



The Gatton Trust Limited

Complaints Policy and Procedure

This policy was originated by Diana Bromley

It was approved by the Trustees on [18 September 2015]

It is next due for re-approval during Autumn 2016

1. Complaints Policy

The Gatton Trust Limited (“the Charity”) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

The Charity’s policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at the Charity knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Charity. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

3. Which complaints policy/procedure?

Any complaint relating to the Charity’s operations ie any aspect of the administration of the charity must be dealt with using this policy and procedure.

4. Confidentiality

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

5. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Charity Trustees.

6. Review

This policy is reviewed annually.

Complaints Procedure

1. Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to The Education Manager (EM) or The Landscape Heritage Officer (LHO), The Gatton Trust, Foundation Office, Gatton Park Reigate RH2 0TW or by e-mail to education@gatton-park.org.uk or landscapeofficer@gatton-park.org.uk

Verbal complaints may be made by phone (01737 649066 or 01737 649068) or in person to any member of the Charity's trustees.

2. Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded.

The person who receives a phone call or in person 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 the Charity (eg performer, volunteer, parent, member of the public etc)
- Advise the complainant regarding the appropriate complaint's procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next
- 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.

3. Resolving Complaints

3.1 Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the EM or LHO within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the EM or LHO will record it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, he/she will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, he/she should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

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.

3.2 Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Trustee level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chairman.

The request for Trustee level review should be acknowledged within one week of receipt and the acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chairman may investigate the facts of the case himself or delegate another trustee or senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

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.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Chairman decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

3.3 External Stage

The complainant may 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

4. Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Trustees may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

5. Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

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 organisation
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 can't 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