

The British Society of Soil Science (BSSS) is committed to resolving complaints in an appropriate, fair and timely way. We welcome feedback as this helps us to improve the way we work.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the BSSS's approach to receiving and dealing with complaints, how you can make a complaint, what you can expect from the BSSS when you do so and how you can escalate a complaint if you are unhappy with the outcome. This policy applies to all areas of the Society's activities.

Our Approach

We are sorry if you are unhappy with any aspect of the Society. Whilst we are committed to operating to the highest standards, there may be times when you feel that we do not achieve the level of service, or demonstrate the behaviours that you expect. If you do have a complaint, please let us know so that we can try and help.

We take all complaints seriously and we will be in touch as soon as we can once you have told us your concern. This policy reflects our commitment to ensuring that we have effective and transparent procedures in place for fair and efficient handling of complaints.

We will keep all complaints confidential to the extent possible, subject to the need to disclose information necessarily as part of any investigation, as required by statutory authorities such as the Charity Commission and/or as a result of legal or regulatory obligations placed on us. If you make a complaint, we will treat you with respect and we expect you to treat our staff in the same way.

Complaints can range from an expression of dissatisfaction; to something that is the cause or subject of protest or outcry; to an allegation concerning the Society or its volunteers or staff.

How to get in touch

If you would like to make a complaint, the best way to do this is by email. You can contact us via admin@soils.org.uk. If you would prefer to write to us, please address your complaint to: British Society of Soil Science, Building 42a, Cranfield University, Bedfordshire, MK43 0AL.

If you cannot make your complaint in writing, you can reach us by phone on: 01234 752983.

Making a Complaint

To help us to effectively investigate your complaint, please set out the facts in as much detail as you can, as clearly as possible. In particular, please tell us:

- a. what happened
- b. when it happened
- c. who you dealt with
- d. why you consider this to be a complaint
- e. what you would like us to do to address your complaint.

Please be aware that we will keep your complaint and any information or document you disclose to us confidential. We will only disclose information internally or to our external advisors to the extent necessary to investigate your complaint effectively.

What we will do

We take complaints seriously and all complaints will be investigated. We will take action in response to any failures identified by the complaint or investigation, if applicable.

We aim to respond to your complaint within 10 Business Days of receiving it and:

- will assign a Complaint Lead to deal with your complaint which will usually be the Executive Officer. If it is not appropriate as the complaint concerns the Executive Officer, the complaint will be assigned to a member of the Council to respond to.
- if we have been able to resolve the complaint within that time, we shall include details of this and shall treat the matter as closed.
- If a complaint requires further investigation, we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and set out who will be dealing with the complaint and their contact details (the “Complaint Lead”).

The Complaint Lead will investigate your complaint competently, diligently, and as impartially as possible. They may need to speak to you further to gather such additional information as necessary to assess your complaint. They will consider the subject matter of the complaint, whether they consider the complaint should be upheld and, if so, what remedial action or redress the BSSS may consider appropriate.

Where the complaint is of a nature which could affect the Society’s reputation, the Complaint Lead will share details of your complaint with our committees, Council and/or Board.

The Complaint Lead will usually advise you of their findings and the Charity’s conclusion within 30 days of the acknowledgement of receipt of your complaint. If we are unable to give a definitive response within that timeframe, for example because an investigation has not been fully completed, we will send a progress report with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Complaints Relating to Members

If you are not happy with our response, please let us know as soon as possible. As set out in our [Bye-Laws](#) (item 15), the Council or Professional Practice Committee may choose to establish an investigatory panel where the complaint relates to a Society Member. The Panel will be chaired by a member of the Presidential Team or where it is not appropriate to be Chaired by a member of the Presidential Team, the Trustees may nominate another Trustee to undertake this role.

The potential outcomes of any investigation into a Society Member’s conduct are set out in the [Bye-Laws](#).

If you do not agree with our response

If you do not agree with our decision, or wish to appeal against a decision made against you, this must be set out in writing sent to the registered office of the Society within 30 days of our response to you. The Trustee Board will then set up an appeals panel comprised of suitably qualified individuals who have had no involvement in the previous panel. The appeals panel may regulate its own practice and procedure and any decision that it produces may overrule, or uphold, the decision of previous panels.

If following the appeal, you remain dissatisfied with our response, please refer to the Charity Commission’s guidance publication [‘CC47 Complaints About Charities’](#).

Further Information

- If you have a concern or issue that you do not consider amounts to a complaint, as defined in the policy, we still want to hear from you. Please discuss the matter informally with any member of the BSSS’ staff

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as soon as possible, so that this can be addressed at an early stage, or alternatively, you can share your views with us on admin@soils.org.uk

- Complaints relating to activities being carried out by external organisations on behalf of the Society (such as venue management or catering) should be directed to the organisations carrying out those activities on our behalf. These organisations will instigate their own complaints policy and/or procedures. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Society may also decide to investigate. Some complaints may also be escalated to the Society following the conclusion of that organisation's complaint process
- This policy is not for use in relation to complaints from the Society's staff or volunteers (such as e.g. cases of bullying or harassment), which are dealt with by the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#).
- In addition to reporting any complaints to the Society:
 - if your complaint relates to actual or suspected criminal activity or raises a serious safeguarding concern which poses a threat to a person's life or wellbeing, please report this immediately to the police; or
 - if it relates to actual or suspected fraudulent activity, this can be reported to [Action Fraud](#) on 0300 123 2040.

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