



## Policy on Unacceptable Actions by Individuals

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This policy sets out how Snowdonia National Park Authority will deal with the relatively few individuals of the public who display actions or behaviour which are considered unacceptable.

### **2. Policy Aims**

- 2.1. Snowdonia National Park Authority wishes to deal fairly, honestly, consistently and appropriately with all members of the public. The Authority believes that everyone has the right to be heard, understood and respected, including its staff.
- 2.2. The aim of this policy is to set out clearly what the Authority considers to be unacceptable behaviour and what actions it will take when it comes across such behaviour from individuals. This will ensure that other members of the public and the Authority's staff do not suffer any disadvantage from individuals who act in an unacceptable manner.

### **3. Defining Unacceptable Actions by Individuals**

- 3.1. Snowdonia National Park Authority understands that in certain circumstances individuals feel frustrated and annoyed with a situation (whether this directly or indirectly involves the Authority), and this can lead to an individual feeling stressed and under pressure. However, the actions of individuals who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands and / or unacceptable behaviour towards the Authority's staff. It is these actions (which have been grouped in three broad headings below) that are considered unacceptable and which this policy aims to manage.

#### **3.2. Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour**

- 3.2.1. Aggressive or abusive behaviour is defined as threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks and rudeness that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused. It is also considered that inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can be abusive behaviour.

3.2.2. We expect our staff to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse against staff is unacceptable. The Authority understands that individuals may feel anger about a situation, however, it is not acceptable when anger escalates into aggression directed towards the Authority staff.

### 3.3. Unreasonable Demands

3.3.1 What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and the seriousness of the issues raised by the individual. Such examples could include demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff and continual phone calls or letters. These demands are considered unreasonable and unacceptable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the Authority, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of other members of the public.

### 3.4. Unreasonable Persistence

3.4.1. Snowdonia National Park Authority recognises that some individuals will not or cannot accept the Authority's decision on a specified matter or are unable to accept that the Authority cannot assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Such examples could include persistent refusal to accept a decision made in relation to a complaint, persistent refusal to accept explanations relating to what the Authority can or cannot do and a persistent refusal to accept the Authority's statutory powers and legal obligations. The actions of persistent individuals are considered to be unacceptable if they start to impact substantially on the work of the Authority, such as taking up an excessive amount of staff time to the disadvantage of other members of the public.

## **4. Managing Unacceptable Actions by Individuals**

4.1. There are relatively few individuals whose actions are considered by the Authority to be unacceptable. How these actions are managed depends on their nature and extent.

4.2. The threat or use of physical violence, verbal abuse or harassment towards the Authority's staff is likely to result in the ending of all direct contact with the individual. Incidents may be reported to the police. This will always be the case if physical violence is used or threatened.

4.3. Snowdonia National Park Authority will not deal with correspondence that is abusive to staff or contains allegations that

lack substantive evidence. When this happens the individual will be told that their language is considered offensive, unnecessary and unhelpful. They will be asked to stop using such language and the Authority will state that there will be no response to their correspondence if they do not stop. The Authority may require future contact to be through a third party.

- 4.4. The Authority's staff will end telephone calls if the caller is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive. The staff member taking the call has the right to make this decision, tell the caller that the behaviour is unacceptable and end the call if the behaviour does not stop (following guidelines issued in the Authority's Telephone Use Policy).
- 4.5. In a situation whereby an individual repeatedly phones, visits the office, sends irrelevant documents or raises the same issues, the Authority may take the following action if the individual's behaviour is such that it adversely affects the Authority's ability to do its work and provide a service to others:
  - i) requiring the individual to make an appointment to see a named member of staff before visiting the office or that the individual contacts the Authority in writing only.
  - ii) requiring an individual to contact the Authority through a third party only.
  - iii) take any other action that the Authority considers appropriate. The Authority will always tell the individual what action is being taken and why.
- 4.6. An individual's actions may be considered unreasonably persistent if all the internal review mechanisms including the complaints procedure have been exhausted and the individual continues to dispute the Authority's decision relating to their case. The individual will be told that no future phone calls will be accepted or face-to-face contact will be granted concerning the case. Any future contact by the individual on this issue must be in writing. Future correspondence will be read and filed, but only acknowledged or responded to if the individual provides significant new information.

## **5. Deciding on Restricting an Individual's Contact**

- 5.1. Snowdonia National Park staff that directly experience aggressive or abusive behaviour from an individual have the authority to deal immediately with that behaviour in a manner they consider appropriate to the situation and in line with this policy.
- 5.2. With the exception of such immediate decisions taken at the time of an incident, decisions to restrict contact by the Authority are only taken after careful consideration of the situation by the management team. Wherever possible, the Authority will give an

individual the opportunity to modify their behaviour or action before a decision is taken. An individual will be told in writing why a decision has been made to restrict future contact, the restricted contact arrangements and, if relevant, the length of time these restrictions will be in place. There is no right of appeal.

## **6. Recording and Reviewing a Decision to Restrict Contact**

- 6.1. Snowdonia National Park Authority records all incidents of unacceptable actions by individuals. Where it is decided to restrict an individual's contact, an entry noting this is made on the relevant file and on appropriate computer records.
- 6.2. A decision to restrict an individual's contact may be re-considered if the individual demonstrates a more acceptable approach. This is however, completely at the discretion of the Authority.