Charity No: 1203185

Company No: 14241649

THE NORTHERN POWERGRID FOUNDATION

(the "Charity")

COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

Date adopted: 9 February 2024

1. WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO

1.1 The Northern Powergrid Foundation (the **Charity**) is a grant making charity. The Charity is committed to supporting local communities through the grants it makes, in line with its charitable objects.

1.2 The trustees of the Charity (**Trustees**) work hard to ensure that we provide a fair and consistently high level of service so that you never have cause for complaint, but we understand that sometimes things can go wrong.

1.3 The purpose of this policy is to set out the process that the Charity will follow if a complaint is received from an external stakeholder – for example, our applicants for grants, grantees, persons or companies with contracts with the Charity, and members of the public who have dealings with the Charity (**you**).

1.4 In this policy, a **complaint** is a reference to a written statement, where the complainant wishes the matter to be investigated. It can be about the work that the Charity does, about a member of staff, a volunteer, a trustee, our organisation or something that the Charity has been involved in.

1.5 If you are a grant applicant, grant recipient or member of the wider public who has dealings with the Charity and you are unsure as to whether your complaint is covered by this policy, then we ask that you treat it as covered by this policy unless we inform you otherwise.

1.6 If your relationship with the charity falls under any category other than those mentioned in paragraph 1.3, your complaint will not be covered by the scope of this policy.

1.7 Where an individual brings more than one complaint against the Charity under this policy, we will have the discretion to appoint the same person to consider all such complaints and deal with them concurrently under this policy.

2. WHAT THIS POLICY DOES AND DOES NOT COVER

Grant-making process

2.1 The Trustees decision on the grant of awards is final. We can therefore only review your application again if you can clearly show a material procedural error in the Charity assessing your grant application, for example that we significantly delayed, made material mistakes in, or failed to follow the procedures in our application process. If we have followed our policies and procedures correctly, the decision is final. Please note we are not obliged to give grant applicants reasons for refusing to make a grant.

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Your contact with a Charity representative

2.2 This policy should be followed if, for example, you believe that you have not been treated fairly or politely or have been discriminated against.

Organisations we fund

2.3 We welcome any concerns about an organisation we fund. However, depending on the nature of your complaint, it may be that the matter does not concern the Charity directly. In our response we may therefore signpost you to other bodies which you may wish to raise your concerns with, such as the organisation itself, or regulatory bodies.

2.4 This policy should not be used to complain about:

2.4.1 employee grievance matters

2.4.2 internal trustee disputes or governance concerns

2.5 Please note that we will not investigate complaints which we reasonably believe to be:

2.5.1 vexatious, unreasonable or malicious in nature and we may take appropriate action against individuals who raise such complaints.

2.5.2 incoherent or illegible, unless further clarification can be obtained.

2.5.3 part of a bulk mailing or email campaign.

2.6 Complaints made anonymously will be investigated, but by their nature, a response will not be provided.

2.7 This policy is intended to help us deal with complaints promptly, proportionately, impartially and fairly. However, situations may arise where following the stages and timeframes set out in this policy would not be appropriate or practicable in the circumstances. Where we determine this to be the case, we reserve the right, acting reasonably, to deal with the relevant complaint outside of this policy, whilst still mindful of the need for a fair hearing.

3. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Overview

3.1 We will only investigate complaints that are made in writing. Complaints made verbally or via social media platforms will not be investigated.

3.2 Complaints should be made promptly and in any event within 28 working days of the date of the subject matter of the complaint arising. We will only consider complaints made after this time if compelling reasons are presented to the Trustees to justify this.

3.3 We will deal with complaints as quickly as possible and have set out anticipated timescales for each stage in this procedure. In certain circumstances, it may not be possible to deal with your complaint in the timeframes set out in this policy. However, we will keep you informed if that is the case.

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

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3.4 If you have a complaint which falls within the scope of this policy, we ask that you please raise this informally in writing with your usual contact at the Charity in the first instance. If you do not have a usual contact, it should be addressed to foundation@northernpowergrid.com or alternatively: **The Northern Powergrid Foundation, Lloyds Court, 78 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6AF.** You should try to do this as soon as possible following the incident giving rise to your complaint.

3.5 You may be contacted by the individual dealing with your complaint if there are any elements they wish to discuss with you in more detail.

3.6 The individual receiving your complaint will try to resolve that complaint directly, within 28 working days following receipt (subject to any additional time required to communicate with you).

3.7 Whilst we hope that in the first instance your complaint can be dealt with informally in the manner set out above, the person receiving your complaint may, at their discretion, escalate the complaint to Stage 2 without it first being dealt with under Stage 1 if the circumstances deem appropriate.

Stage 2 – Formal procedure

3.8 If your complaint is not resolved informally under Stage 1 to your satisfaction, then you should contact the Charity in writing at foundation@northernpowergrid.com or alternatively: **The Northern Powergrid Foundation, Lloyds Court, 78 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6AF** within 14 working days of the date of the notification of the outcome received at Stage 1.

