

## **Funding for UK LIFE projects if there's no Brexit deal**

### **Summary**

How organisations receiving funding under the EU LIFE programme would be affected if the UK leaves the EU with no deal.

### **Detail**

If the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 without a deal, find out how this would affect UK organisations which are currently receiving funding under the EU LIFE programme.

A scenario in which the UK leaves the EU without agreement (a 'no deal' scenario) remains unlikely given the mutual interests of the UK and the EU in securing a negotiated outcome.

Negotiations are progressing well and both we and the EU continue to work hard to seek a positive deal. However, it's our duty as a responsible government to prepare for all eventualities, including 'no deal', until we can be certain of the outcome of those negotiations.

For two years, the government has been implementing a significant programme of work to ensure the UK will be ready from day 1 in all scenarios, including a potential 'no deal' outcome in March 2019.

It has always been the case that as we get nearer to March 2019, preparations for a no deal scenario would have to be accelerated. Such an acceleration does not reflect an increased likelihood of a 'no deal' outcome. Rather it is about ensuring our plans are in place in the unlikely scenario that they need to be relied upon.

This series of technical notices sets out information to allow businesses and citizens to understand what they would need to do in a 'no deal' scenario, so they can make informed plans and preparations.

This guidance is part of that series.

Also included is an overarching framing notice (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-preparations-for-a-no-deal-scenario/>) explaining the government's overarching approach to preparing the UK for this outcome in order to minimise disruption and ensure a smooth and orderly exit in all scenarios.

We are working with the devolved administrations on technical notices and we will continue to do so as plans develop.

## **Purpose**

This notice sets out how UK organisations receiving funding under the EU LIFE programme would be affected if the UK leaves the EU with no deal in March 2019. It explains what this would mean for existing projects due to finish after 29 March 2019 and for organisations applying for projects funded after this date.

### **Before 29 March 2019**

The LIFE programme is an EU fund supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects throughout the EU. It is funded and administered by the European Commission. The UK is currently a net contributor to the EU budget, and all EU funding is derived from funding by UK taxpayers.

Currently, UK organisations submit bids directly to the LIFE fund on a competitive basis for a variety of projects focused on environmental and climate action. Projects usually last between three and five years, with funding paid by the European Commission in stages throughout the project. Project payments are currently made directly from the Commission to the organisation leading the project, with no involvement by the UK government. On average, five UK-led projects are awarded LIFE funding each year.

In a negotiated scenario, UK-based organisations will be able to continue to participate in the LIFE programme until the end of 2020 as they do now, and successful projects agreed within this timeframe will be fully funded by the European Commission until they finish. We are considering how environmental projects can be best supported in future when the UK is no longer part of the European Union.

### **After March 2019 if there's no deal**

In the unlikely event that the UK leaves the EU in March 2019 with no deal in place, the UK government has [guaranteed to fund](<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-from-eu-programmes-guaranteed-until-the-end-of-2020>) the following:

- LIFE project bids submitted by UK organisations and approved by the European Commission while we are still a member of the EU; and
- LIFE funding due to UK organisations acting as partners in projects led by other Member States. This covers ongoing projects, and those awarded funding before the end of 2020.

This means that, if required, the UK government would take over any remaining payments due to UK organisations involved in LIFE projects after March 2019, ensuring an uninterrupted flow of funding to these projects until they finish.

Payments due to be made to project leads after 29 March 2019 may no longer come from the European Commission, and so would need to be made by the UK government via Defra and the relevant devolved administrations.

Defra has contacted the small number of organisations in England leading LIFE projects due to be running after 29 March 2019 to request copies of project grant agreements, to inform contingency planning. Projects do not need to take any further action at present. The devolved administrations are making similar arrangements for projects where the lead partner is legally based within their countries. We are considering how environmental projects can be best supported in future when the UK is no longer part of the European Union.

The guarantee does not cover funding for organisations from countries in consortia with UK participants – only the funding for UK participants is in scope. We are aware of some cases where UK participants lead a consortium and are responsible for distributing funding to the other participants; the UK government is seeking to discuss how this could best be addressed in a ‘no deal’ scenario with the European Commission.

### **Further information**

Further information can be found on the [Joint Nature Conservation Committee website](<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7121>). JNCC provides the National Contact Point service for LIFE in the UK.

Organisations can contact JNCC ([UKLIFE@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:UKLIFE@jncc.gov.uk)) if they have further questions, or look on the JNCC [website](<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-7121>) for more information about the fund.

If you are a UK partner in a LIFE project led by another Member State and have concerns, please contact Defra at [DefraLIFE@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DefraLIFE@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

This notice is meant for guidance only. You should consider whether you need separate professional advice before making specific preparations.

It is part of the government’s ongoing programme of planning for all possible outcomes. We expect to negotiate a successful deal with the EU.

The UK government is clear that in this scenario we must respect our unique relationship with Ireland, with whom we share a land border and who are co-signatories of the Belfast Agreement. The UK government has consistently placed upholding the Agreement and its successors at the heart of our approach. It enshrines the consent principle on which Northern Ireland’s constitutional status rests. We recognise the basis it has provided for the deep economic and social

cooperation on the island of Ireland. This includes North-South cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland, which we're committed to protecting in line with the letter and spirit of Strand two of the Agreement.

The Irish government has indicated they would need to discuss arrangements in the event of no deal with the European Commission and EU Member States. The UK would stand ready in this scenario to engage constructively to meet our commitments and act in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland, recognising the very significant challenges that the lack of a UK-EU legal agreement would pose in this unique and highly sensitive context.

It remains, though, the responsibility of the UK government, as the sovereign government in Northern Ireland, to continue preparations for the full range of potential outcomes, including no deal. As we do, and as decisions are made, we'll take full account of the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland.