



Chartered  
Institute of  
Ecology and  
Environmental  
Management

# CIEEM Members and the UK Referendum on EU Membership

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## Introduction

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) conducted a survey, of all its UK-based members on the potential impacts of the UK leaving the EU on the ecology and environmental management sector from 21 December 2015 to 31 January 2016. There were 841 respondents, out of a total UK-based membership of 4,540 (19% response rate).

**93% believe the EU has been beneficial for the UK's natural environment**

From a natural environment point of view, 90% of respondents said that the UK fared better in the EU, with 8% unsure and 3% saying that the UK would be better outside. However,

the few respondents who believed that the UK's natural environment would be better served outside the EU still believed that EU legislation had been beneficial and that leaving the EU posed risks associated with job losses and impacts on the profession. Some respondents did however point out that the EU is not perfect and that improvements could be made.

## About the Respondents

Nearly 70% of respondents were Full members of the Institute, with 12% Graduates, 8% Associates, 5% Students, 3% Fellows, and the remainder made up of Qualifying and Supporter members. Most respondents worked in more than one country, with the majority working in England (91%), Wales (42%) and Scotland (31%). A small proportion of respondents worked in Northern Ireland (8%) and in other EU member states (10%) as well as internationally outside the EU (8%).

Nearly 67% of respondents work in the consultancy sector, which is roughly similar to the proportion of all CIEEM members working in this sector. The remaining respondents were spread across Local Government (8%), NGOs (7%), Statutory Nature Conservation Agencies (6%), academia (5%), industry (4%), and central government (3%).

## The EU and the Natural Environment

Over 93% of respondents believed that EU environmental legislation has been beneficial to the UK's natural environment, with 5% unsure and less than 2% saying that it has not been beneficial.

**93% say EU environmental directives have had positive additional benefits on UK habitats and species**

If the UK were to leave the EU, respondents felt that there would be significant negative impacts upon:

**90% are concerned about the impact on wildlife protection**

- Protection of certain wildlife species (90%)
- Protection of the natural environment for its environmental benefits (89%)
- Benefits to migratory species (e.g. birds and cetaceans) (87%)
- Improved water quality and the recovery of freshwater fish populations (77%)
- Reduction of nitrates in the environment (74%)
- Recovery of marine fisheries (74%)
- Improvements in air quality (70%)

Other issues that were raised by respondents, in the event that the UK left the EU, included concerns about:

- Lack of joined up climate change action
- Lack of co-ordinated

**90% say the UK's natural environment has fared better inside the EU**

action to prevent the spread of invasive species and plant/animal diseases

- Lack of linked pollution and recycling legislation and controls
- Loss of protection for the Natura 2000 network of designated sites
- Loss of access to beneficial funding schemes (e.g. LIFE)
- Loss of co-ordinated support for underwater noise mitigation and monitoring
- Loss of environmental schemes on farmland
- Loss of some wider landscape-scale considerations

**84% say the UK will achieve more for nature conservation in the future as an EU member**

Many respondents commented that the impact of leaving the EU would be detrimental to all natural environment considerations.

When asked for their top priorities in relation to the natural environment and the EU referendum, respondents highlighted the following issues (in order of importance):

- Protected species
- Protected habitats
- Appropriate environmental legislation
- Freshwater considerations
- Pollution
- Funding

Most respondents worked with the following directives and policies on a regular (at least monthly) basis:

- Habitats Directive (75%)
- Wild Birds Directive (49%)
- Invasive Species Regulations (42%)

**85% do not believe current UK environmental policies would have been delivered to the standard that they are now if we had remained outside the EU**

- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (36%)
- Water Framework Directive (25%)

Respondents were asked what they believed the effects (over and above what the UK would do anyway) of relevant EU directives were on the following:

- Habitats and species (93% said positive or very positive)
- Natural capital and ecosystem services (79% said positive or very positive)
- Socio-economic benefits (e.g. green economy jobs) (75% said positive or very positive)
- Human health and wellbeing (74% said positive or very positive)

Over 85% of respondents did not believe that current UK environmental policies would have been delivered to the standard that they are now if we had remained outside the EU, whilst 9% were unsure and 5% said environmental standards would have been the same. Some respondents indicated a considerable lack of confidence in the current government that it would prioritise the natural environment if the UK left the EU.

