



Rochester Bridge Trust **External Complaints Policy**

The Rochester Bridge Trust 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.

Our 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 the complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure trustees, staff and professional advisors for the Rochester Bridge Trust know 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 the Trust to improve what it does.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work of the Rochester Bridge Trust.

This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should refer to the Employment Handbook.

Confidentiality

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

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Bridge Clerk (Chief Executive), who is accountable to the Court of Wardens and Assistants.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly as part of triennial policy reviews.

Contact Details for Complaints:

Complaints regarding the Trust's bridges at Rochester

Any complaints or enquiries regarding the road or service bridges or the section of Rochester Esplanade which is owned by the Trust, or the conduct of contractors working on the bridges should be made to the Trust's bridge engineer – Arcadis. Please note that Rochester Railway Bridge is owned by Network Rail. The traffic signal junctions at each end of the bridges and the approaches to the New Bridge are the responsibility of Medway Council.

Complaints should be posted to Arcadis at Manning House, 22 Carlisle Place, London SW1P 1JA for the attention of Tim Belcher-Whyte, or by e-mail at enquiries@rbt.org.uk or by phone to Tim Belcher-Whyte on 020 3014 9000

Complaints regarding the Trust's property estate

Any complaints, whether from tenants, neighbours or other parties with a legitimate interest in the Trust's property estate, should be made to the Trust's agents – Savills Smiths Gore.

For properties located in Kent and West Sussex:

Complaints should be posted to Savills incorporating Smiths Gore at 23 Kings Hill Avenue, West Malling, ME19 4UA. or by e-mail at tim.cathcart@savills-smithsgore.co.uk or by phone to Tim Cathcart on 01732 879057

For properties located in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire:

Complaints should be posted to Savills incorporating Smiths Gore at Stuart House, City Road, Peterborough, PE1 1QF or by e-mail at iain.nott@savills-smithsgore.co.uk or by phone to Iain Nott on 01733 559 304

All Other Complaints

All other complaints should be posted to The Rochester Bridge Trust at 5 Esplanade, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1QE or by e-mail to bridgeclerk@rbt.org.uk or by phone to Zoe Johnston on 01634 846706. Please note that the office is not open on Monday or Wednesday afternoon and all day Friday.

Receiving Complaints

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

The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, email or postal address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Rochester Bridge Trust
- 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.

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

In most 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 details of the complaint should be reported to the Bridge Clerk within three days.

If the complaint has not already been resolved, the Bridge Clerk will identify an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints will be acknowledged by the Bridge Engineer, Surveyor or Bridge Clerk's Secretary, depending who is handling the complaint, within 7 days. The acknowledgement will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks at the most. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will 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.

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. If the Stage One complaint has been handled by a professional advisor then the review will be carried out by the Bridge Clerk. If the Stage One complaint has been handled by the Bridge Clerk then the review will be carried out by a current or former Warden. The Senior Warden will decide whether to carry out the review himself/herself or to ask the Junior Warden or a former Senior Warden to conduct the review.

The request for a Stage Two review will be acknowledged within 7 days of receipt. The acknowledgement will say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The investigator will review the paperwork of the case and speak with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

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 will 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 Warden decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

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

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Court of Wardens and Assistants may decide to vary the procedure for good reason - for example to avoid a conflict of interest.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

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