

Board Paper

09 July 2014

Paper Title	Annual Report – Complaint Handling - 2013/14
Paper Reference:	NRW B B 50.14
Paper Sponsored By: Paper Authored By:	Clive Thomas Geralene Mills

Purpose of Paper:	Scrutiny
Recommendation:	To note progress on the handling and responding to complaints received for 2013/14 and to approve the Annual Report
Decision Required:	Yes

Impact: To note – all headings might not be applicable to the topic	Adopting a customer care approach to complaint handling and developing a culture of viewing complaints as legitimate and a potentially valuable source of feedback on our service delivery should positively impact on the environment, economy and communities of Wales by increasing our knowledge and helping to encourage learning and improvement by Natural Resources Wales
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Issue

1. To update the Board on the progress and handling of complaints received by Natural Resources Wales for 2013/14 and to approve the Annual Report.

Summary

2. This paper provides information to the Board on the performance of our Complaint handling and the developments we have delivered during the year to improve our performance

Background

3. As part the of the work undertaken by the Living Wales Programme prior to 1 April 2013, we developed interim arrangements for handing complaints which would allow us to deliver responses to complaints raised to NRW from Day1 in a 'business as usual' manner.
4. This involved developing and using existing practices from our predecessor bodies.

In Year Progress

5. As well as responding to complaints we inherited and those received in-year as shown in the report we have identified a need to develop our approach to the handling of complaints based on the interim arrangements proving overly complex and difficult to manage. This was especially apparent with respect to a small number of complaints that proved disproportionate in the time they took to deal with. In addition the process proved to be challenging in terms of promoting a positive approach to complaint handling in line with organisational values
6. As a result we prioritised our complaint handling policy and procedure and as a result we have developed a new approach which follows more closely the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Best Practice model policy. We have adapted this model policy to reflect the structure and accountabilities for the organisation.
7. This policy emphasis the following points
 - A Customer Care culture in respect of complaint handling. All staff are responsible and accountable for efficient handling of complaints at point of service whenever this is possible
 - A clear two stage process - Stage 1 Point of Service resolution. Stage 2 – Investigation leading to final conclusions and potential onward reference to the Ombudsman
 - Stage 2 - Investigate once and investigate well
 - Clear roles identified for Directors, Directorate Complaint Co-ordinators and Director of Governance
8. The new approach was formally launched internally and externally on 1 May, using internal communication cascade routes and updates on the website and intranet. We are now delivering awareness sessions at Directorate Management team meetings and promoting the cascade from leadership team members to all staff.

Risks

9. Natural Resources Wales faces reputational risks for inefficient handling of complaints.

Financial Implications

10. There are no financial implications.

Communications

11. The publication of our report will be of interest to our staff and may also attract interest externally. We will develop an appropriate Communications Plan.

Equality impact assessment (EqIA)

12. Not required.

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Annex 1: Complaint Report with supporting Narrative.