



Office for
**Environmental
Protection**

Complaint Report

Interim Office for Environmental Protection

1 July - 30 September 2021

Background



On 1 July 2021, the Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat (IEGS) became the Interim Office for Environmental Protection (Interim OEP). From 1 January 2021, the IEGS and Interim OEP have 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).

The Interim OEP covers 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.theoep.org.uk/faqs for more details and contact information.

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

Regardless of our initial assessment of whether a complaint meets the criteria, the OEP will reconsider all of the complaints received in the interim period, once the Environment Bill is enacted and we become an independent legal body.

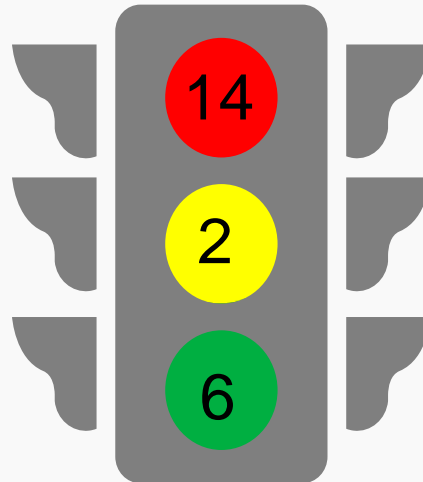
Complaint summary

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



22

Total number of
complaints received
1 January –
30 September 2021



Closed

Waiting

Open



0

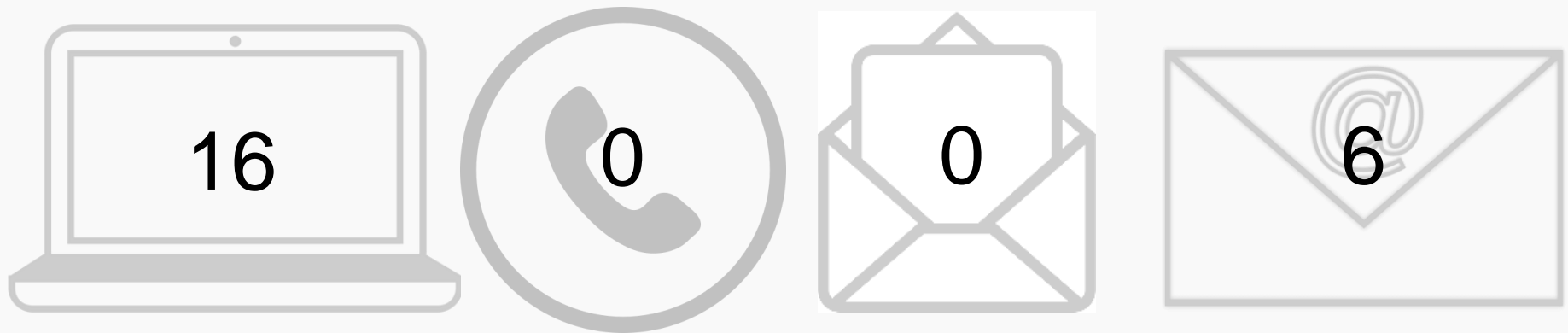
No cases have been
escalated for the
attention of Defra
Ministers

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
awaiting a decision on next steps by the OEP

