

## **Waterways Ombudsman Service Standards**

The Waterways Ombudsman is committed to offering a high-quality service. Our Customer Service Standards are based on The Ombudsman Association's best practice guide and describe how you can expect us, and anyone associated with the service to act.

### **We will communicate effectively with you.**

- We will treat you with courtesy, respect and dignity.
- We will work with you without discrimination or prejudice.
- We will explain our role and investigation process to you.
- We will keep you informed of progress and tell you what needs to happen at each stage.
- If you have any questions, we will answer them or direct you to someone who can.
- We will deal with your complaint in a timely manner, taking into account the complexity of the case.
- We will be as accurate, plain and clear as we can in our communications.

### **We will be accessible to you.**

- Our service will be free, easily available and accessible to you.
- We will work with you to meet your individual needs, including working with representatives to support you through our service.
- We will listen to what you want from us and ensure we understand your complaint. If we cannot help you, we will direct you to an organisation who can.

### **Professionalism and Fairness**

- The Ombudsman will have the relevant skills and knowledge to make the decision on your complaint and access to suitable professional advice if required.
- We will clearly explain what we can look at, any restrictions that apply and what we can and cannot achieve.
- We will clearly explain the reasons for our decisions.
- We will ensure remedies are proportionate, appropriate and fair.
- We will make sure remedies are put in place, as far as we can and explain the procedures to facilitate compliance.
- We will use the outcomes of complaints and the learning from them to promote improvement and learning in the sector.
- We will ensure our record-keeping is accurate, that we hold data securely and share it appropriately.
- We will acknowledge and apologise for any mistakes we make, put them right quickly and ensure lessons are learned to improve our service.

## **Transparency**

- We publish information on our website about the Ombudsman and details of the Committee members responsible for our governance.
- We publish case summaries on the website to inform complainants and others of causes and outcomes of complaints and to drive service improvements.
- We will give you information about how we handle complaints.
- We will consider all information provided to us before we reach a decision.
- Our decisions will be based on the independent impartial evaluation of the relevant evidence.

## **What we expect from you**

We are committed to dealing with you in line with our customer service standards. We also expect you to treat the Ombudsman and Waterways Ombudsman Committee members with respect. Our Behaviour Policy explains how we deal with unacceptable actions towards us and our process.

## **Complaints about the Waterways Ombudsman Scheme**

If you have a complaint about the service, you can ask the independent Chair of the Scheme to consider it. The Chair cannot consider an appeal against the decision but can consider complaints about the service or the process. The service complaints process is predominantly aimed at ensuring we follow the standards we set out, follow best practice, learn lessons and make changes where appropriate. It is not a mechanism for reopening or re-looking at an original complaint nor is there any redress in respect of the service received beyond an apology if it is deemed appropriate. You should submit any complaint via the Ombudsman, who will forward it to the Chair.

November 2021