LIFE concept notes – guidance for filling in JNCC's eProposal template

It is important to note that this guidance and accompanying concept note template are designed to support applicants prepare for submission to the LIFE programme. The template has been structured to align with the 2019 LIFE programme's concept note, as found in eProposal. This is the required format for LIFE Environment sub-programme projects submitted to the first 'concept note' phase of the 2020 Call.

Concept notes can be submitted at any time, but **by 16 July 2020** at the latest for Environment projects, to the UK's National Contact Point for LIFE funding at UKLIFE@jncc.gov.uk. For more LIFE information visit JNCC UK NCP LIFE.

NB. LIFE Climate projects are NOT required to submit a concept note in the 2020 Call. However, use of this template will support formulation of your project idea before moving to full proposal.

Concept Note Overview

Submission of a concept note to the Commission is the first stage in writing a LIFE application under the Environment sub-programme. Concept notes will be evaluated against two award criteria, *overall quality of the proposal* and overall *EU-added value*. Those projects scoring the minimum score or above will be ranked, and the highest ranked projects (accounting for 2- 2.5 x the total annual budget) will be invited to prepare and submit a full proposal.

The concept note template provides a document to help frame the context of your project. It is designed to help to focus your thinking but to also help the NCP to evaluate the eligibility of your proposal or point you towards a more suitable funding programme. It has the advantage over the eProposal online tool, of being easily editable, is unconstrained by character limits (although remaining within these will help when it comes to submission), and, shareable across multiple partners to aid collaboration.

Before filling in the form, it is essential that you read the:
- LIFE Multi-Annual Work Programme for 2018 -2020
- 2018 Call for proposals for Traditional projects

The Commission wants innovative projects, so check the funding programme's compendia to make sure that 'your' project has not been funded before. The LIFE project database can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm.

Remember, your concept note should:
- Be as quantifiable and specific as possible,
- Demonstrate you understand your project's baseline, i.e. the extent of the environmental problem you are addressing and the European and UK context
- Help you identify partners depending on the desired outcomes, scope, cost and duration of the project.

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1

LIFE Programme Concept Note for Environment Sub-Programme

Contents

Basic Structure

The concept note structure is limited to 10 pages, and includes,
- **Administrative forms (A forms)**
    - o **Form A1** – General project information
    - o **Form A2** – Coordinating beneficiary
- **Project outline (B forms)**
    - o **Form B1** – Summary description of the project
    - o **Form B2** - General character of the project (For CN ENV only; abbreviated in comparison with stage 2)
    - o **Form B3**– EU added value (abbreviated in comparison with stage 2)
- **Financial application forms (R forms)**
    - o **Form R1** – Project budget

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2

Indicative Timetable

Indicative timetable for "Traditional Projects" under the LIFE sub-programme for Environment	
Date or period	**Activity**
02 April 2020	Call publication
16 July 2020	Deadline for applicants to submit concept notes to the Contracting Authority
October 2020	Notification to the applicants, shortlisted applicants invited to submit full proposal
February 2021	Deadline to submit full proposals
TBC	Evaluation and revision of proposals
July 2021	Signature of individual grand agreements
TBC	Earliest possible starting date for the 2020 projects

Access to eProposal- the LIFE programme online application portal

Access to eProposal is via:https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/eproposalWeb/

Information on how to access and use the eProposal tool for applications can be found in **Annex 3** of the relevant **Guidelines for applicants 2020**.

Evaluation Phase and Award Criteria

Eligibility Criteria for Concept Notes

UK Eligibility

The joint report from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government published on 8 December stated that UK entities' right to participate in EU MFF 2014-2020 programmes will be unaffected by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This means that UK based organisations will be able to bid for funding, participate in and lead consortia, in 2018, 2019 and 2020, and will continue to receive funding for the lifetime of the projects. It remains the case that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed, which is why the Government's underwrite guarantee remains in place. UK organisations should continue to bid for competitive EU funds including LIFE while we remain a member of the EU and we will work with the Commission to ensure payment when funds are awarded. The Government will underwrite the payment of such awards, even when specific projects continue beyond the UK's departure from the EU.

