



## **COMPLAINTS POLICY**

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## **SECTION ONE – WEBSITE CONTENT**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**National Museums NI is committed to providing a high-quality service to all our customers. However, there may be occasions when problems arise and you do not receive the service you expect.**

**We want to know when an issue has arisen so that we can put it right. We also want to learn from the feedback.**

#### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint could be about any aspect of our museum services delivered directly by our teams or by our partners.

For instance:

- When you have an issue with the service provided by a member of staff or by a partner.
- When we provide you with the wrong information
- When you receive a poor-quality service

Complaints received by National Museum NI will be treated seriously and will be thoroughly and objectively investigated in a timely manner.

#### **What is not a complaint?**

The following will not be dealt with under this Complaints Policy

- An information request
- Appeals of a business decision
- An attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision.

Such requests will be dealt with as routine business issues and you should contact the relevant business area.

#### **How to make a complaint**

We are keen to ensure that all complaints about our museum services are dealt with in a satisfactory way and are resolved as quickly as possible.

Often an issue can be resolved quickly and easily by contacting the person with whom you have been dealing. You can do this in person, by telephone, e-mail or letter.

We understand that some customers may prefer to share their complaint on social media, such as Facebook, X, Instagram or external platforms such as TripAdvisor. We will acknowledge that a complaint on the social platform, and then the details will be followed up with you by telephone, email or letter as dialoguing on public platforms can have the potential to compromise privacy issues. This approach helps comply with our Complaints Policy and with data protection legislation.

### **Tell Us At The Time**

Tell us what you think during your visit. Looking after our visitors is our top priority, so our staff are eager to get your feedback in person. We're always open to suggestions, and it's really helpful to hear what our visitors think. In most cases, we can resolve the situation then and there and make sure that you leave looking forward to your next visit.

If your complaint originates at our sites as part of your visitor experience, please approach a staff member if you have a question, comment or complaint. Our staff are identifiable by the National Museums NI branded uniforms, name badges and lanyards or by their period costumes.

If we can't resolve the matter immediately, we will record your feedback. A manager will then investigate and follow up with you via telephone or email with 15 working days.

All visitor feedback is also included in our regular reviews of service.

### **Provide feedback after your visit**

You can also get in touch with us after you've left our sites.

If you have an urgent question or complaint, the quickest way to get in touch with us is by phone. Call 02890 428428, Monday – Friday 8am – 4pm. If you prefer, you can also send us your feedback in writing through the following ways:

- Submit your complaint through our online form
- Submit your complaint by email: [contactcentre@nationalmuseumsni.org](mailto:contactcentre@nationalmuseumsni.org)
- Submit your complaint in writing to;  
National Museums NI  
Contact Centre  
153 Bangor Road  
Cultra  
Co. Down  
BT18 0EU

We commit to read and record every piece of correspondence that we're sent. Where a response is appropriate, or requested we will reply to you within 15 working days.

If you're not satisfied with our response to your complaint, please get back in touch with us and a Senior Manager from the relevant Department will respond to you within 15 working days. Contact details below:

The Visitor Experience Team  
National Museums NI  
153 Bangor Road  
Cultra  
Co. Down  
BT18 OEU

### **What we do with visitor feedback**

National Museums NI wants to hear what our visitors are saying about their experience at our four sites;

- Ulster Museum
- Ulster Folk Museum
- Ulster Transport Museum
- Ulster American Folk Park

Feedback is hugely important in helping to constantly inform our decisions on improving our service.

We analyse the trends in our visitor comments to improve our processes, update our policies and support training for our staff. Compliments about National Museums NI staff and volunteers are shared internally and comments or suggestions are forwarded to the relevant departments.

### **Our commitment to you**

National Museums NI promise to consider your feedback carefully, to respect your privacy, and to resolve any complaints professionally and to the best of our ability. We commit to being fair and impartial when investigating any issues that you raise and to use what we learn to help maintain and improve our visitor experience.

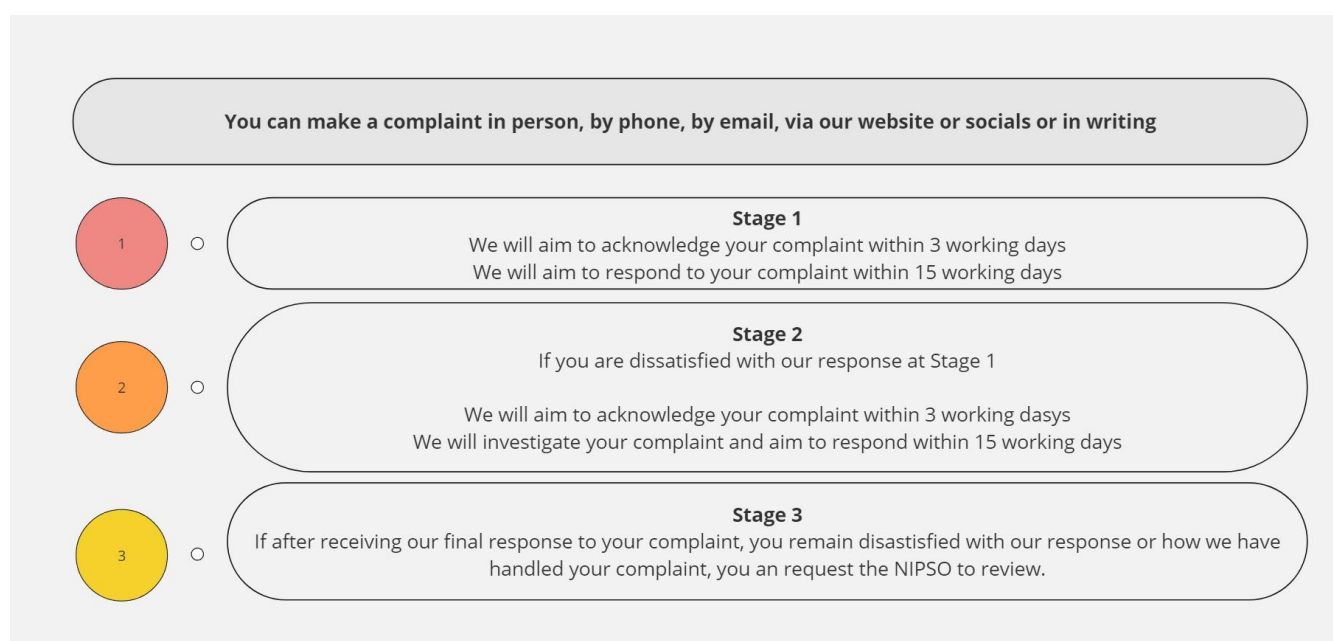
Our privacy policy can be found here: [Privacy Statement | National Museums NI](#).

You can read our full Complaints Policy on pages 5-12 below, where you will find further information on what happens next, once we receive your complaint and what to do if you are not satisfied with the response you receive.

## SECTION TWO

### National Museums NI Complaints Policy

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### What to do if you want to complain about the work of National Museum NI?

National Museums NI understands the importance of excellence in the delivery of its museum services. We are committed to creating and developing a positive approach to the museum services we deliver in which we strive to consistently exceed expectations of all our visitors and stakeholders. We aim to create an environment within which excellence is seen as essential to the management and delivery of our museum services. We are committed to continual improvement. This includes handling complaints carefully in an open and courteous way by investigating the matters raised thoroughly and replying as quickly as possible.

- 1.1 National Museums NI has an internal two-stage complaints process. We will do all we can to resolve your complaint at the first stage, but if you are not satisfied

with our response or you are unhappy with the way we have handled your complaint, you can request for your complaint to be escalated and reviewed. How to complain and details of our procedure are set out below along with how you can expect us to handle your complaint and the expected timeframes.

- 1.2 We will treat an individual or organisation making a complaint impartially, in confidence and with respect and courtesy. No individual or organisation will be adversely treated because they have found cause to complain about our service.

## **Informal Complaints**

- 2.1 If you are unhappy with our treatment of you or any part of our service, then please get in touch, as soon as possible, with the National Museum NI staff member who has responsibility for the work. This may be whilst you are visiting our sites. They are best placed to sort out most problems. If you are still not satisfied, or feel unable to raise the matter with that person, then please raise a formal written complaint, following the procedures outlined below.

## **Formal Complaints**

### **What do we consider to be a complaint?**

- 3.1 National Museums NI regards a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction made to us about a perceived failure to carry any aspect of our service. We want to know so that we can try to put things right in the most appropriate manner, and make longer-term improvements

### **Who can complain?**

- 3.2 Anyone who comes into contact with National Museums NI and is unhappy or dissatisfied can complain. For example, you could be a member of the public or an employee of a body associated with National Museums NI

### **Who do I complain to?**

- 3.3 There are two ways by which you can formally complain. You can complete our complaint form which is available in hard copy, on request and on our website, or can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy. This should be sent to The Contact Centre who will raise the issue directly with the manager responsible for that service.

The Contact Centre  
National Museums NI  
153, Bangor Road  
Cultra  
Holywood  
Co. Down  
BT18 OEU

If you prefer you can email your complaint to

[contactcentre@nationalmuseumsni.org](mailto:contactcentre@nationalmuseumsni.org)

### Is there a time limit for complaining?

- 3.4 We will do all we can to look into your complaint as quickly as possible. In order to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly, we will not usually accept complaints that are made more than **6 months** after the event being complained about or being brought to our attention. If your complaint exceeds this period and you feel that the time limit is not applicable, please outline the reasons within your complaint.

### Are there any types of complaint that this procedure cannot consider under this process?

- 3.5 If you wish to comment on the performance or behaviour of an organisation associated with National Museums NI, you should raise it with that organisation, using its own complaints procedure.
- 3.6 Complaints that National Museums NI has failed to meet its obligations to disclose information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and to deal with requests in accordance with statutory procedure are subject to a distinct formal process. If your complaint relates to **Freedom of Information**, please write to:

The Information Manager  
National Museums NI  
153, Bangor Road  
Cultra  
Holywood  
Co. Down  
BT18 OEU

- 3.7 If a complaint is vexatious and/or repetitious, we may bring the communication to a close.
- We define vexatious as: a complaint instituted without sufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance to the receiver of the complaint; an

oppressive complaint (with unjust severity); or otherwise an abuse of the procedures for dealing with complaints or conduct matters.

