

# Special treat to cool off animals at Beijing Zoo

A large part of China is sweltering in intolerable heat as temperatures in central and eastern regions have soared to 40 degrees Celsius.

Not only humans are suffering, so are the animals.

With its mouth wide open, a rhino at the Beijing Zoo greedily enjoyed a spray of water. Not far away, others swallowed watermelons prepared by their feeders.

Li Dongrui, a member of the zoo's feeding team, told Xinhua they sprayed water at least twice a day to cool down the overheated animals.

"We also set up paddling pools for the pandas and elephants, and air conditioners for the polar bears," he said. "This year, we even created a 10-square meter mud pool for the rhinos."

When the temperature hits 35 degrees Celsius, giant ice cubes are delivered to the enclosures of polar bears, red pandas, golden monkeys, and chimpanzees.

The ice cubes, weighing 15 kilos each, are prepared three days in advance. Eight to ten ice cubes are needed each time.

The giant pandas receive a special treat – a dessert of mung bean soup, a traditional Chinese summer soup believed to be beneficial to human body, and in this case animal body, to reduce heat.

"Giant pandas cannot handle the heat, so we must keep the indoor temperature between 24 to 26 degrees Celsius," Li said. "They eat eight meals every day to maintain strength, including bamboo shoots, carrots, and mung bean soup. Each panda consumes almost 50 kilos of bamboo a day."

This summer, the Beijing Zoo has served 12 kinds of fruit, 28 kinds of vegetable, three kinds of green fodder as well as sugar and beverages daily to keep the animals healthy under the baking sun.

It is estimated over 48,000 kilos of fruit, 450,000 kilos of vegetables and 256,000 kilos of green fodder will be consumed during the summer.

To guarantee the freshness, all the green fodder is delivered at night and given to the animals within 15 hours. Bamboo leaves have been transported refrigerated since June, so that the giant pandas can have the best quality of their favorite food.

---

## We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are deeply concerned that millions have faced a real terms pay cut under this Government – Debbie Abrahams

**Debbie**

**Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on today's Labour Market Statistics, said:**

"We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are deeply concerned that millions have faced a real terms pay cut under this Government.

"The cost of basic essentials continues to rise as real wages decline under the Conservatives. Millions are struggling to get by while Theresa May hands £1 billion to the DUP to keep herself in a job.

"Too many people also continue to face barriers to getting a job on the basis of their age, ethnicity, disability or where they live. These same groups bear the brunt of this Government's failed austerity plans.

"A Labour government will implement a real Living Wage of £10 per hour, and bring an immediate end to Tory austerity."

---

## Lords' report highlights Government failures in responding to refugee crisis – Diane Abbott

**Diane Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, responding to the House of Lords' report on the refugee crisis and 'Operation Sophia', said:**

"The report paints a picture of failure in response to the refugee crisis, but over 30,000 lives have been saved by Operation Sophia,

which is very welcome. The tactic of destroying vessels means that refugees are coming in record numbers, but they come in ever more unseaworthy dinghies. The risk of drowning at sea is increased.

“The report’s conclusions are correct. Future UK and EU action should focus on tackling people smuggling at source and in transit countries, and supporting sustainable economic development and good governance in these countries.

“The Government has also not implemented the Dubs amendment which would have secured 3,000 places here for unaccompanied refugee children. In this Parliament, Labour will be pressing for the government to meet its obligations in full.”

---

## **Press release: Water companies make environmental improvements but Environment Agency urges more action**

The majority of the UK’s water companies achieved close to or exceeded targets set to improve water quality, according to a new report published by the Environment Agency today.

Wessex Water and United Utilities were the top performing water companies, repeating last year’s success.

In a year when the Environment Agency introduced tougher standards, water companies made good progress in meeting the new targets. However, the total number of pollution incidents increased by 160 in 2016, the first increase since 2012.

While water companies continue to improve their reporting of pollution to ensure impact can be minimised and wildlife protected downstream, the Environment Agency has urged some water companies to make significant improvements to bring down pollution levels.