Concept Note Award Criteria and Scoring

There are two award criteria against which concept notes will be evaluated, 'overall quality of the proposal' and 'overall EU added value'. Concept notes will be evaluated and ranked by score. To proceed concepts notes must obtain at least a passing score to be considered for ranking. The best ranked concept notes will be invited to submit a full proposal. The award criteria scoring scheme is shown in the below table,

Concept Note Award Criteria	Minimum Pass Score	Maximum Score
1. Overall quality of the proposal	5	20
2. Overall EU added value	10	30
Overall (pass scores)	15	50

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3

Evaluation Criteria: Overall quality of the proposal

This criterion will focus on the clarity of the proposal (including the description of the pre-operational context), its feasibility and indicative value for money.

Clarity of the proposal
- The pre-operational context (baseline) must be described, in particular, environmental problems and threats need to be clearly identified.
- There should be a clear, logical link between problems / threats targeted by the project, and its objectives, the proposed actions and their expected results.
- Main actions and expected results should be sufficiently described and quantified.
- The concept note must also indicate how the project partnership is constructed.

Project Feasibility
To allow the evaluation of the *project feasibility* the concept note must,
- describe how, where, when and by whom each main action will be undertaken. Indicative means necessary for the implementation of the project should be provided. Expected results should be clearly spelled out.
- Technical means, competencies and expertise of the beneficiaries involved in the project need to be adequate for its implementation.
- Any main potential difficulties must be assessed and a realistic mitigation strategy needs to be described.

Value for Money
The project should represent good value for money, i.e. the overall indicative investment should be reasonable in view of the expected impacts and results.

Evaluation Criteria: Overall EU added value

This criterion will focus on the project contribution to the **LIFE priorities**, its **expected impact**, and the **sustainability** of the project results.

The concept note needs to,
- demonstrate how the project contributes to one or several of the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE subprogramme for Environment. These are set out in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation. The extent and the quality of this contribution will be evaluated.
- To demonstrate the projects expected impact, which is understood as the extent and quality of its contribution to the implementation, updating and development of European Union environmental policy and legislation as well its environmental benefits which must be concrete, realistic and quantified.
- To demonstrate sustainability of the project results in the medium and long term, which is understood as the capacity to maintain them after project implementation. Concept note should sufficiently describe how the continuation of necessary project actions and necessary financing after the end of the project will be ensured. *Transfer* and r*eplication* are also considered part of sustainability.

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4

Detailed Structure Notes

This section of the guidance is designed to support the development of your application. It provides short descriptions of the key requirements accompanied by supplementary questions designed to support the filling in of the concept note/full application. A full description of requirements can be found in the LIFE programme's Guidelines for Applicants.

Administrative forms (A forms)

- o   **Form A1** – General project information
- o   **Form A2** – Coordinating beneficiary

This part of the form is self-explanatory and covers basic administrative information, such as contact details and financial status of the coordinating beneficiary.

To note to enable the NCP to support you in the application process via eProposal you MUST tick 'yes' to the question on **National Authorities Access**. This will allow the NCP to access your eProposal concept note, during/ post application, and, during the revision phase. The NCP will then be able to advise on technical aspects related to competing the proposal form.

Project name

- This should include the key elements and objective of the project and needs to have LIFE in the title.

Project Outline forms (B forms)

In the Concept note these are a shortened version of the B1, B2 and B3 forms found at full proposal stage.

B1 Summary description of the project

This section requires succinct descriptions of the;
- Environmental problem targeted (max 3500 characters)
- Project objectives (max 2500 characters)
- Actions and means involved (max 5000 characters)
- Expected results (max 3000 characters)
- Sustainability of the Project Results (max 3000 characters)
- Project topics
- Project Partnership (3000 max. characters)
- Expected Constraints and Risks (2500 max. characters)

Environmental problem (3500 max. characters)

- What is the environmental problem you are trying to address? You need to be able to describe your environmental problem within two sentences – if not then it is too complicated to be solved by a €5 million project. What is the context of the project?
- What is the current state of play?
- What is your project hoping to achieve? Please note that your project must address a problem that spans the European area.
- What is the environmental baseline that indicates the extent of the problem which you wish to tackle? LIFE, like other EU funds, is increasingly results driven. Without knowing the baseline how can you show that your project is addressing the problem and achieving improvements?

Project Objectives (2500 max. characters)

- These need to be realistic, achievable within the lifespan of the project and provide value for money.

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5

- These should be listed by decreasing order of importance.
- Remember that EU added value, sustainability, replicability and transferability all need to be considered within the scope of your project and that a strategy will need to be in place for these elements. These themes are picked up again further through the application.

Actions and Means i.e. Activities (5000 max. characters)
- What actions/means will be utilised to counteract the cause and achieve the impact and objective? Convert your log frame[1] problem tree into an objective tree to make sure you are addressing each element of the problem.
- You will need to ensure there are logical links between the cause, activity and result.

Expected results (3000 max. characters)
- What is the outcome of addressing each cause of the problem?
- Please quantify any improvement to help determine value for money.
- Expected results should not be the project objectives, but they should be the *outputs* and quantified *achievements* allowing the project to reach its objectives.
- These must be concrete, realistic and quantified as far as possible.
- You will need to start to think about how you will verify these improvements, i.e. what indicators you will use.

AfterLIFE/ Sustainability of the project (3000 max. characters)
- The Commission want to see long-term results from their investment and you will need to demonstrate a clear strategy for the long-term continuation of the project results – this includes, where possible, identifying transfer and replication opportunities.

Project Topics
- Please paste in the priority area and project topic that this project will address from the Multi Annual Work Programme or specific Guidelines for Applicants.
- Please note that you can select up to two project topics, but these must be from the same priority area, e.g. it cannot be Environment and Resource Efficiency and Environmental Governance and Information. Select carefully as your project will need to satisfy all the elements defined in the project topics; you will not lose points for selecting one topic but you will for not meeting the all the elements of the selected topic.
- This sections also requires that applicants briefly describe reasons why the proposal is relevant to the project topic(s).

Project Partnership (3000 max, characters)
- What is the structure of your project partnership?
- How are your key associated beneficiaries? You should detail their expertise and expected role, including actions they will be responsible for.
- How will your project be co-financed by other entities? Is this confirmed?

To note: the project partnerships and structure can change between the concept and full proposal stages BUT all changes must be justified and must not affect a major change in the projects ability to deliver the proposed objectives.

Expected Risks and Constraints (1500 max. characters)
- This section should examine the main constraints (i.e. limitations and restrictions) and risks that might occur during the project. For example, if an action depends on the purchase of land, and, purchase cannot be made, could the land be leased instead?

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[1] Project Cycle Management and logical framework matrix *Europa EU* https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1477434274057&do=publi.getDoc&documentId=149258&pubID=136797

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6

- How might these be mitigated for? What over-arching strategy for mitigation might be implemented?

B3 General Character of the project (max 3000 characters)[2] and EU added value of the project and its actions (max 3000 characters)

Project's best practice/pilot/ demonstration character (3000 max. characters)
To note: This field is referred to under B2 in the Environment and Resource Efficiency Guidelines but the same requirement applies, as described below. Completion of this field is not required at Concept note stage under the Environmental Governance and Information strand.
- **Best practice**: means projects that apply appropriate, cost-effective, state-of-the-art techniques, methods and approaches taking into account the specific context of the project
- **Pilot projects:** Apply a novel technique or method which has not been applied or tested before or that offers potential advantages over and above current best practice, which can subsequently be mainstreamed.
- **Demonstration projects:** Practice, test, evaluate and, disseminate actions, methodologies or approaches that are new or unknown in a specific context.
- This section should be used to justify the character of your project i.e. for a demonstration project what is novel about the specific context? Are the proposed methods being applied in a unique socio-economic, geographical or ecological setting?

EU Context: what is the scale of the problem across the EU?
How does the project contribute to one or several of the specific objectives of the priority areas of the LIFE sub-programme for Environment? These are set out in Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the LIFE Regulation.
- Your project will need to clearly state why action needs to be taken on the EU scale. Therefore, you need to know the scale of the problem at your site, region and nationally but also across the EU (see Award Criteria 'EU Added Value'.)
- Demonstrate how the project links to EU environmental policy. How the project will support implementation, update, and/ or development of this policy?

R1 Project budgets
Applicants must provide indicative project budget per following cost category:
- Direct personnel costs
- Travel and subsistence costs
- External assistance
- Durable goods (Infrastructure, Equipment, Prototype)
- Land – where applicable
- Consumables
- Other costs
- Overheads

To note: The Applicant can introduce changes to the total requested EU contribution within margin of 10% between the concept note and full proposal stage. All changes must be justified. There is no limit to other changes in the budget (including total project cost) as long as the total EU contribution does not increase by more than 10%).

To note: The NCP will undertake a basic screening of the R1 forms, making a basic assessment of whether costings seem appropriate to the project objectives, actions and means.

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[2] ERE projects must fill in B2 and B3 forms as per the ERE guidelines. B2 covers the General Character of the project (i.e. pilot or demonstration) and B3 EU added value

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7