



Casework Summary Report

Case Number: CMS-590

Description: Failure by the Secretary of State to report on the “Developments in International Environmental Protection” in line with Section 21 of the Environment Act 2021.

Case Overview

Background/ Complaints Summary
<p>The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) received a complaint from Green Alliance alleging that Defra had failed to publish a report on the “Developments in International Environmental Protection” in line with Section 21 of the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 states that the Secretary of State must report under this section two years after it comes into legal force and each subsequent two-year period. There is a legal requirement to lay this report before Parliament and publish as soon as reasonably practicable, after the end of the reporting period it relates to.</p> <p>Section 21 of the Environment Act came into force on the 1 April 2022, and therefore the first reporting period ran from the 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2024. Our complainant highlighted that no report had been published after that timeframe.</p> <p>Our complainant raised their concerns to Defra in January 2025 to which Defra responded and explained that the change in Government in 2024 had resulted in a delay to publication.</p> <p>On the 1 April 2025 it was evident no report had been published, and a complaint was formally logged with the OEP to consider.</p>
OEP Actions
<p>Following an initial review of the formal complaint, the OEP identified the appropriate point of contact and engaged directly with the Director of Environmental Quality at Defra to understand the reason behind delays and the expected timeframes for the report to be laid before parliament and published.</p> <p>The OEP sought reassurances that there would not be any significant delays and that the report would be prioritised in line with legal requirements as stated in the Environment Act 2021.</p>

Conclusions and Outcomes
<p>Following dialogue with Defra the report was published on 29 April 2025, and the OEP considers that the alleged failure set out in the complaint has now been resolved. As such, the complaint has been closed.</p> <p>The OEP will continue to monitor the publication of future reports in line with the legal requirements stated in the Environment Act 2021.</p>