The report which ranks the nine big water and sewage companies in England on a range of measures needed to protect the environment also showed:

- All companies achieved the target to complete work to build and upgrade infrastructure which will improve water quality, water resources and river biodiversity.

- Eight out of nine water companies gained full marks for protecting water supply security. This is crucial following the dry winter as some rivers, reservoirs and groundwaters are lower than normal for the time of year but there are no water supply issues.
- Safe recovery or disposal of sewage sludge took place 99.9% of the time and was mostly used to improve agricultural land, generate heat or power. And compliance with permits at sewage treatment and water treatment works is at 98.6% on average, while good is still short of the 100% target.
- The number of serious pollution incidents has continued to decline. However there was an increase in total numbers of incidents and of the most damaging pollution incidents, nine up from four in the previous year.

Dr Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations for the Environment Agency, said:

Water companies work hard to protect the environment. We have set more stringent targets and we are glad to see overall improvements but want to see more effort to avoid pollution incidents.

As a fair and effective regulator we are committed to publishing results, highlighting best practice but also taking action to address any poor practice.

While we welcome the good progress being made we will continue to address any failings and will take enforcement action in the most serious cases.

2016 was also the first year to see several million pound fines handed out by the courts to water companies for pollution incidents.

All water companies provide an essential public service and affect the health of rivers and how water can be used downstream by others. High environmental performance from water companies protects rivers and seas, supports wildlife and ensures people can enjoy the environment. Water companies also contributed £127 million last year to reduce risk of sewers flooding homes and protect local communities.

Annual water and sewerage company environmental performance reports are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

---

# State of play of Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom

On 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom notified the European Council of its intention to leave the European Union, in accordance with Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union.

On 29 April 2017, the European Council at EU27 adopted a set of [political guidelines](#), which define the framework for the negotiations and set out the EU's overall positions and principles.

On 3 May 2017, the European Commission sent [a recommendation](#), including draft negotiating directives, to the Council to open the Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom. On 22 May 2017, the Council, on the basis of the Commission's recommendation, [authorised the opening of the Article 50 negotiations](#) with the UK and nominated the Commission as Union negotiator. Together with the European Council guidelines agreed by the leaders of the EU27 on 29 April 2017, these negotiating directives outline the priorities for the first phase of the negotiations.

The European Commission has also issued detailed position papers for the negotiations with the UK. Each paper is subject to an exchange of views between Michel Barnier, the Commission's Chief Negotiator, and the [Council Working Party](#) chaired by the General Secretariat of the Council, as well as the Brexit steering group of the European Parliament.

The European Commission publishes these position papers on [our website](#), both when they are shared with the other EU institutions as well as when they are sent to the UK. Position papers on the following topics have been published so far:

1. Citizens' rights
2. The financial settlement
3. Nuclear materials and safeguard equipment (EURATOM)
4. Issues relating to the functioning of the Union institutions, agencies and bodies
5. Governance of the Article 50 agreement
6. Goods placed on the market under Union law before the withdrawal date
7. Judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters
8. Ongoing judicial and administrative procedures
9. Ongoing police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters

## **What happened during the first negotiation round?**

The first round of Article 50 negotiations between the European Commission and the United Kingdom took place on 19 June. Both parties agreed to create working groups on citizens' rights, the financial settlement and other separation issues. The coordinators of the negotiations on the EU and UK side will also start a dialogue on issues pertaining to Northern Ireland. The

outcome of this first round of negotiations is outlined in the “Terms of Reference” agreed between the UK and the European Commission and is [published on our website](#).

### **What will happen in the second negotiation round?**

The agenda for this round will be published on our website, once available.

### **When does the United Kingdom cease to be a member of the European Union?**

The UK will cease to be a member of the European Union at midnight on 29 March 2019, unless the European Council decides unanimously to extend the two-year negotiating period. The United Kingdom will become a third country from the date of withdrawal.

### **How will the withdrawal agreement be concluded?**

The negotiations on the UK’s orderly withdrawal from the EU must be completed within a period of two years from the moment Article 50 is triggered. If no agreement is reached within this period, the Treaties will cease to apply to the UK.

