



General Principles & Scheme Governance
General Information

GG 901

Customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact

Version 1.0.0

Summary

This document contains requirements for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact.

Application by Overseeing Organisations

Any specific requirements for Overseeing Organisations alternative or supplementary to those given in this document are given in National Application Annexes to this document.

Feedback and Enquiries

Users of this document are encouraged to raise any enquiries and/or provide feedback on the content and usage of this document to the dedicated Highways England team. The email address for all enquiries and feedback is: Standards_Enquiries@highwaysengland.co.uk

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GG 901	1.0.0	June 2021	Core document, England NAA	Change to policy, major revision, new document development
GG 901 is a new document. This full document has been written in compliance with the new Highways England drafting rules.				

Foreword

Publishing information

This document is published by Highways England.

Contractual and legal considerations

This document forms part of the works specification. It does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for applying all appropriate documents applicable to their contract.

Introduction

Background

This document contains requirements for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact.

Assumptions made in the preparation of this document

The assumptions made in GG 101 [Ref 1.N] apply to this document.

1. Scope

Aspects covered

- 1.1 The national requirements for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact set out in the National Application Annexes shall be followed.

Implementation

- 1.2 This document shall be implemented forthwith on all schemes involving responses to customer contact on the Overseeing Organisations' motorway and all-purpose trunk roads according to the implementation requirements of GG 101 [Ref 1.N].

Use of GG 101

- 1.3 The requirements contained in GG 101 [Ref 1.N] shall be followed in respect of activities covered by this document.

2. Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normative references for this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

Ref 1.N	Highways England. GG 101, 'Introduction to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges'
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General Principles & Scheme Governance
General Information

GG 901

England National Application Annex to GG 901 Customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact

Version 1.0.0

Summary

This National Application Annex contains Highways England-specific requirements for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact.

Feedback and Enquiries

Users of this document are encouraged to raise any enquiries and/or provide feedback on the content and usage of this document to the dedicated Highways England team. The email address for all enquiries and feedback is: Standards_Enquiries@highwaysengland.co.uk

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Document code	Version number	Date of publication of relevant change	Changes made to	Type of change
GG 901	1.0.0	June 2021	England NAA	Change to policy, major revision, new document development
Highways England National Application Annex to GG 901.				

Document code	Version number	Date of publication of relevant change	Changes made to	Type of change
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Foreword

Publishing information

This document is published by Highways England.

Contractual and legal considerations

This document forms part of the works specification. It does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for applying all appropriate documents applicable to their contract.

Introduction

Background

Through our customer service strategy we aim to deliver better relationships with our customers. We need customers to trust us and know that we care. Listening to our customers' views and responding to their contact is integral to achieving these aims.

Good quality and timely responses to customer contact is fundamental, with the Institute of Customer Service's satisfaction index highlighting quality and speed of response as significant factors in determining customer experience. See ICSSI [Ref 2.I].

This customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact will enable our employees to consistently deliver the basics. This enables improvement to the customer experience, delivering more customer focused and timely responses to customer contact.

Assumptions made in the preparation of this document

The assumptions made in GG 101 [Ref 4.N] apply to this document.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EIR	Environmental information regulations
FOI	Freedom of information
GDPR	General data protection regulation
ICA	Independent Complaints Assessor
MP	Member of parliament
PQ	Parliamentary question
RCC	Regional control centre
ROC	Regional operations centre
TO	Treat as official correspondence

Terms and definitions

Terms

Term	Definition
CEO correspondence	Correspondence that is addressed to the CEO of Highways England.
CEO stage 1	A complaint addressed to the CEO of Highways England.
CEO stage 2	If a CEO stage 1 is unresolved, escalation to a CEO stage 2 is the next stage of the process. These are handled in a similar way to stage 2 complaints.
Complaint	Highways England defines a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction on the service we have provided.
Customer contact	An enquiry or complaint received by email, letter, telephone or via social media.
Data Protection Act (2018)	Controls how personal information is used by organisations, businesses or the government.
Environmental information regulations	The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 EIR 2004 [Ref 6.N] provide public access to environmental information held by public authorities.
Freedom of Information Act	The public's legal right of access to information held by government agencies and public authorities (FOI 2000 [Ref 1.N]).
GDPR	Regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy for all individual citizens of the European Union (EU) and the European Economic Area (EEA) (GDPR 2016 [Ref 2.N]).
General correspondence	Enquiries from customers that are not deemed to be complaints, real time notifications of safety concerns or official correspondence.
Green claims	Recovery of costs incurred in repairing damage to the Highways England road network caused by third parties i.e damage to crown property (DCP).
Holding response	A reply to a customer that does not answer all of the raised points, but explains when a full response can be expected and why we are unable to respond in full initially.
Independent complaints assessor	Reviews complaints made against the Department for Transport and its agencies and other bodies, if a customer thinks they have been treated unfairly or received poor service.
Ministerial correspondence	An MP or councillor writing directly to the Secretary of State, requiring action from Highways England.

Terms (continued)

Official correspondence	<p>Official correspondence consists of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) letters or emails addressed to our CEO seeking information (known as CEO correspondence); 2) letters or emails sent to ministers which are then forwarded to the business to answer (known as treat officials or TOs); 3) Parliamentary correspondence sent directly from ministers and the Department for Transport (known as parliamentary questions and ministerial correspondence); 4) letters or emails sent direct to a Highways England member of staff from an MP (known as MP directs).
Parliamentary questions	A parliamentary question (PQ) is a question put formally to a government minister about a matter they are responsible for by an MP or a member of the lords.
Plain English	To use everyday language and avoid using formal language, jargon and abbreviations.
Polite and professional	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Address customers correctly. 2) Sound courteous and friendly. 3) Provide a positive tone to messages that you are delivering. 4) Thank the customer for their contact.
Proportionate actions	Actions that balance the needs of different customer groups with the needs of the business.
Red claims	Claims and potential claims by third parties, made against Highways England, for recovery of damages and losses incurred whilst using the motorway and all-purpose trunk road network in England.
Relevant	<p>To:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) use the most appropriate sources of information; 2) provide an accurate, structured and consistent message within the response.
Safety critical	Safety critical defects are those defects that require prompt attention because there is an immediate or imminent risk to safety.
Stage 1 complaints	Complaints that are managed within the first stage of Highways England's corporate complaints process (local resolution).
Stage 2 complaints	If the complaint has not been resolved in stage 1, it will be investigated, including the manner in which it was handled during previous responses, by the relevant regional or divisional director (or where appropriate the relevant executive director or the Chief Executive).
Stage 3 complaints	If customers are not satisfied with the outcome of their stage 2 complaint, they can request a review by an independent complaints assessor (ICA) which is stage 3 of our process.
Timely	Responding to the customer within the agreed time-frame set out in this document.

Terms (continued)

Unreasonable	Customers who because of the frequency or nature of their contact can hinder Highways England's review of their complaint or enquiry, or the service to others. Refer to the unreasonable customer policy HE Complaints [Ref 3.N].
Working days	Week days Monday through to Friday, not including public holidays and weekends.

E/1. Purpose

E/1.1 This document shall be used for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact taken by all channels, unless otherwise stated in the requirements, to promote responses that are consistent and meet customer expectations.

NOTE *Responding to safety critical notifications is out of scope of this document. Safety critical notifications can be made to the Customer Contact Centre CCC [Ref 1.1], who will advise the relevant RCC / ROC.*

E/2. General requirements

E/2.1 When responding to customer contact, the customer's preferred contact method shall be used.

E/2.1.1 Responses should be provided in an accessible format.

NOTE *Information exchanged between Highways England and customers is managed in accordance with the GDPR (GDPR 2016 [Ref 2.N]).*

E/2.2 Written responses to customer contact shall be in accordance with Highways England's Normal not formal tone and style guide HE (Style Guide) [Ref 5.N] and Highways England's Writing reactive correspondence guidance HE (Correspondence) [Ref 8.N], unless the quality of the response is driven by ministers, i.e. a parliamentary question.

E/2.3 When responding to a customer's complaint, the complaint shall be handled in accordance with the Highways England corporate complaints process HE Complaints [Ref 3.N].

E/2.4 Where the nature of customer contact is deemed unreasonable, this contact shall be managed in accordance with the Highways England corporate complaints process HE Complaints [Ref 3.N].

E/2.5 Guidance and procedures for responding to customer contact shall be reviewed at least every 2 years to ensure they are effective.

E/2.6 The feedback received through customer contact shall be used in continuous improvement.

What can customers expect from Highways England in response to their contact?

Quality

E/2.7 It shall be made clear that a response to customer contact is from or on behalf of Highways England.

E/2.8 Responses to customer contact by Highways England's service providers shall explain who they are and why they are providing a response on behalf of Highways England.

E/2.9 Responses to customer contact shall be in line with Highways England's corporate values HE V&B [Ref 7.N].

E/2.10 Responses to customer contact shall be in plain English.

E/2.11 Responses to customer contact shall be relevant and answer all of the points raised.

E/2.12 Responses to customer contact shall acknowledge any concerns and provide an apology where appropriate.

E/2.12.1 Where deemed appropriate, the customer's tone may be mirrored, while remaining polite and professional.

E/2.13 Where further action is required to enable a response to, or resolve, the nature of the customer contact, the response shall be specific in the actions that are being taken and who is responsible for delivering them.

E/2.14 Where further action is required to resolve the nature of the customer contact, the response shall manage the customer's expectations with proportionate actions and realistic timescales.

