

Whistleblowing

Reporting serious concerns at The Royal Parks

Last updated: January 2021
Review date: January 2023



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Introduction

1. The Royal Parks is committed to the highest possible standards of probity and expects employees and others connected with the organisation to maintain the same standards in everything they do. This is in line with The Royal Parks' values of accountability, excellence, inclusivity, openness and respect.
2. If however, an individual reasonably suspects that there is serious wrongdoing in any aspect of The Royal Parks work, The Royal Parks encourages individuals to come forward and raise any concerns that they may have and 'blow the whistle' about the conduct of others in the business or the way in which the business is run.
3. It is not necessary for the individual raising the concern to have proof that such a serious act of wrongdoing is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. Once the concern has been raised, The Royal Parks will ensure that an investigation takes place.
4. The types of wrongdoing or serious concerns that individuals are encouraged to report to The Royal Parks under the terms of this policy are:
 - a criminal offence (For example: theft and fraud).
 - a failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - a miscarriage of justice
 - endangering of an individual's health and safety
 - damage to the environment
 - deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the above.
5. This policy sets out the way in which individuals, including members of staff, volunteers, workers and employees of contractors, concessionaires and licensees who provide a service to The Royal Parks and members of the public, may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

Complaints or concerns that fall outside the scope of this policy.

6. Members of the public, volunteers and workers or employees of contractors, licensees and concessionaires who provide a service to The Royal Parks and can raise complaints/concerns that they believe do not fall within the scope of this policy by visiting the TRP website:

https://www.royalparks.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/112326/Comments-and-Complaints.pdf
7. Members of staff who wish to raise concerns that fall outside the scope of the serious concerns listed in Paragraph 4 should consult The Royal Parks Grievance Procedure or contact the Human Resources Department for advice. Equally, this policy would not apply to matters of individual conscience where there is no suggestion of wrongdoing by the organisation but an employee is, for example, required to act in a way which conflicts with a deeply held personal belief.

Who can raise a concern under the terms of this policy?

8. Anyone can raise a concern under the terms of this policy. For example, you may be a member of the public, a member of staff or someone providing a service to TRP. If you are a member of the public, a volunteer or a worker or employee of a contractor, licensee or concessionaire who provides a service to The Royal Parks, please go directly to Paragraph 12.

9. For the following groups or individuals, this policy references the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), which offers protection to workers in both the private and public sectors who 'blow the whistle' in certain circumstances, creating what is known as a 'qualifying disclosure'. A worker who makes such a disclosure in good faith has the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because they have made a disclosure in the public interest concerning one or more of the categories listed in Paragraph 4.

The groups or individuals to which protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 applies includes those who are:

- Employed on a permanent or fixed term contract of employment
- On secondment to The Royal Parks
- On a fee paid contract or employed through an agency to work for The Royal Parks
- An independent consultant providing services to The Royal Parks
- A contractor or supplier of services to The Royal Parks

Our Assurance to Staff who 'blow the whistle'

10. In addition to the protections afforded to individuals to who make a qualifying disclosure, The Royal Parks provides the following assurances:

Victimisation - The Royal Parks recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice. The Royal Parks will not tolerate any resulting victimisation when an individual raises a concern in good faith and will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence to be dealt with under the appropriate procedures.

Confidentiality - All reports will be dealt with in confidence, with only staff who need to know, being informed. The Royal Parks will do its best to protect an individual's identity if s/he does not want their name to be disclosed. If a situation arises where we are not able to resolve the concern without revealing the individual's identity, we will discuss with him/her whether and how best we can proceed.

Anonymous Allegations - If an individual does not reveal their identity, it will be much more difficult for us to investigate the matter, to protect their position or to provide them with feedback. We therefore encourage anyone raising a concern to put their name to their allegation. However, raising a concern anonymously is preferred to silence about potential serious wrongdoing. Anonymous concerns will be considered at the discretion of the General Counsel.

How to Raise a Concern if you are a member of staff

11. The procedure to follow if you want to raise a concern internally is as follows:

- If you have a concern about malpractice, you should raise it first with your line manager (or your manager or contract manager if you are a supplier of services). This may be done orally or in writing. For concerns relating to Fraud, TRPs Anti- Fraud policy can be accessed here: [Anti-fraud and fraud response plan.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
- If you do not feel able to do so, for whatever reason, please raise the matter with your Head of Department, or your Director if you suspect that the Head of Department is party to the malpractice.
- If you do not wish to speak to your Head of Department, or if you are a line manager to whom an issue has been reported, you can raise the matter with the General Counsel.
- Please say if you want to raise the matter in confidence so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
- If these channels have been followed and you still have concerns, or if you feel that the issue is so serious that you cannot discuss it with any of the above, you can raise the matter directly with the Chief Executive.
- A member of staff who feels that their concerns are not being taken seriously, and that they have pursued all channels available to them through senior management, should contact the members of the Board of Trustees Audit and Risk Committee using the dedicated email address: trparc@royalparks.org.uk

Raising a concern if you are not a member of staff

12. Members of the public, volunteers and workers or employees of contractors, licensees and concessionaires who provide a service to The Royal Parks should email: chiefexecutive@royalparks.org.uk and your concern will be actioned by The General Counsel.

How we will handle the matter

13. Once you have told us of your concern, we will look into it to assess what initial action should be taken. We will then do the following:

- If you request, we will write to you summarising your concern and setting out how we propose to handle it. We will tell you who is dealing with the matter, how you can contact him/her and whether your further assistance may be needed.
- It may be decided that a formal investigation is necessary; in most cases this will be the responsibility of the General Counsel to carry out or arrange.
- We will give you as much feedback as we properly can and, if requested, we will confirm our response to you in writing. However, we may not be able to tell you the precise action we take as this may infringe a duty of confidence owed by us to someone else.

- We would ask that you respect the process, once started, and allow it to take its course. However, if you are not satisfied with the response received and any subsequent action taken, you should put your concerns in writing to the General Counsel.
 - If you remain dissatisfied with the response received and any subsequent action taken by the General Counsel, you should put your concerns in writing to the Chief Executive. If all other avenues have been explored, you can contact the Audit and Risk Committee (trparc@royalparks.org.uk). In the last resort you can contact the Chairman of the Board of Trustees (chairman@royalparks.org.uk).
14. The Royal Parks commits to treat all concerns raised under the terms of this policy as being made in good faith. If however, in relation to concerns raised by employees or workers, it becomes clear that the policy has not been invoked in good faith, for example for malicious or vexatious reasons, this will constitute misconduct and will be dealt with in accordance with The Royal Parks' Disciplinary Procedure.

Other sources of information

15. If after reading this policy you are unsure whether to use this procedure or you want advice at any stage, members of staff may contact the Human Resources department or their trade union representative.
16. Concerns about prescribed categories of serious wrongdoing at any charity can also be reported directly to the Charity Commission. The Commission asks that whistleblowing reports are made in writing via the dedicated [whistleblowing email address](#).
17. Further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/whistleblowing-guidance-for-charity-employees> and [Raising concerns - Charity Commission](#) for others.
18. The charity 'Protect' provides confidential advice to employees about whistleblowing and can be contacted at <https://protect-advice.org.uk/>
19. Free information and advice can also be obtained from the Advice, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) on 0300 123 1100.