

## How will Brexit affect bugs across the continent?

The EU has been good for bugs with the Habitats Directive, EU Red Listing work, Water Framework Directive and Clean Beaches being good examples. The progress made over the last 20 years is likely to continue into the future.

On the other hand the record of the UK Government over the last 20 years on wildlife conservation has been less glowing. While the Government has tried to improve the environmental credentials of the Common Fisheries and Common Agriculture Policies, it is also characterised by repeated visits to the courts for failing to apply environmental protection measures and attempts to block environmentally sensible EU proposals. The UK took the lead (under several governments) on successfully [blocking the proposed Soil Directive](#) ; has tried to [block EU efforts to improve air quality](#); tried to block efforts to protect bees from neonicotinoid pesticides, and is blocking new pesticide safety measures that would check that candidate pesticides do not harm bumblebees or solitary bees.

Should the UK leave there remain a great many uncertainties about the exact relationship that the UK would have with the EU post Brexit and hence the exact impacts on invertebrates. Although when the UK joined the EU it was known as the '[dirty man of Europe](#)', in the long term it is possible that the UK governments could become more responsible environmental custodians.

The list below focuses on the more predictable and higher impact issues, there are of course a great many issues that affect the conservation of bugs across the EU, the list also focuses more on the short term which is more predictable than the >20 year time horizon which is difficult to envisage.

Risks to Buglife Charitable Objectives from Brexit Outcome	Charitable Objective Problem/Opportunity	Effect of Outcome	Likelihood of Outcome
Ability of Buglife to further bug conservation across Europe	Buglife currently represents invertebrates on the European Habitats Forum, the leading EU wide NGO forum for nature conservation. EHF's meetings with the EC would no longer be directly relevant to the UK where Buglife has its greatest activity and experience. Out of touch and side-lined our ability to influence the conservation of bugs across the EU would reduce.	High Negative	Near Certain
UK citizens ability to contribute to continental decisions that will determine their environmental health	Many environmental issues affecting bugs are trans-boundary in nature, without democratic representation at the EU level, UK citizens would lose influence on future initiatives.	High Negative	Near Certain
UK citizens ability to contribute to national decisions that will determine their environmental health	It may be that in the long term the UK governments would become more responsive to the environmental wishes of the British people.	Medium Positive	Possible

<b>Ability of democratic establishments to stand up to multinational business</b>	The EU is a substantive power block that is better able to stand up to the lobbying of multinational industries than the 28 member state or regional governments.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Near Certain</b>
<b>UK citizens and Buglife ability to hold their Government to account for environmental failings</b>	Ability to refer issues to the ECJ has proven very useful in securing wildlife conservation action in the UK, this will no longer be possible if relevant Directives are no longer directly applicable.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Near Certain</b>
<b>Resources available to carefully regulate pesticides (active substances)</b>	EFSA draws upon the scientific expertise of 28 member states to undertake pesticide approval work, the UK would no longer have direct access to this process and EFSA may not be able to access UK expertise as easily either.	<b>Medium Negative</b>	<b>Highly Likely</b>
<b>Likelihood of effective EU bee and pollinator strategy</b>	The EU Parliament (with leadership from a British MEP) has asked the EC to produce a pollinator initiative, the UK is home to the EU's only international all wild pollinator conservation charity (Buglife), Butterfly Conservation, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and the only two national pollinator strategies. The EU's ability to reverse pollinator declines are better with the UK participating fully in the democratic and expert processes.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Highly Likely</b>
<b>Achievement of good ecological status for freshwater bugs in the rest of the EU</b>	EU Water Framework Directive has been slow to be implemented across the EU. In the UK legal challenges have ensured that compliance is taken seriously, there remains a significant risk that the UK will fail to put in place appropriate measures in most catchments. If this happens the UK is likely to end up at the ECJ and there is a high chance that the resulting ruling would also push forward the implementation of good ecological status in other Member States. This possibility won't be realised if the UK leaves before the issue is resolved.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Possible</b>
<b>Achievement of good ecological status for freshwater bugs in the UK</b>	Without directly applicable legislation and recourse to the ECJ it seems unlikely that the UK will deliver good ecological status in waterbodies.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Likely</b>
<b>Cross border trade in endangered species regulated effectively</b>	EU regulations have meant that the UK has had to improve its legal framework for controlling the trade in EU species. It is unclear how this might apply if the UK left, it may be that the basic protections would still apply, but any reduction in coordination is likely to have a negative effect.	<b>Medium Negative</b>	<b>Likely</b>