E/2.15 Where appropriate, when responding to customer contact, Highways England shall tell the customer about lessons learned and any changes made to services or policy as a result of their contact.

E/2.16 Responses to customer contact shall include:

- 1) the name and job title of the person responding;
- 2) contact details and advice of how to gain additional information or make further contact if appropriate.

Timeliness

- E/2.17 Responses to customer contact shall be timely.
- E/2.17.1 The following types of customer contact should be responded to with a full response within 10 working days:
- 1) general correspondence;
 - 2) stage 1 complaints;
 - 3) stage 2 complaints;
 - 4) treat as official correspondence (excluding PQs);
 - 5) CEO correspondence (including CEO stage 1 and CEO stage 2 complaints);
 - 6) correspondence directly from an MP (also known as an MP direct).
- E/2.17.2 Where a full response is not going to meet the response timescale, a holding response should be sent.
- E/2.18 A holding response to a customer shall explain why a full response has not been given and when a full response can be expected.
- NOTE** *A holding response to a customer contact does not constitute the full response required to meet the timescales in this document.*
- E/2.19 The following types of contact shall be replied to within timescales governed by regulation, policy or guidance:
- 1) freedom of information requests (FOI 2000 [Ref 1.N]);
 - 2) GDPR requests and information (GDPR 2016 [Ref 2.N]);
 - 3) environmental information requests (EIR) EIR 2004 [Ref 6.N];
 - 4) red and green claims;
 - 5) stage 3 independent complaints assessor (ICA) complaints;
 - 6) parliamentary questions (PQs) and ministerial correspondence;
 - 7) social media responses.
- NOTE** *At stage 3, the ICA complete their investigation and respond in accordance to their guidance. They inform the customer if it is to take longer than the guidance states.*

E/3. Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normative references for this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

Ref 1.N	HMSO. FOI 2000, 'Freedom of Information Act'
Ref 2.N	Publications Office of the EU. Council of the European Union, European Parliament. GDPR 2016, 'General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016'
Ref 3.N	Highways England. HE Complaints, 'Highways England - Corporate complaints process'
Ref 4.N	Highways England. GG 101, 'Introduction to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges'
Ref 5.N	Highways England. HE (Style Guide), 'Our Tone of Voice and Style Guide'
Ref 6.N	legislation.gov.uk. EIR 2004, 'The Environmental Information Regulations 2004'
Ref 7.N	Highways England. HE V&B, 'Values and behaviours - HE Booklet'
Ref 8.N	Highways England. HE (Correspondence), 'Writing reactive customer correspondence'

E/4. Informative references

The following documents are informative references for this document and provide supporting information.

Ref 1.I	CCC, 'Customer Contact Centre - Telephone Number 0300 123 5000 '
Ref 2.I	https://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com/ . ICSSI, 'Institute of customer service satisfaction index'

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General Principles & Scheme Governance
General Information

GG 901

Northern Ireland National Application Annex to GG 901 Customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact

Version 1.0.0

Summary

The requirements of GG 901 do not apply in Northern Ireland.

Feedback and Enquiries

Users of this document are encouraged to raise any enquiries and/or provide feedback on the content and usage of this document to the dedicated team in the Department for Infrastructure, Northern Ireland. The email address for all enquiries and feedback is: dcu@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

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Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland National Application Annex to GG 901.				

Document code	Version number	Date of publication of relevant change	Changes made to	Type of change
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General Principles & Scheme Governance
General Information

GG 901

Scotland National Application Annex to GG 901 Customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact

Version 1.0.0

Summary

The requirements of GG 901 do not apply in Scotland.

Feedback and Enquiries

Users of this document are encouraged to raise any enquiries and/or provide feedback on the content and usage of this document to the dedicated Transport Scotland team. The email address for all enquiries and feedback is: TSSStandardsBranch@transport.gov.scot

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GG 901	1.0.0	June 2021	Scotland NAA	Change to policy, major revision, new document development
Transport Scotland National Application Annex to GG 901.				

Document code	Version number	Date of publication of relevant change	Changes made to	Type of change
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General Principles & Scheme Governance
General Information

GG 901

Wales National Application Annex to GG 901 Customer service standard for the quality and timeliness of responses to customer contact

Version 1.0.0

Summary

The requirements of GG 901 do not apply in Wales.

Feedback and Enquiries

Users of this document are encouraged to raise any enquiries and/or provide feedback on the content and usage of this document to the dedicated Welsh Government team. The email address for all enquiries and feedback is: Standards_Feedback_and_Enquiries@gov.wales

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GG 901	1.0.0	June 2021	Wales NAA	Change to policy, major revision, new document development
Welsh Government National Application Annex to GG 901.				

Document code	Version number	Date of publication of relevant change	Changes made to	Type of change
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