- We define repetitive as: a complaint that is substantially the same as a previous complaint (whether made by or on behalf of the same or a different complainant); contains no fresh allegations which significantly affect the account of the previous complaint; or no fresh evidence, being evidence which was not reasonably available at the time the previous complaint was made, is tendered in support of it.

### **What happens to my formal complaint? (Stage One)**

- 3.8 (i) Once you have made a complaint to National Museums NI in writing to The Contact Centre, we will send you an acknowledgement within **three working days of receipt**. That acknowledgement will provide an indication as to who will be responsible for responding to you and when you can expect to receive a reply.
- (ii) If we cannot investigate your complaint, we will write to you explaining why. If possible, we will suggest another organisation that may be able to help you if we cannot.
- (iii) All complaints made on social media will be routed into the complaints procedure by the following routes; in person, by telephone, email, online complaint form or letter as dialoguing on public platforms can compromise privacy issues. The **three working days acknowledgement receipt** commences when it is routed through those formats.
- 3.9 We expect to respond to the majority of complaints within **15 working days of the complaint arriving with us**. The time taken to respond will vary depending on the complexity of the complaint. More complex matters involving the need to speak with part time staff may take the full 15 working days to complete. However, if we are unable to respond within this deadline because, for example, the matters you raise require more detailed investigation, we will inform you in writing.
- 3.10 We will give serious consideration to the issues you raise. Where we identify mistakes in our approach we will acknowledge those and this may include providing an apology, setting out details of next steps if applicable, , and explaining what we will do to prevent the problem occurring again.

### **What happens if I disagree with the outcome, or how my complaint was handled? (Stage Two)**

- 3.11 We will make every effort to satisfactorily resolve your complaint in the first instance. However, if you are not satisfied by our response or by the way that your complaint was handled, you should contact the Chief Operating Officer's Office. You will need to outline why you are dissatisfied with the initial response.



3.12 We will acknowledge the complaint within

(i) **three working days of receipt.**

(ii) Following your acknowledgement, the Chief Operating Officer will arrange for the case to be reconsidered by a member of staff who was not previously involved in handling your complaint. This stage will involve a full independent review of the handling of your complaint and all associated papers.

(iii) The outcome of this review will be communicated to you in writing within **15 working days of the receipt of the complaint**, however if for any reason there is a problem with collating the response, we will inform you of the reason for a delayed response and will inform you of the expected date of reply.

### **What can I do if I am still dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage Two?**

4.1 If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of Stage Two, you may contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's Office (NIPSO) as National Museums NI falls under Schedule 3 of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

4.2 The NIPSO will expect you to exhaust our internal complaints process before they will accept your complaint. In addition your contact with the Ombudsman's Office must be done **within six months from the completion of our process**, although they may investigate a complaint outside this time limit if there are special circumstances that would make it proper to do so.

You can contact the Ombudsman in any of the following ways:

Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman  
Progressive House  
33 Wellington Place,  
Belfast  
BT1 6NN

Freephone: 0800 34 34 24

Freepost: Freepost NIPSO

Email: [nipso@nipso.org.uk](mailto:nipso@nipso.org.uk)

Further details are available from the NI Public Services Ombudsman's website:

<https://nipso.org.uk>

### **Equality and Diversity**

4.3 We want our services to be accessible to all our stakeholders, regardless of age, disability, race or any other factor that may cause a disadvantage. To this

end we strive to ensure that our services are accessible to all. If you encounter trouble submitting your complaint in writing we will aim to make reasonable adjustments to help you access this service, this includes:

- Providing access in our Administration Building for National Museums NI, 153 Bangor Road, Cultra, Co. Down, BT18 0EU
- Arranging to visit you in your home if you cannot visit our offices
- Arranging to make available interpretation or other communicative services if required

**National Museums NI Complaint Form**

**(Please complete in Capital Letters and in ink)**

**SECTION 1 – ABOUT YOU**

Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr:

Surname:

Forename(s):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

**SECTION 2 – ISSUE RAISED**

**2a)** Which National Museums NI service does this complaint relate to?

Please give the name of the relevant staff member(s) you were dealing with – if appropriate?

**2b)** What issue would you like to report?

(Outline the background to the issue, when it occurred and give a brief description of what you think National Museums NI failed to do, or did wrongly. If there is not enough space here, please continue your comments on a separate piece of paper and attach it to the form. If possible, refer to any relevant letters you have written to National Museums NI, our responses and any other information you think relevant).

**2c)** How has it affected you?

(Describe how this has affected you or your interests)

**2d)** What would you regard as a reasonable remedy to the matter?

**2e)** If there has been a delay in telling/informing us about the issue, please state why.

### **SECTION 3 – PRIOR ISSUE**

Have you raised this issue previously with National Museums NI? (If yes and if possible please provide a copy of the response you received or alternatively provide some details).

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**\_\_\_\_\_

