

Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP)

April 2020

Background

We are seeking project ideas from clubs, fisheries and other partners to improve local fish stocks and angling opportunities. The FIP is funded from the coarse, trout and eel fishing licence income and provides a direct benefit to anglers. The programme was established in 2015 and since then we have reinvested over £5M of money from anglers in projects that will directly benefit local fish and fisheries.

In 2019 we completed 162 projects working with 374 partners, resulting in 127km of river improved and 23 barriers to fish passage removed.

We are aware that involvement in our sport is diminishing; we are selling fewer licences and there is an ageing demographic of participants (more older anglers and less juniors). We recognise the challenges this present and are committed to delivering the new National Angling Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-national-angling-strategy-aims-to-get-more-people-fishing>).

Falling licence sales (around 10% per year) reduces our income and places a pressure in our ability to adequately fund all the fisheries work we want to do. As a result we have less budget to reinvest in the FIP and the Angling Improvement Fund. In addition the covid-19 pandemic is having a significant effect, therefore at the time of writing we have paused making any decision about which FIP projects to fund and their implementation.

However we still need to develop good projects and ensure we make our fisheries money go further and work harder in the future. We remain committed to working with partners to develop a log of ideas and therefore welcome input from partners via the Angling Trust's portal (<https://grants.anglingtrust.net/>).

Action Requested

We are asking angling clubs, fisheries managers and other partners to submit project proposals using the portal. The system will ask you some basic information about the type of works you are considering. To help you understand the projects we might be able to support the following advice is shared.

The priorities are:-

- 1) **Angling benefits:** water where the project is planned must be fished (or there is a demonstrable link).
- 2) **Coarse, trout and eel habitat/passage:** these are the key constraints for good fish populations, addressing them will result in more sustainable stocks and improved connectivity.
- 3) **Angling access and facilities:** platforms, pegs and pathways for rivers and stillwaters
 - Ensuring that the needs of less able bodied anglers are considered
 - An emphasis on developing community and urban fisheries (which may require both habitat and access work).
- 4) **Improving local evidence:** it may be sometimes necessary to undertake investigations to better understand and manage fish stocks. Small investments over and above our routine monitoring.
- 5) **Socio/economic and wellbeing benefits:** seeking wider outcomes from a fisheries project in particular delivering against Government priorities identified in the 25 year environment plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>).
- 6) **Reactive issues:** for example managing the impacts of climate change such as prolonged dry weather or other incidents affecting fish and fisheries if needed.
- 7) **Match funding:** all projects need to secure additional funds or 'in-kind' support.

Who can apply?

Angling clubs, fisheries, charities, local authorities or other community organisations involved in angling. To be eligible, the projects must be located in England and involve a form of angling covered by a valid Environment Agency non-migratory trout and coarse fishing licence. Projects principally benefiting salmon or sea trout, sea angling projects cannot apply.

We welcome proposals from river, canal and stillwater fisheries. If you do not own or manage a water, you may still apply, but should obtain in advance the permission of the organisation who leases the venue.

We cannot pay for work already completed or pay for materials/services already purchased, but we welcome projects which form part of a wider ongoing programme of improvements at the venue.

We particularly encourage proposals from small angling clubs with limited finances; usually run by volunteers and with smaller needs. Our involvement could make a real difference for the survival of these clubs and a limited investment could result in the turnaround in their fortunes and an increase in membership.

By investing in equipment or materials coupled with appropriate advice/training will enable a club or fishery to take on more responsibilities. There are good examples across the country of water quality monitoring, constructing angling pegs, making and deploying floating islands, and having a tool bank to enable owners to undertake sensitive vegetation management.

Thank you for reading this guidance and we look forward to receiving your project ideas

We will be unable to fund everything, especially at the time of covid-19, and therefore applicants should be realistic in their expectations- we will review all ideas and progress the best when we are able to do so; working with partners to secure funds, permits through to implementation. If we are unable to progress your idea, we may still be able to provide advice on the issue you are facing or seek to involve others to try and resolve.

If you have taken time to submit a project proposal we will read each and every one and consider how best to take forward the work. We realise that anglers are passionate about their sport and we want to support you and together we can make fisheries better for all.

If you require any further explanation about the Fisheries Improvement Programme in general, or the content of this note the national contact is roger.handford@environment-agency.gov.uk



**Willow spiling to restore a section of eroded bank.
Funded by the Fisheries Improvement Programme**



**Gravel raking to improve quality for spawning fish.
Funded by the Fisheries Improvement Programme**