



Office for Environmental Protection (OEP):

Annual whistleblowing report for the period ending 1 April 2026

1. Summary of the reason for reporting

As a Prescribed Person, the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) has a duty to report annually on the number of qualifying disclosures made to us and to provide a summary of the action taken in respect of these. This duty aims to increase transparency in the way that whistleblowing disclosures are dealt with and to reassure whistleblowers that their disclosures are taken seriously.

More specifically, under the [Prescribed Persons \(Reports on Disclosure of Information\) Regulations 2017](#) the OEP, as a Prescribed Person, must report the following information every year:

- The number of disclosures received (which met certain criteria)
- The number of those disclosures where no further action was taken
- A summary of the action taken in relation to the disclosures
- A summary of how workers' disclosures have impacted our ability to perform our functions and meet our objectives
- An explanation of the OEP's functions and objectives

2. The statutory framework

Whistleblowing law is located in the [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) (as amended by the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#) and the [Employment Rights Act 2025](#)). This provides the statutory framework for employment protections for workers who make a qualifying disclosure (or 'blow the whistle') about suspected wrongdoing.

The OEP is a ‘prescribed person’ under [The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) \(Amendment\) Order 2022](#) making it the appropriate body for disclosures on matters relating to the functions of the OEP.¹

A full list of prescribed persons and their contact information may be located here: [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

3. Whistleblowing facts 2025 to 2026

The OEP was designated as a Prescribed Person in law in Northern Ireland in November 2022, and in England in December 2022. This is our fourth annual whistleblowing report and covers the reporting period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

When a whistleblowing disclosure is received, we record the type of issue raised. This is done for reporting purposes and so that we may identify and respond to any potential breaches of environmental law in the most expedient manner possible, in accordance with our overarching statutory objectives.²

In this reporting period the OEP received ten whistleblowing reports. We review every whistleblowing report we receive. We first consider if the report is a qualifying disclosure from a worker of a public authority concerned about wrongdoing, risk, or malpractice in an area relevant to our functions.

Table 1. Breakdown of whistleblowing reports

Total reports received	10
Reports which were non-qualifying disclosures	6
Reports which were qualifying disclosures	4

Non-Qualifying Disclosures

Six of the reports received did not qualify as whistleblowing disclosures for different reasons. Three did not relate to a public authority’s compliance with environmental law and three were not made by workers of the public authorities. These non-qualifying disclosures were handled in line with our general procedures for enquiries.

Qualifying Disclosures

Four of the ten whistleblowing reports received were assessed as a ‘qualifying disclosure’ in that they were from a worker of a public authority reporting matters within our remit.

We complete assessments of the matters raised within all qualifying disclosures to determine if there is evidence of a potential serious failure to comply with environmental law and the scope for resolving any non-compliance, guided by our [strategy and enforcement policy](#).

¹ [The Public Interest Disclosure \(Prescribed Persons\) Order 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

² <https://www.theoep.org.uk/what-we-do>

Table 2. Assessments of qualifying disclosures

Number qualifying disclosures received	4
Assessment of qualifying disclosure ongoing	2
Assessment of qualifying disclosure concluded the available information did not indicate that any potential failures to comply with environmental law, if they occurred, would be serious	2

Our assessment of two qualifying disclosures are ongoing. These assessments have involved the review of a significant amount of detailed material provided by whistleblowers and obtained from multiple requests we have made to public authorities to provide information. We are engaging with the public authorities to understand what actions they are taking in relation to issues we have identified in order to determine our next steps.

Our assessments of two qualifying disclosures are complete. These concluded that the available information did not indicate that any potential failures to comply with environmental law, if they occurred, would be serious. They therefore did not meet the criteria for further action under our enforcement functions. Following further engagement with the public authorities on the issues considered, the assessments resulted in the following outcomes:

- We completed engagement with a public authority to clarify what the law requires and provide points it should consider in light of our assessment;
- We will take a monitoring approach for another public authority who confirmed that it has a plan to achieve compliance and will update us when it considers that full compliance has been achieved.

4. Our approach to whistleblowing disclosures

Our approach to whistleblowing provides an avenue for individuals to make disclosures in relation to possible infractions of environmental law by the government or public authorities in England and Northern Ireland.

Whistleblowing disclosures have the potential to help us to detect serious problems with the way environmental law is implemented and enforced. We therefore recognise the potential importance of whistleblowing to our organisation. When we receive a whistleblowing disclosure, we will consider the information provided to us, then decide and prioritise what action, if any, to take according to the nature and level of risk. This approach will be consistent with that outlined in our [strategy and enforcement policy](#) as well as our statutory obligations.

The OEP cannot provide legal advice. As such we encourage potential whistleblowers to review the [government's guidance on whistleblowing](#). Anyone considering making a disclosure may also wish to consider obtaining independent legal advice before blowing the whistle.

Further information on the OEP's approach to whistleblowing can be found in the [OEP's whistleblowing policy](#).

5. Our functions, objectives, and powers

The OEP was established under the Environment Act 2021. The primary objective of the OEP is to hold government and other public authorities to account for their duties and obligations relating to environmental law. What is environmental law for the OEP's purposes is defined in [Section 46](#) of the Environment Act 2021. The two most common ways in which a public authority could fail to comply with environmental law are:

- Failing to take proper account of environmental law when carrying out its activities. For example, not carrying out an environmental impact assessment when required to do so.
- Unlawfully exercising, or failing to exercise, any activities it has to carry out under environmental law. For example, not properly regulating environmentally harmful activities it is responsible for licensing.

6. The impact of whistleblowing disclosures on our ability to perform our duties

We monitor outcomes achieved in relation to any disclosures received. Any potential enforcement action would be taken in view of our strategy and enforcement policy. As our concluded assessments of qualifying disclosures have not identified potential serious failures to comply and nor resulted in enforcement action, there is no information to provide in this regard at this time.

We regularly review and improve how we encourage, receive and handle whistleblowing disclosures. These reviews draw on our learning from the reports we have received alongside the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's [Whistleblowing: prescribed persons guidance](#), the practices of other prescribed persons, specialist guidance and our own experience.

This year we have reviewed and improved our whistleblowing process to manage the reports and assessments more effectively. This includes:

- Implementing a new Case Management System for our case work. This provides a secure, efficient way to record information and share it with relevant teams for action where appropriate. It has improved our ability to track and monitor outcomes and strengthens our ability to complete thematic reviews to inform work across the organisation.
- We have completed refresher training and clarified roles and responsibilities within teams responsible for managing disclosures and undertaking assessments. This has improved our ability and capacity to manage disclosures allowing us to progress assessments more efficiently.