3.9 To help us deal with your complaint as appropriately and quickly as possible, please make sure that you provide as much information as possible when you contact us, including:

3.9.1 Details of what your complaint is about

3.9.2 The people involved

3.9.3 Relevant dates

3.9.4 Details of the steps that you have taken to try to resolve the complaint informally, including the response that you received at Stage 1.

3.9.5 What you would like us to do to put things right.

3.10 We will acknowledge your complaint, normally within 7 working days of receipt.

3.11 Our aim is to arrange a meeting between you and at least one **a senior individual** (**Responsible Individual**) within the Charity that we consider appropriate within **28** working days from the date of our acknowledgement to discuss your complaint. The Responsible Individual will be someone who is not directly or specifically involved in the subject matter of the complaint, and who did not consider the complaint at Stage 1.

3.12 After that meeting, our aim is to respond in full within **28 working days** from the date of the meeting. If we cannot give you a full response within this timeframe then we will let you know how long we expect it will take. You will receive confirmation of the outcome of your complaint (together with reasons).

Stage 3 – Appeal

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3.13 If you are not satisfied with the response received at Stage 2 then you may write to the **Chair of the Board of Trustees** at **The Northern Powergrid Foundation, Lloyds Court, 78 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6AF or** alternatively to foundation@northernpowergrid.com to appeal the decision. If the complaint involves the **Chair of the Board of Trustees** then you may instead write to **the Company Secretary** at **The Northern Powergrid Foundation, Lloyds Court, 78 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6AF or alternatively to** foundation@northernpowergrid.com.

3.14 You should notify the Charity of your appeal within **14** working days of the date of the notification of the outcome received at Stage 2.

3.15 A Stage 2 decision will only be eligible for appeal if you can demonstrate that:

3.15.1 There was a defect in the process or procedure followed by us at Stage 2, or

3.15.2 New information is available which was not available at the time of the Stage 2 process.

3.16 We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint at this Stage 3, normally within**7** working days of receipt, and advise you whether your grounds for appeal are valid.

3.17 Where your appeal is eligible to be considered, **the Chair or a Trustee** may invite you to meet with them to discuss your complaint. You may be asked to provide further evidence or information in relation to your complaint.

3.18 You will receive the outcome of your appeal (together with reasons), normally within **28** working days from the date of your meeting (or, if no meeting takes place, within **28** working days from the date of your appeal request).

3.19 The decision of **the Chair or Trustee** will be final.

4. OTHER AVENUES OF COMPLAINT AVAILABLE

4.1 If you have a complaint then we ask that you tell us first so that we can try to put things right and can use the information that you provide to improve our standards and ways of working going forward.

4.2 However, if you are not satisfied with the way we have handled your complaint then, depending on the nature of your complaint, you may be able to contact:

4.2.1 The Fundraising Regulator if you are dissatisfied about the way you have been asked for donations by the Charity or about the conduct of fundraisers.

4.2.2 The Charity Commission if you are in England and Wales and are concerned the Charity is:

(a) not doing what it claims to do (i.e. acting contrary to its charitable objects);

(b) losing lots of money;

(c) harming individuals;

(d) being used for personal profit or gain; or

(e) involved in illegal activity.

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4.2.3 The Information Commissioner's Office if it relates to a data protection issue.

4.3 Please note, however, that the regulator(s) may decline to investigate your complaint further if they are not satisfied that you have exhausted this complaints procedure first.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Your personal details

5.1 By raising a complaint under this policy you are:

5.1.1 Consenting to us using the personal information that you have provided to us for the purpose of dealing with your complaint and to help us improve our practices going forward.

5.1.2 Consenting to us sharing the personal information that you have provided with other persons and organisations (e.g. our legal advisers, regulators, the police) to assist us in dealing with your complaint and improving our practices going forward.

5.1.3 Consenting to us sharing the personal information that you have provided, as required by law.

5.2 Please note that we will retain details of your complaint on our files for a period of 12 months after the final resolution of the complaint.

Confidentiality

5.3 We will aim to keep all complaints confidential, unless otherwise required under applicable laws.

5.4 If you bring a complaint, we will treat you with respect, and we expect you to treat us in the same way.

5.5 If you bring a complaint, we expect you to keep the complaint confidential, particularly whilst it is being considered under this policy. Any contravention of this by you may impact on our ability to investigate your complaint independently and in accordance with this policy and may result in the Trustees concluding that your complaint is vexatious or malicious and should therefore not be investigated further.

5.6 Any anonymous complaint investigated under this policy will be treated confidentially, unless the disclosure of the subject matter is deemed necessary by the Trustees to fulfil its legal or regulatory obligations.

Other improvements

5.7 All complaints received, whether formal or informal, will be recorded and monitored by us and used to improve our ways of working and standards going forward.

5.8 The Trustees will receive a log of complaints periodically and shall seek to identify any trends in complaints being made and take action accordingly.

6. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

6.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every two years to ensure that its provisions continue to meet our legal obligations and reflect best practice.

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