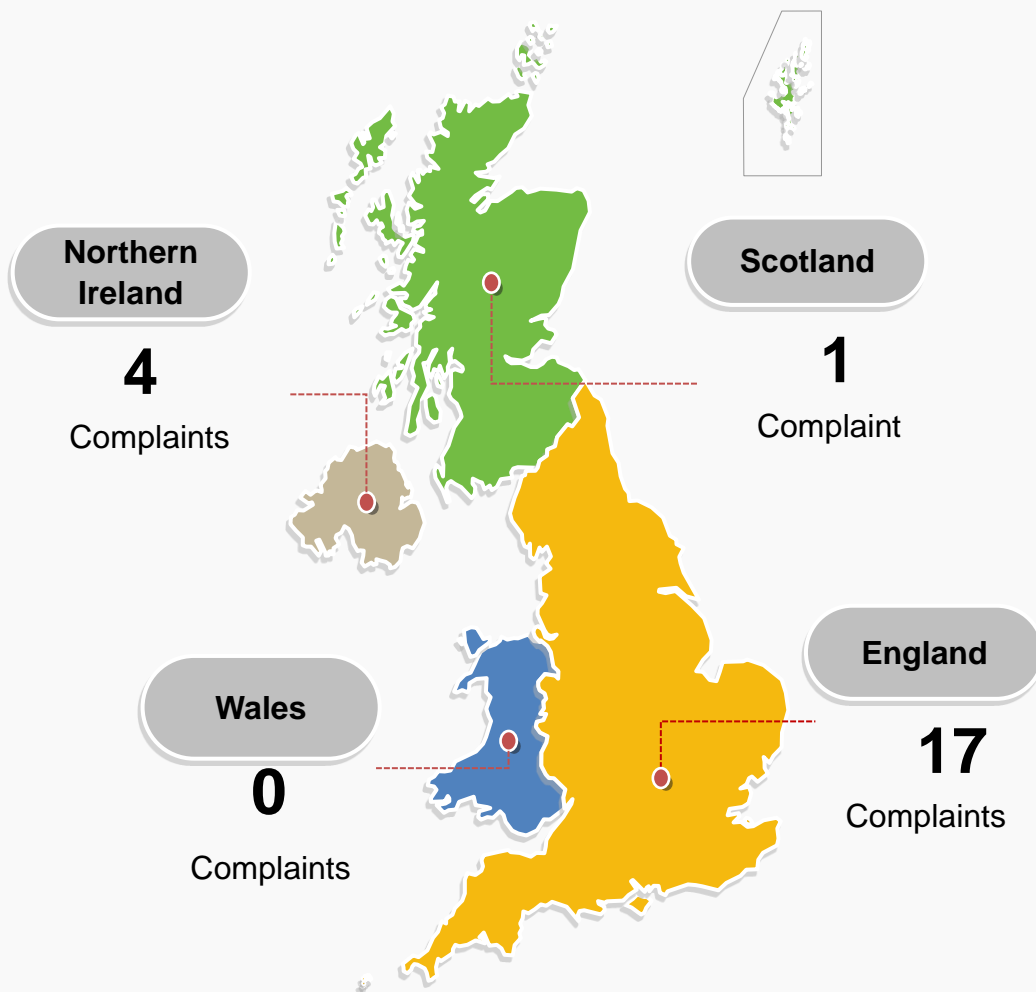
Method of complaint submission



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

From 1 January up to 30 September 2021 most of our complainants chose to submit their complaint via our [online complaint portal](#). Six complaints were submitted by email, four of which relate to Northern Ireland.

Geographic breakdown



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

We received one complaint about a devolved matter in Scotland. We signposted the complainant to [Environmental Standards Scotland](#) before closing the complaint on our system.

We have not received any cross-border complaints.

From 1 January to 30 September 2021, the complaints received named 25 different public authorities in Northern Ireland and England, including 14 different local authorities.

Environmental Category

Environmental Category	Percentage of complaints where category mentioned
Nature conservation	30%
Environmental monitoring and assessment	23%
Pollution control	20%
Other	14%
Waste and resources	7%
Environmental governance	3%
Not environmental law	3%
Climate change	0%

Following discussion with stakeholders, we have adopted an initial approach to categorising complaints under 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. The "Other" category includes things like development control. Some complaints named more than one category.

Hot topics



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

Our approach

Complainants often identify a public authority that is not responsible for the matter that they complain about, or they have not first gone through the relevant complaint procedure of the public authority. To help complainants identify the relevant public authority, we have adopted a signposting approach. We have also published details about some public authority remits and complaints procedures on our website.

Sometimes it is not clear whether the public authority internal complaint procedure will apply to the complaint we have received. In these instances, to be more helpful to complainants, we first contact the public authority to check with them, before signposting, where appropriate. This also provides the public authority with the opportunity to engage with the complaint before it is considered by the OEP.

We will not close a complaint where the points above are still under consideration. We have closed 14 complaints because they do not meet the six criteria for complaining to the OEP, as stated in the Environment Bill. In three instances, we closed the complaints as the complainants did not respond to our request to provide evidence that they had exhausted the public authority complaints procedure within three months of us requesting it.

More information

For more information about our complaints procedure and definitions, please visit our website: www.theoep.org.uk.

If you cannot find an answer on the website, please email us at:

TheOEPEnquiries@defra.gov.uk

or for Northern Ireland enquiries:

TheOEPEnquiries@daera-ni.gov.uk

For media enquiries, please contact:

newsdesk@defra.gov.uk



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