

Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society

Registered Charity No. 1108962

Policy and Procedures

3. Complaints and Compliments

Introduction

Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society (SAHS), takes all complaints seriously and we aim to deal with them fairly and as quickly as possible. This policy sets out how we deal with complaints

SAHS aims to provide a quality experience to all our Members and participants in our programme, activities, events and projects either as individuals or an organisation. If you are not happy about something SAHS or its officers have done, you have a right to complain. We hope you will be able to discuss problems with one of our Committee members. Should you feel you cannot do this or your complaint is of a very serious nature we have a Concerns, Complaints and compliments procedure.

We would also like to know about aspects of what SAHS does that you are pleased with and would be glad to receive both formal and informal positive feedback or compliments

Complaints and Compliments Procedure

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of SAHS. We wish to know your concerns so we can make improvements and ensure as far as possible that all our Members and participants are satisfied

The nature of your complaint will determine how we deal with it

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in the activities of SAHS. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

How do you complain

You can complain in person, by e-mail or by letter. E-mails should be sent to secretary@sahs.org.uk or chair@sahs.org.uk

Letters should be sent to:-

The Secretary or the Chairman,
SAHS
c/o 4C Dunslow Court
Eastfield
Scarborough
YO11 3XT

Verbal complaints may be made to any Committee member of SAHS.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints received in person need to be recorded and the person receiving the complaint should:-

- Write down the facts of the complaint

- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to SAHS
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Further guidelines about handling verbal complaints are set out in Appendix 1

Resolving Complaints

Stage 1

In many cases, a complaint is satisfactorily resolved by an informal conversation either in person or by telephone. Time may be needed to ascertain the background and information from other people.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Secretary within one week who will record it.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that individual should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

If it is decided to make a written response, whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage 2

If this does not provide a satisfactory outcome or your complaint is more serious, it **must** be made formally in writing. You will receive a written acknowledgement within seven working days. One of the Trustees will be appointed to carry out an investigation into your complaint and provide you with a written response.

The complainant should be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. If it is not possible to respond within 28 days, for example because an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Stage 3

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at this stage, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at a higher level by a Review Panel. The panel will consist of the Chair of the SAHS Trustees, a Trustee (not the one who carried out the first investigation into the complaint) and an independent person from within the Voluntary Sector. As with the previous stage you should be informed in writing of the outcome of the investigation within 28 working days.

The decision taken at this stage is final.

External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Compliments

SAHS is always pleased to receive compliments as this enables us to know what we are getting right. We will use them to share your appreciation with our volunteers, our supporters and our

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation

Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"

Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry

Show an interest in what is being said

Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details

Ask for clarification wherever necessary

Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down

Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organization e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"

If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise

Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue

Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.

Don't promise things you or your organization cannot deliver

Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met

Make sure that the person understands what they have been told

Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal