eNGO Coronavirus Impact Survey Report

31/03/2020

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Between 20 and 24 March 2020, Wildlife and Countryside Link (Link) worked with, NI Environment Link, Scot Link and Wales Environment Link and our members to conduct a UK-wide survey of the impact of the coronavirus on the environment sector.

The aim of the survey was to help DEFRA, the statutory agencies, devolved administrations, and grant funders, like the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to assess the effect that the coronavirus is currently having, and is expected to have, on the funding and operations of environment organisations across the UK. We also gathered input from the environment sector on the support and funding that would be most valuable from Defra and grant providers at this critical time.

Key findings

Our finding are clear. The outbreak poses a threat to:

1. frontline functions: conservation, access and animal welfare;
2. scientific and policy work; and
3. the short-term and long-term viability of a significant proportion of the environment sector.

Several of the organisations surveyed said they were already at a particularly vulnerable time financially before the coronavirus pandemic, due to extra costs from dealing with recent storm and flooding crises. Many organisations with visitor attraction sites are highly reliant on the income they generate, and they see their reserves being quickly consumed with no revenue coming in from these venues.

In the short-term, significant redundancies may need to be made, unless adequate support is provided quickly. There is a high level of concern among environmental and conservation charities about whether and how the government-funded 80% staff furlough scheme, and other support offered to businesses, will apply to charities.
There is a clear need for emergency and replacement funding, and flexibility on grant deadlines and targets, from environmental.