



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Interim Environmental
Governance Secretariat



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Interim Environmental
Governance Secretariat

Complaint Report

Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat

1 January – 31 March 2021

From 1 January 2021, the Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat (IEGS) has received complaints about suspected failures, by public authorities, to comply with environmental law. This is to help uphold environmental governance standards in preparation for the arrival of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP).

We cover England, Northern Ireland and UK-wide reserved matters. There are separate arrangements for devolved matters in Wales and Scotland. Please visit our FAQ page on www.iegs.org.uk for more details and contact information.

We check each complaint received against the criteria for complaining to the OEP set out in the [Environment Bill](#), and make an initial assessment.

Regardless of whether they meet the criteria, we will pass all the complaints we receive on to the OEP, which will be set up in an interim, non-statutory form from 1 July 2021 and will become an independent legal body after the Bill is enacted.



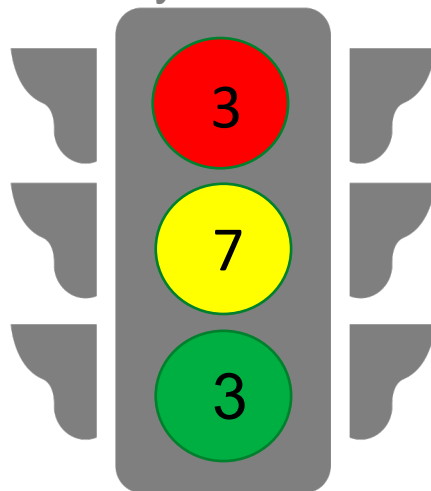
Complaint Summary

When we receive a complaint, we send a receipt to the complainant and validate the complaint against the criteria in the Environment Bill. If the complaint meets the criteria, we check with the public authority that their complaint procedure has been completed and invite them to share any relevant information. We record our assessment of each complaint ready for the OEP to consider.



13

Total number of
complaints received
January-March 2021



Closed

Waiting

Open

Closed: Does not meet the criteria

Waiting: We are seeking further information
from the complainant or public authority

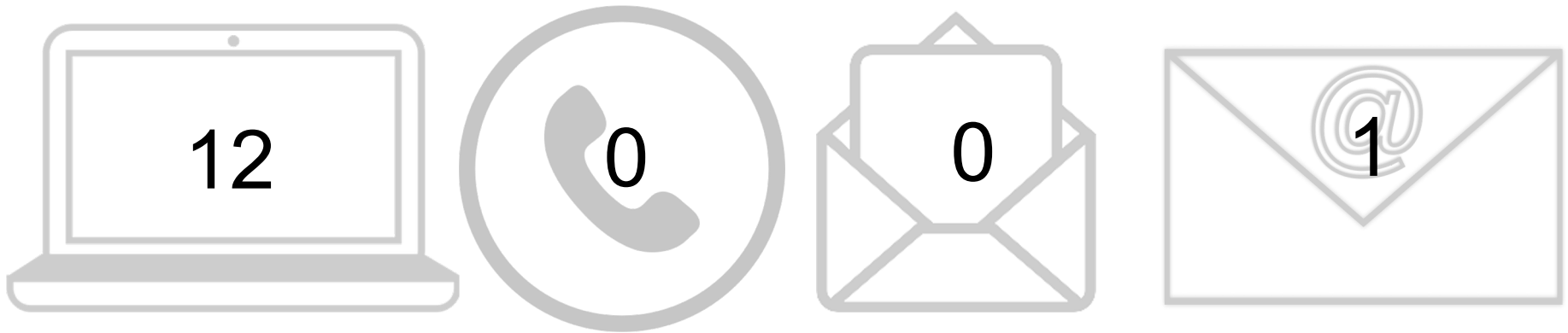
Open: Meets the criteria and is an open case



