

Complaints Policy & Procedure – Draft 2026

1. Introduction and Scope

Friends of Firs Farm is a registered charity run entirely by a volunteer Board of Trustees. Our main objectives are: “To provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life of the public in North London by supporting the preservation, promotion and improvement of Firs Farm Wetlands Park & playing fields.”

In essence we bring the community together for events, interests, and sporting / other in/outdoor activities, as well as providing Volunteer opportunities, reduce loneliness and encourage healthier lifestyles

However, we know things can go wrong. We take all complaints seriously. We will handle them fairly, politely, and within the timeframes outlined below.

This policy applies to complaints about the actions, services, or governance of our charity, our volunteers, and our trustees.

What this policy does not cover:

- Park Maintenance and Infrastructure: Complaints about broken council facilities, grass cutting, bin emptying, or council staff must be sent directly to Enfield Council via their corporate complaints procedure.
- Whistleblowing: Complaints about illegal acts or financial fraud must be sent to the Charity Commission.

2. Stage 1: Informal Resolution

We aim to resolve most issues quickly and informally.

- How to raise it: Speak or email any trustee.
- Acknowledgment: We will acknowledge your informal complaint within 5 working days.
- Resolution: We will investigate and try to resolve the matter informally within 10 working days.

3. Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If the informal stage does not resolve the issue, or if the complaint is highly serious, you can launch a formal complaint.

- How to raise it: Put your complaint in writing (by letter or email) to the Chair of Trustees [or Secretary if the complaint is about the Chair]. Clearly mark it "Formal Complaint."
- Acknowledgment: The Chair will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.
- Investigation: The Chair (or a designated independent trustee) will investigate the facts. This may involve interviewing volunteers or reviewing paperwork.

- Outcome: You will receive a full, written response outlining the findings and any actions taken within 20 working days of our acknowledgment.
-

4. Stage 3: Internal Appeal

If you are unhappy with the Stage 2 outcome, you have 14 working days from the date of the decision letter to lodge an appeal.

- How to appeal: Write to the Secretary stating exactly why you disagree with the Stage 2 decision.
- The Appeal Panel: The Secretary will convene an Appeal Panel consisting of two trustees who have had no previous involvement with your complaint.
- Final Decision: The panel will review the evidence. They will write to you with their final decision within 15 working days. This marks the end of our charity's internal complaints process.

5. Council Partnership Alignment

Our charity operates under a partnership agreement with Enfield Council.

- If a complaint directly impacts our right to operate in the park or affects council land, we will inform our designated Council Liaison Officer.
- The Council will not mediate internal charity disputes, but we will cooperate with them if a complaint alleges a breach of our partnership agreement.

6. External Escalation

If you have completed our internal process and feel the issue remains unresolved, you can escalate it to external regulatory bodies.

- Governance and Mismanagement: If you believe the trustees are seriously breaching charity law or mismanaging funds, contact the Charity Commission for England and Wales via their official website.
- Fundraising Issues: If your complaint is about a donation drive or fundraising event, contact the Fundraising Regulator.

7. Record Keeping and Learning

The Board of Trustees will securely log all formal complaints, outcomes, and appeals. This log is to be reviewed annually by the board to identify trends, improve our volunteer training, and make the park a better place for everyone.

Reviewed and adopted by the board of Trustees: 24th July 2026