<b>Invasive species threats addressed</b>	New EU regulations have meant that the UK has had to improve its legal framework for controlling invasive non-native species, the implementation of an EU wide risk assessment process and a legally enforced list of unwelcome species may improve our ability to combat invasive species and stop problems becoming intractable. It is unclear how this might apply if the UK left, but any reduction in coordination is likely to have a negative effect.	Medium Negative	Likely
<b>Capacity of UK nature conservation organisations to give adequate input to the development of legislation and regulation</b>	If the UK leaves the EU nature conservation organisations may be required to put extensive efforts into holding the line on key legal principles and measures as legislation is reviewed. Given the volume of likely work and recent history of the UK and country governments there is likely to be little opportunity for environmental progress	Medium Negative	Likely
<b>UK Government influence on EU environmental initiatives</b>	The UK Government has usually been unsupportive of new EU environmental initiatives. Removing this constraint may make it easier for the remaining EU members to secure new environmental legislation.	Medium Positive	Likely
<b>Science and knowledge base for invertebrate conservation</b>	Scientists have flagged up concerns that leaving the EU would damage the ability of UK scientists to work in partnership with EU colleagues and could also reduce funding for key science. Efforts to develop pan Europe wildlife status assessments would be hindered.	Medium Negative	Likely
<b>Likelihood of progress towards sustainable EU fisheries</b>	Recent progress towards sustainable sea fisheries have been made with UK showing leadership, this process may not continue if the UK leaves the CFP.	Medium Negative	Likely
<b>Likelihood of progress towards sustainable UK fisheries</b>	The end of the CFP would bring uncertainty to the sustainability of UK fisheries, there may be incentives for the UK to compete by setting higher quotas than the EU, damaging our sustainability and that of our neighbours.	Medium Negative	Likely
<b>Capacity of UK nature conservation organisations to maintain current delivery levels</b>	Risk of reduction in delivery capacity as attention needed on development of policy changes and adapting to new systems	Low Negative	Likely
<b>Availability of funding for nature conservation in the rest of the EU</b>	From 2014-2010 EU LIFE funding will contribute approximately €3.4 billion to the protection of the environment and climate. It is unclear what will happen to	High Negative	Possible

	this in case of Brexit. The UK may stop contributing to these funds, reducing the size of the pot available, which may hit wildlife particularly hard in the poorer areas of the EU.		
<b>Availability of funding for nature conservation in the UK</b>	The UK Government may switch funding from the EU directly into wildlife conservation, which would compensate for the UK's loss of LIFE funding, but given their record of setting very low levels of commitment they may be more likely to choose not to do so.	<b>Medium Negative</b>	<b>Possible</b>
<b>Availability of funding for wildlife friendly farming in the rest of the EU</b>	Pillar II agrienvironment payments support wildlife across the EU. It is unclear what will happen to this, the UK is likely to stop contributing to these funds and working to increase the proportion of the budget allocated to Pillar II. This would reduce the size of the pot available for wildlife, which may hit wildlife particularly hard in the poorer areas of the EU.	<b>High Negative</b>	<b>Likely</b>
<b>Availability of funding for wildlife friendly farming in the UK</b>	The UK Government may switch funding from the EU directly into a new Pillar II scheme, which would compensate for the UK's loss of CAP funding, but they may also choose not to do so.	<b>Med to High Positive or Negative</b>	<b>Unknown</b>