**87% think Brexit will have a detrimental impact on the ecology and environmental management sector as a profession**

Nearly 84% of respondents thought that the UK had achieved more for nature conservation as an EU member than it would have done if it had relied only on international nature conservation agreements (e.g. Convention on Biological Diversity). Over 10% were unsure about the issue, under 4% disagreed, and under 2% said membership had made no difference.

Over 84% also stated that the UK would achieve more in the future for nature conservation as an EU member than as a non-member. Just over 9% disagreed with the proposition, while 3% were unsure and another 3% said it would make no difference.

Some respondents raised serious concerns that the general public is not aware of the good that EU policy and legislation has done for the UK's natural environment, and the knock-on benefits that a healthy natural environment has on the economy and human health and well-being.

## Impact on the Sector and the Profession

Nearly 87% of respondents thought that the UK leaving the EU will have a detrimental impact on the ecology and environmental management sector as a profession. Only 1% said it will be beneficial, with just over 6% unsure and nearly 6% said it will have no effect.

Furthermore, 67% indicated that an exit would have a negative impact on their company or organisation; 24% were unsure of the impact on their organisation, 7% said it will have no effect and just over 1% said it will have a positive effect. An exit from the EU would create a large amount of uncertainty in the profession, since 39% of respondents were unsure if they will have a job if the UK leaves the EU. Although 48% of respondents thought that they would still have a job if the UK left the EU, a significant proportion, 13%, stated that they would lose their job. If this outcome proved accurate, then it would mean over 500 job losses across CIEEM's UK-based membership. Moreover, even among those respondents who felt that their job is safe, 53% of them said that their personal financial situation would be detrimentally

impacted, with over 28% unsure of what the impact would be. Under 2% thought that leaving the EU would be beneficial to their personal financial situation.

The majority of respondents (73%) believed that UK nature conservation policy and legislation delivery is dependent, at least to some degree, on EU funding mechanisms. Respondents commented that having good policies and legislation in place is key, but that appropriate funding is important in delivering them.

**67% say  
Brexit will  
have a  
negative  
impact  
on their  
organisation**

**13% are  
concerned  
about losing  
their job**

## Conclusion

It is absolutely clear that the great majority of CIEEM respondents – experienced and expert professionals – believe that the UK's natural environment has benefited from membership of the EU and that remaining in the EU will be better for the natural environment into the future, not least because of the pan-European approach to nature conservation, information sharing, strongly enforced legislation and specialised co-funding mechanisms. Furthermore, CIEEM members overwhelmingly regard EU membership as having been beneficial for instigating the green economy, including the development of professional practice in the ecology and environmental management sector itself.

From a natural environment point of view, therefore, CIEEM is convinced that leaving the EU would have significant detrimental effects on the UK's natural environment, on the economy, and on society.

**24% are uncertain  
about the  
impact on their  
organisation**

## About CIEEM

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) is the leading professional membership body representing and supporting ecologists and environmental managers in the UK, Ireland and abroad. Our Vision is of a society which values the natural environment and recognises the contribution of professional ecologists and environmental managers to its conservation.

Established in 1991 and receiving our Royal Charter in 2013, we have members drawn from across the employment sectors including local authorities, government agencies, NGOs, environmental consultancy, academia and industry. The diversity of our membership is our greatest strength, enabling us to take an integrated and holistic approach to furthering the management and enhancement of biodiversity and the ecological processes essential to a fully functional biosphere.



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**CIEEM  
43 Southgate Street  
Winchester  
Hampshire  
SO23 9EH  
UK**

**[www.cieem.net](http://www.cieem.net)**

**+44 (0)1962 868 626**

**[enquiries@cieem.net](mailto:enquiries@cieem.net)**