

How to complain if an environmental law is broken

April 2021

Environmental laws should protect the environment from harm, for example by preventing pollution, safeguarding wildlife, or setting standards for air and water quality. Following the UK's departure from the EU, governments are putting in place new arrangements to ensure that laws are upheld, and standards are maintained.

If you believe that an environmental law has been broken by a government or public body, or a law is not working effectively, you can complain to an independent environmental watchdog or person. They may decide to investigate your complaint and take this up with the government or body in question.

Complaints on environmental law should follow the guidelines set by the relevant watchdog and, where possible, include supporting evidence and background material. The watchdog should make it as easy as possible for members of the public to register concerns, including by answering questions and providing technical support if needed.

Complaints in England and Northern Ireland

The [Environment Bill](#) will establish the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) to investigate complaints about public authorities' compliance with environmental law in England, and subject to final approval by the Northern Ireland Assembly, Northern Ireland. It will also be able to consider complaints about 'reserved matters' in Scotland and Wales.

The OEP will be set up on an [interim basis](#) from July 2021. Until then, complaints about environmental law should be sent to the [Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat](#) based in Defra and DAERA. This [guide](#) explains how to make a complaint.

Complaints in England

Email: IEGSEnquiries@defra.gov.uk

Telephone: 03300 416 581

Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat, Defra
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Complaints in Northern Ireland

Email: IEGSEnquiries@daera-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 03300 416 581

Interim Environmental Governance Secretariat
c/o Environment Bill Team
Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs
Environmental Policy Division, 2nd Floor Klondyke Building
Cromac Avenue, Gasworks Business Park
Belfast BT7 2JA

Scotland

[Environmental Standards Scotland](#) (ESS) will be established to ensure that Scotland's high standards of environmental governance are maintained. The founding legislation, the [UK Withdrawal from the European Union \(Continuity\) \(Scotland\) Act](#), requires the body to prepare and publish a strategy. Currently, ESS is operating on a non-statutory, interim basis.

The strategy must explain how members of the public, non-government organisations and other bodies can make representations about a public authority's failure to comply with environmental law and the effectiveness of environmental law. Until this process is ready, concerns about environmental law should be sent to ESS at the address below.

Email: enquiries@environmentalstandards.scot

Phone: 0808 1964000

Environmental Standards Scotland
PO Box No 24193
Edinburgh
EH7 9GG

Wales

The setting up of a new watchdog in Wales is on a slower timescale, with a body not expected to be in place until 2022 at the earliest.

If you have concerns about the functioning of environmental laws in Wales, you can send these to IEPAW@gov.wales

This is an [interim process](#) while a permanent body to oversee compliance with environmental law is being developed. Its focus is on the functioning of environmental law, not on breaches of that law, for example, where the law is outdated or no longer functions in a way which protects the environment or where clearer guidance would improve how the law operates. Dr Nerys Llewelyn Jones has been appointed as the [Interim Environmental Protection Assessor](#) from 1 March 2021 for a period of up to two years.

For more information, please contact:

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