



Office for  
**Environmental  
Protection**



# Office for Environmental Protection

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**Chief of Staff**

## What is the OEP?



The Environment Act established the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) as a **new public body**.

The role of the OEP is to **protect and improve the environment** by holding government and public authorities to account against their commitments and environmental law.

Remit to cover **England**, potentially Northern Ireland and **reserved matters**

Central to a **new system of environmental governance** in the Environment Act - alongside environmental improvement plans, targets and principles

We have now launched our draft strategy and enforcement policy for consultation, which is available on our website



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## What will the OEP do?

The Environment Act enables a range of functions

### **Advice**

Advise Ministers, regarding proposed changes to 'environmental law' and matters relating to the 'natural environment'

### **Scrutinising Environmental Law**

We have a duty to monitor the implementation of environmental law

### **Scrutinising Environmental Improvement Plans (EIPs) and targets**

Review and report on government progress in implementing environmental improvement plans and targets

### **Enforcement**

Investigate suspected serious failures to comply with environmental law by public authorities and enforce compliance when needed.

## Complaints



A person may make a complaint to the OEP if they believe that a public authority has failed to comply with environmental law.

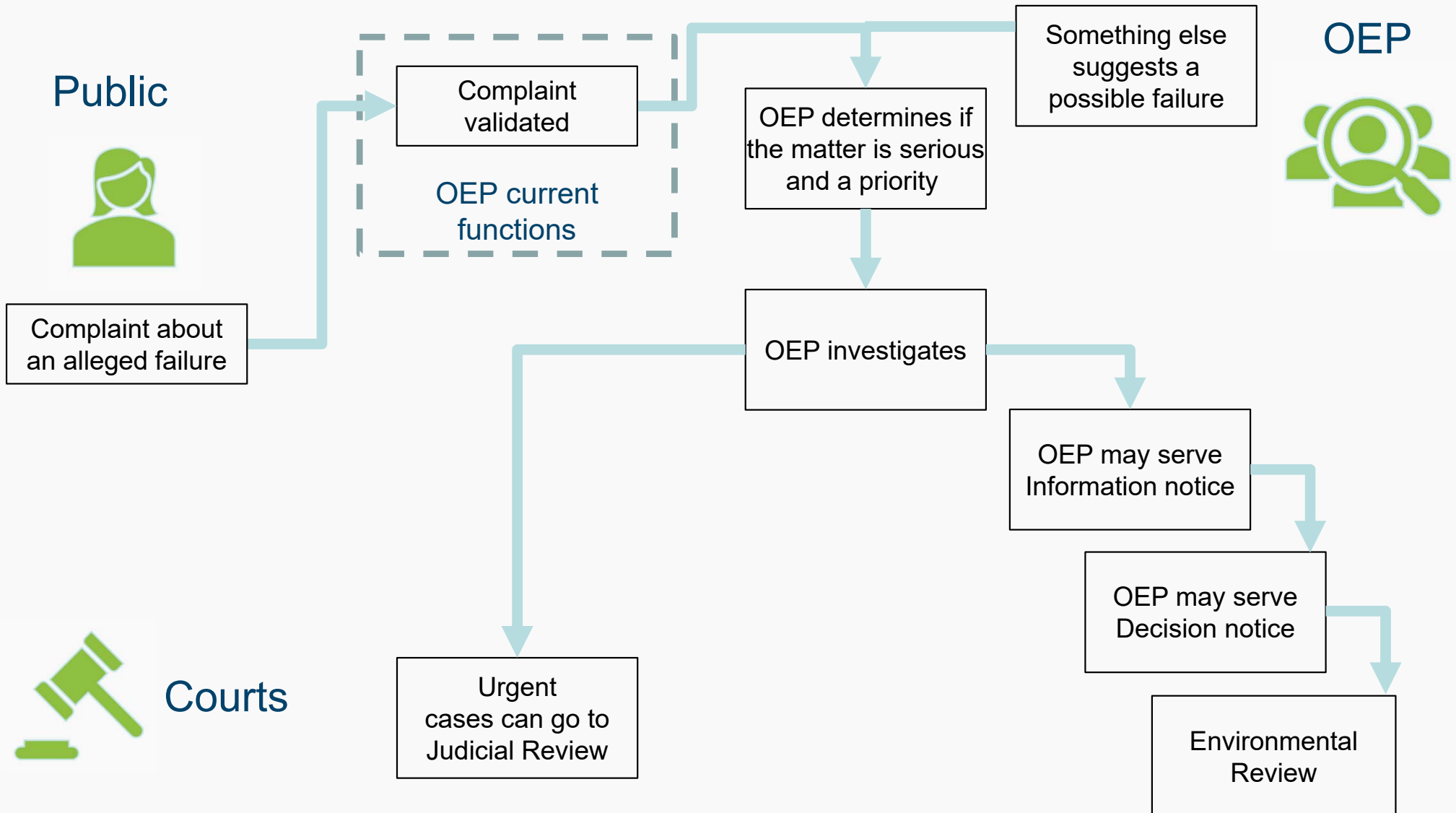
What can you do to ensure that a complaint is directed to the right place:

- For a complaint to reach the OEP, it must relate to an alleged failure to comply with Environmental law.
- If it doesn't then it is unlikely to be within our remit and may be more suited for consideration through alternative avenues, such as the LGSCO.
- It would also be helpful for members to consider how these environmental issues are likely to interface with their own internal complaints processes.

# Complaints and Enforcement



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## Scrutinising environmental law and advice



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OEP must:

- monitor the implementation of environmental law
- advise Ministers, on request, regarding proposed changes to environmental law and matters relating to the natural environment

OEP may:

- report on matters concerned with the implementation of environmental law
- advise Ministers on its own initiative about proposed changes to environmental law
- We may ask local authorities to provide information to us, or you may wish to bring matters to our attention.

## Monitoring of the EIP



The **25 Year Environment Plan** (25 YEP) was the first of the government's Environmental Improvement Plans (EIP), to be refreshed in 2023.

The OEP has a role to **monitor government's progress against the EIPs.**



We expect the OEP's **first report to be published in March this year**



## 25YEP monitoring report



- First report is intended to be a stocktake
- The aim is for the reports to be constructive and maximise the opportunity to achieve positive outcomes for the environment
- We will be looking to set out key building blocks that drive change in how government protects and improves the environment and delivers the ambition out in in the 25YEP for the environment.

## Developing the OEP Strategy



The Environment Act requires the OEP to **develop and consult on a strategy** for how it intends to exercise its functions.

Our consultation on our draft strategy and enforcement policy is now open and runs until March 22. We want to hear from as many people and organisations as possible, so please do seek out those documents and take part. And please spread the word to others.

Consultation can be found on our website: [www.theoep.org.uk](http://www.theoep.org.uk)

# Developing the OEP Strategy



The draft strategy covers:

- How the OEP will **further its principal objective** – “*to contribute to environmental protection and the improvement of the natural environment*”
- How it will **act objectively and impartially**
- How it will have regard to the need to **act proportionately and transparently**
- Its **enforcement policy**
- How it intends to **avoid any overlaps** with other organisations as appropriate



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## Strategic objectives

The four strategic objectives that set out the difference we will strive to make:

1. Sustained environmental improvement
2. Better environmental law, better implemented
3. Improved compliance with environmental law
4. Organisational excellence and influence

## Enforcement Policy



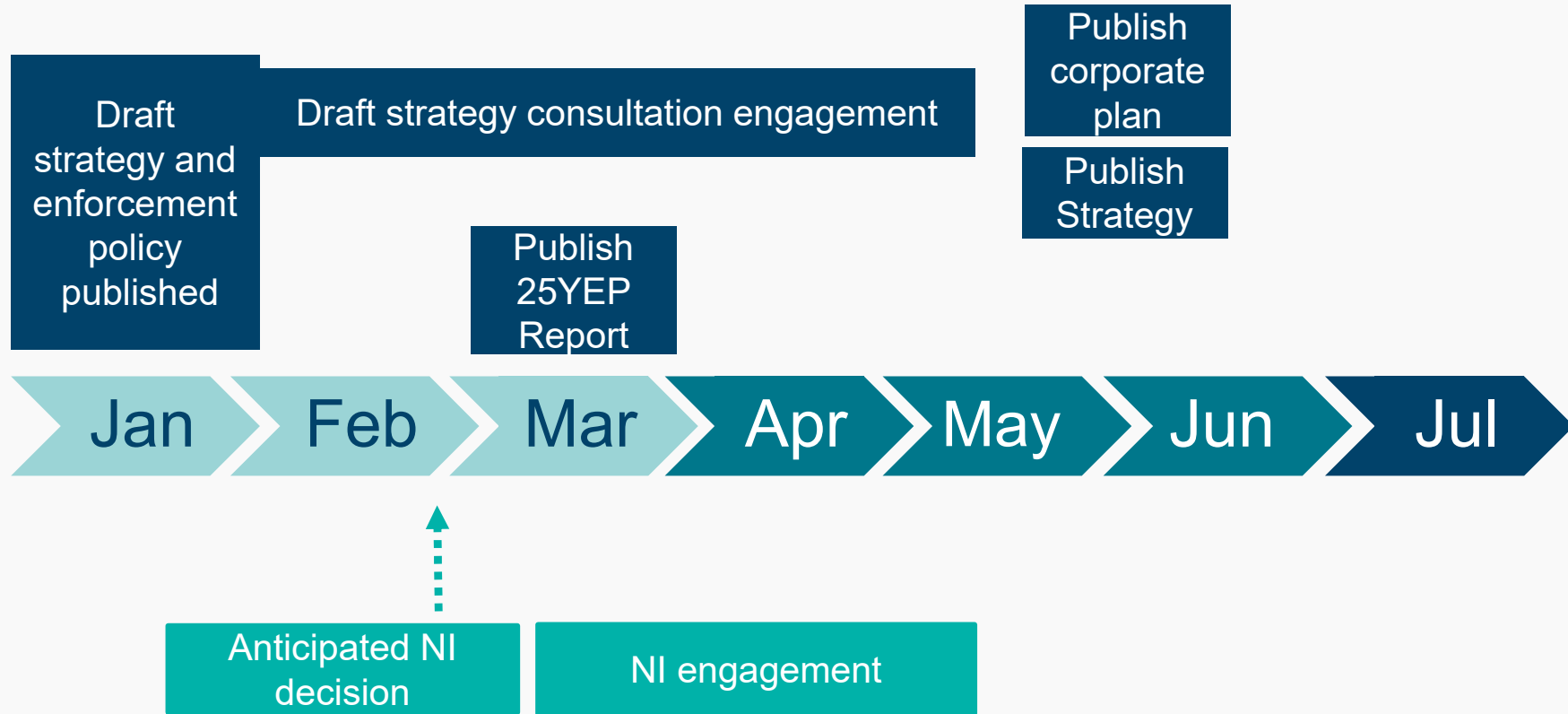
- We expect to target enforcement action where we can most benefit environmental protection and improvement, based on a combination of: (i) what is most serious, and (ii) where we think we can make the most difference.
- The OEP will not only be an enforcer. In many cases we anticipate it will be possible and appropriate to resolve an issue without recourse to formal enforcement procedures.
- We are conscious of the differing environment laws in NI, and we will seek to appoint an NI Lawyer should our remit be confirmed.

## Working with others



- We will work with public authorities in different ways, as we undertake our different functions.
- We will engage, listen, and learn from stakeholders, drawing on and respecting the deep technical expertise of specialist bodies, including those in government.
- We will seek to earn the trust and respect of all organisations we work with through being independent, objective, impartial and reliable.

# Timeline



Want to find out more?



<https://www.theoep.org.uk/>

A screenshot of the Office for Environmental Protection website homepage. The top navigation bar includes the logo, "Home", "About us" (with a dropdown arrow), "Reports and publications", "News", "Work with us" (with a dropdown arrow), "Complain to us" (with a dropdown arrow), "Contact us", and a "Search" button with a magnifying glass icon. The main content area has a dark green background with a large, faint leaf graphic. The text reads: "The Office for Environmental Protection", "The Office for Environmental Protection (The OEP) is a new public body.", and "We protect and improve the environment by holding government and public authorities to account." Below this is a white button labeled "What we do". At the bottom, there are navigation arrows and a set of four circles, with the first one filled. A small gear icon is in the bottom left corner. On the right side, there is a photograph of two hikers on a grassy hillside under a cloudy sky, with a large, semi-transparent leaf graphic overlaid on the image.