

Policy Owner	Trustees
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Mountain Bothies Association (“MBA”)

Scottish Charity Number SC008685

Complaints Policy

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. MBA’s main function is to maintain simple shelters in remote country for the use and benefit of all who love wild & lonely places. In the MBA we are committed to setting the best standards in all areas of our work and ensuring that our members, the users of the bothies we look after, and the public in general all have a positive experience when dealing with MBA, joining a work party, or visiting our bothies.
2. MBA accepts that sometimes things can and do go wrong.
3. If this happens, we want to be given the opportunity to put things right, quickly. A complaint is an opportunity to learn and improve, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.
4. MBA’s policy in respect of complaints is to:
 - provide a complaints procedure which is fair, clear and easy to use by anyone wishing to make a complaint;
 - publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
 - make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and as swiftly as possible;
 - handle each complaint sensitively and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements;
 - resolve complaints, wherever possible, and restore our relationship with the complaining person or organisation; and
 - use the information and experience we have gained to improve what we do.
5. This policy explains how to make a complaint and describes our complaints procedure, and how we handle complaints.

How to make a complaint

6. A complaint can be made in person, by telephone, or in writing by letter or email. Verbal complaints may be made in person to one of our Trustees, the General Secretary or an Area Organiser but must be followed up in writing. Written complaints may be directed to MBA at Edenbank House, 22 Crossgate, Cupar, Fife, KY15 5HW or by e-mail using the “contact us” form on the MBA website.
7. When contacting us, please tell us:
 - your full name, address, email address and telephone number;
 - as much as you can about the complaint; and
 - how you want us to resolve the matter.
8. Where communication through the above methods is not practicable (e.g. due to disability, language etc.) every reasonable step will be taken by MBA to obtain details of the complaint and to support the person making the complaint.

MBA's procedures for dealing with Complaints

9. Complaints may come from any person or organisation about any issue for which MBA is accountable and responsible.
10. MBA will treat all complaints including anonymous complaints seriously and will take action to consider them further, wherever this is appropriate. Generally, we will consider anonymous complaints if there is enough information in the complaint to enable us to make further enquiries.

Confidentiality

11. All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

12. Complaints are ultimately the responsibility of the Board of Trustees of MBA.
13. It is the responsibility of any representative of the MBA who receives a complaint to record the matter as soon as is practicable and then inform the Board of Trustees in order for it to be investigated promptly and effectively.

Resolving Complaints

Stage One Timescale: no longer than 21 (twenty-one) working days from receipt of the complaint

14. MBA will ensure that complaints are investigated by someone within the organisation who is independent of the events complained about, and not by someone who may require to be involved in Stage Two (see below). Where this is not possible, MBA should consider whether a third party outside of the organisation should be asked to investigate the complaint.
15. Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within 7 (seven) working days of the complaint being received. The acknowledgement should say who is investigating the complaint and when the complainant can expect a response. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
16. Where possible, a representative of MBA should be informed if a complaint has been made about them or about actions for which they were responsible. MBA will ensure representatives of MBA have an opportunity to respond to the allegations made.
17. Regardless of whether the complaint is resolved or not, the complaint information should be reported to the Board of Trustees at the earliest stage in order that it can be recorded in the complaints log.
18. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within 21 (twenty one) working days. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
19. If the concern is resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at this stage, the matter should be fully recorded, including full details of the outcome, the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions and any action taken as a result.

Stage Two Timescale: no longer than 21 (twenty one) working days from the date of the request for a review of the Stage One response

20. If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by the Chairman of the Association.
21. The Chairman should acknowledge the complaint, state who will deal with the case now and when the complainant can expect a reply. The Chairman will take responsibility for contacting the complainant and make such enquiries as are necessary to resolve the issue. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who investigated the complaint at Stage One.

22. Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive response within 21 (twenty one) working days. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
23. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
24. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Chairman or the Board of Trustees decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolving the matter, in which case mediation may be considered.

Right to complain to external bodies

25. MBA aim to resolve all complaints directly although, depending on the subject matter of the complaint, a complaint could be made to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator or the Information Commissioners Office (if the complaint relates to MBA's use or processing of personal data) at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints that OSCR or ICO can involve themselves in can be found on their respective websites.

Monitoring and Learning

26. The Trustees will review complaints to ensure that learning outcomes are incorporated into policy and practice.

Vexatious Complainers

27. Where the Association has taken all reasonable steps to resolve a complaint and where the complainer repeatedly makes the same allegations over a period of time, or harasses any officers, the Association reserves the right to deem that person as vexatious.

The Association reserves the right to stop responding to that person or to direct them to deal with only ONE officer.

Reviewing and varying the Complaints Policy and Procedures

28. The Trustees will monitor and regularly review MBA's Complaints Policy and Procedures to ensure that these are effective and may vary them for good reason.
29. At times, it may be appropriate to depart from the Procedures, for example, where matters are complex and it would be not possible to satisfactorily investigate the matter fully and respond to the complainant within the timescale, in which case MBA will ensure the complainant is kept informed of this and the expected date by which they should receive a response.