0

No cases have been
escalated for the
attention of Defra
Ministers

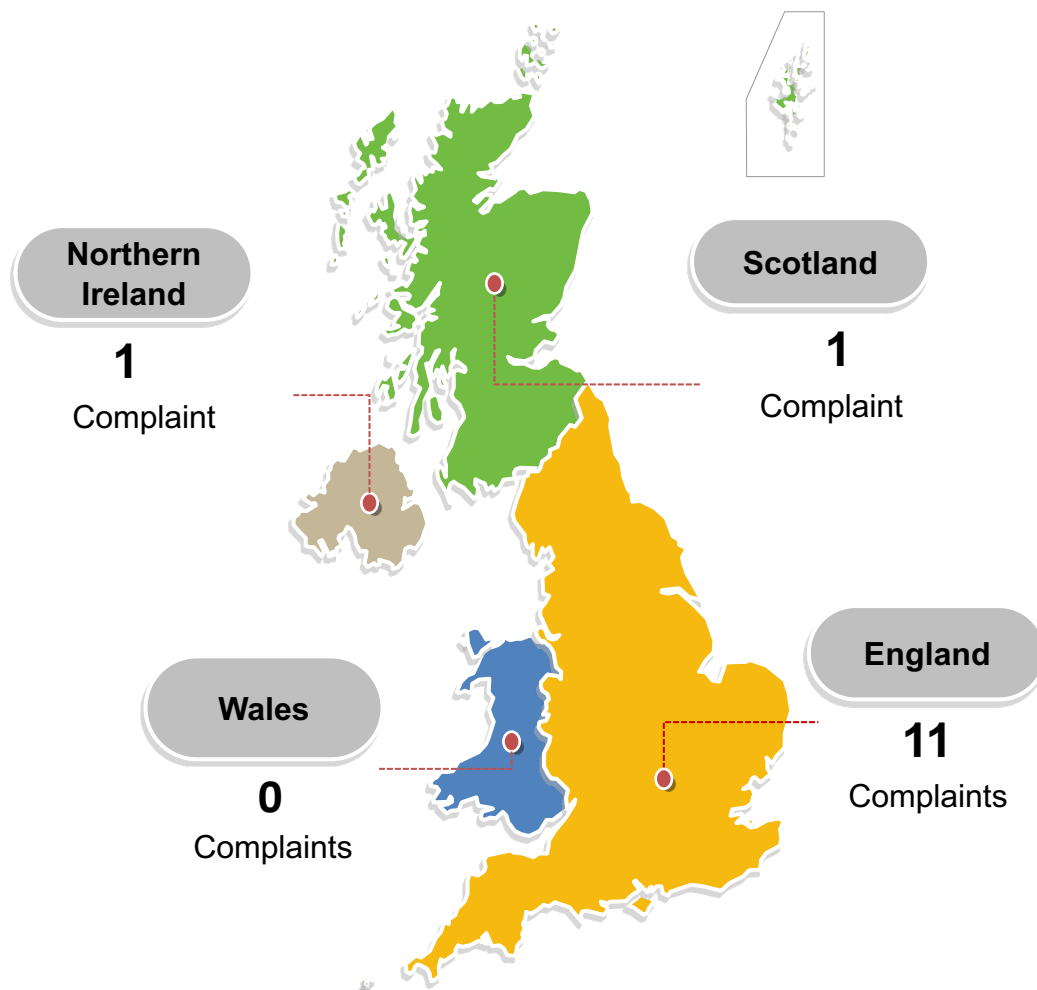
Method of complaint submission



Complainants can submit complaints to us via our online complaint portal, by post, and where necessary by email or phone.

From 1 January to 31 March 2021 most of our complainants chose to submit their complaint via our [online complaint portal](https://www.iegs.org.uk). One complaint was submitted by email.

Geographic breakdown



We cover breaches of environmental law by public authorities in Northern Ireland and England.

We received one complaint about a devolved matter. We signposted the complainant to the relevant body in Scotland before closing the complaint on our system.

We haven't yet received any cross-border complaints.

From 1 January to 31 March 2021 the complaints received named **17 different public authorities** in NI and England. About half the complaints named multiple public authorities.

Environmental Breakdown

Environmental Category	Number of complaints where category mentioned
Nature conservation	9
Pollution control	4
Environmental monitoring and assessment	2
Waste and resources	1
Climate change	0
Environmental governance	0
Not environmental law	1

Following discussion with stakeholders, we have adopted an initial approach to categorising complaints under six broad categories of environmental law as shown above. "Environmental governance" covers the institutional framework for environmental protection as well as cross-cutting measures such as environmental reporting that do not fit in one of the other, more specific categories. We received complaints across most categories but are yet to receive any about climate change or environmental governance. Some complaints covered more than one category.

Hot topics



Our word cloud shows the environmental areas most complained about. The more often a topic was mentioned the larger it appears on the word cloud.

Our Approach

Complainants often identify a public authority that is not responsible for the matter being complained about and have not first gone through the relevant complaint procedure either. We have adopted a signposting approach to help complainants identify the relevant public authority.

Sometimes it is not clear whether the public authority internal complaint procedure will apply to the concern we have received. In these instances, to be more helpful to the complainant, we are first contacting the public authority to check with them, before signposting the complainant to them where appropriate. This also provides the public authority with the opportunity to engage with the complaint before it is validated for possible consideration by the OEP.

We will not close a complaint where the points above are still under consideration. Of the three complaints we have closed, one was not about environmental law, one was about the activity of a private company rather than a public authority, and one was about a devolved matter. Information on the closed cases will still be passed on to the OEP, alongside all other complaints, once it is established.



More information

For more information about the IEGS complaints process and definitions, please go to our website at www.iegs.org.uk

If you cannot find your answer there or in our FAQs please email:

IEGSEnquiries@defra.gov.uk, or for Northern Ireland
IEGSEnquiries@daera-ni.gov.uk

For media enquiries, please contact:
newsdesk@defra.gov.uk