At the end of the negotiation period, the Union negotiator will propose an agreement to the Council and the European Parliament, taking into account the framework of the future relationship of the UK with the EU.

The European Parliament must give its consent, by a vote of simple majority, including Members of the European Parliament from the UK.

The Council will conclude the agreement. The Treaty foresees that this can be done by a vote of strong qualified majority (i.e. 20 countries representing 65% of the EU27 population).

The UK must also approve the agreement according to its own constitutional arrangements.

### **So how long does that leave for the actual negotiations?**

The negotiations themselves will last approximately 18 months (June 2017 – October/November 2018).

### **Who will negotiate for the European Union?**

The Heads of State or Government of the EU27 invited the Council to nominate the European Commission as the Union negotiator. They welcomed the appointment of Michel Barnier as the Commission’s Chief Negotiator.

The European Commission as Union negotiator and Michel Barnier as the Commission’s Chief Negotiator will systematically report to the European Council, the Council and its preparatory bodies, which will discuss Brexit in an EU27 format.

Michel Barnier will keep the European Parliament closely and regularly

informed throughout the negotiations via a dedicated Brexit steering group.

The 27 Member States will be closely involved in preparing negotiations, giving guidance to the Commission's Chief Negotiator, and assessing progress via a dedicated [Working Party](#), which has been created in the Council, with a permanent chair, to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in line with the European Council guidelines and the Council's negotiating directives.

The European Council at EU27 will remain permanently seized of the matter, and will update its guidelines during the negotiations as necessary.

**What about the practical side of the negotiations? What language will they be in? How often will both sides meet?**

Practical issues, such as the language regime and negotiation structure, have been outlined in the [Terms of Reference](#) agreed between the European Commission and the United Kingdom on 19 June 2017. English and French are the two official languages of the negotiations.

**Where will the negotiations take place?**

They will take place in Brussels.

**What happens if no agreement is reached?**

The EU Treaties simply cease to apply to the UK two years after notification.

**Can a Member State apply to re-join after it leaves?**

Any country that has withdrawn from the EU may apply to re-join. It would be required to go through the accession procedure.

**Once triggered, can Article 50 be revoked?**

It was the decision of the United Kingdom to trigger Article 50. But once triggered, it cannot be unilaterally reversed. Article 50 does not provide for the unilateral withdrawal of the notification.

**Will you be transparent in the negotiations?**

The Article 50 negotiations with the United Kingdom are unique and differ from any other negotiation conducted by the European Union to date. Given their unprecedented nature, the European Commission has decided to adopt a tailor-made approach to transparency. The Commission, as European Union negotiator, will ensure a maximum level of transparency during the whole negotiating process. Read our transparency policy [here](#).

**What are your core principles in these negotiations?**

The withdrawal agreement should be based on a balance of rights and obligations, while ensuring a level-playing field. Cherry-picking of the Single Market and a sector-by-sector participation in the Single Market has been excluded by the European Council guidelines. The Union has also stressed

that its four freedoms (people, goods, services and capital) will remain indivisible. The negotiations will be based on the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. The European Union will remain united throughout the negotiation period and the European Council has excluded that there would be separate negotiations between individual Member States and the United Kingdom on matters pertaining to the UK's withdrawal. The withdrawal agreement should respect the autonomy of the decision-making of the Union, as well as the role of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

**When will the negotiations move on to discussions on the future relationship of the European Union and the United Kingdom?**

Discussions on the framework for a future relationship with the United Kingdom will only begin once sufficient progress has been made in all areas of the first phase of the negotiations. It will be for the European Council to decide whether there has been sufficient progress. Michel Barnier has said publicly that he hoped that the European Commission would be in a position to report sufficient progress to the European Council in October.

**Where can I find out more about the Brexit negotiations?**

All information related to the Brexit negotiations can be found on our dedicated [website](#), including all negotiation documents, press material, and speeches by Michel Barnier.