



Virtual Fisheries Forum 21/07/21 – The Fisheries Improvement Programme

Q&A Session with Roger Handford

Q. Our club has already received a grant for a future lake reclamation project. Can we bid for further funds to rebuild swims and access paths?

A. The short answer is yes – we do receive multiple applications for FIP projects from single clubs in different years, and these are considered on a case by case basis. In some scenarios, a FIP project can take over a year to complete, although we would usually expect all agreed works to be carried out within 12 months. It is something which is certainly allowable, but the flipside is that we need to ensure this money is spent in the best way possible for maximum angling benefit – so it might be the case that after we have considered all the available proposals we would look to make awards to other higher priority projects.

Q. Why no salmon or sea trout works? These licenses are double price of trout!

A. If we consider how much money we get receive, the actual amount we get from Salmon & Migratory Trout licences is proportionally very small, maybe only about 10%. All of this money goes towards core work such as regulation, enforcement and monitoring etc. There can be FIP projects with crossover benefits, a multi species fish pass for example, which would be equally valuable to both migratory salmonids and coarse fish.

We also get other sources of funding to help with migratory salmonid management, such as government grant in aid and external funding. Working with other partners is vital to carry out to projects that benefit salmon and sea trout.

Q. As there are many avenues of opportunity discussed here, is there a mentor system to advise where best to start? We have had an issue caused by outside forces and have big plans for our fisheries in Essex; would love some advice!

A. My number one tip is to always contact your local fisheries officer. If they don't already know your fishery, they will be happy to visit or provide advice over the phone. They are there to help support you when it comes to advice on stocking and fisheries management, and will always be happy to point you in the right direction. So go to your local fisheries officer and take it from there.

Q. How many projects as a club can we put in as we have new rivers and stillwaters?

A. I don't think we would fund multiple projects in a single year for a club, but quite often these projects are staged and there are different phases to improving a fishery or a club's waters. It may be the case that it takes multiple years. Since 2015 there have been some clubs who have had 3 or 4 successful applications as they've sought to develop a particular water within their portfolio. It's important to emphasise that we need to be realistic about how much money we have and the overall scope of a project. These decisions are made at very much a local level. The other thing to consider is that if we can advise on work which clubs can do for themselves at a low cost. Often just a few basic tools used in for work parties can be of a massive benefit to a club or fishery.

Q. Hi, would help be available for a club that's having problems with weeds lily pads and silt taking over the lake, causing algae/oxygen problems?

A. Yes - and this is part of the work which local officers can do in terms of advice and support. We've just had a [Fisheries Forum on this subject recently with Kye Jerrom](#). There is lots of good information out there in terms of weed management etc, and how to maintain good oxygen levels. So yes, our local officers can help you nip these things in the bud. FIP might be used to see if there are any further improvements which can be made.

Q. We have a small private club that own our own water - it's strictly members only however. Would we be eligible as we're a 'Closed shop' so to speak?

A. Potentially, yes – the principle is that this money comes from licence sales, and so since your members are buying licenses they should potentially benefit from project awards. I often get asked why we sometimes carry out FIP projects on profit-making commercial fisheries, and the reason is because they are fished by licensed anglers.

Obviously if we're working with a club who have an open membership and large number of members, then the payback will be greater. In contrast, a syndicate with a dozen members would give us less value. We would usually go for the one that can deliver maximum benefit to a larger number of anglers. This should not stop you from applying though – ultimately it's all a question of balance and making the best use of the money we have available.

Q. Hi, (great presentation again) can we still apply to the FIP if the water is leased? Our water is in Public open space owned by County Council and therefore used by all in the community, not just anglers, would that be an issue?

A. It potentially could be an issue, but it could also be a benefit. We'd be talking to both yourselves and the fishery owner, so it might end up being a 3 way partnership. We would expect the council to support any proposals and improvements to the water. However the conversation may throw up conflicting interests that could present problems. The other consideration is to understand the details of your lease - e.g if you only have 1 year left on the lease, then we'd probably need to have more assurances as to the longevity of angling activity at the site. Community waters are very important to us though in the sense of greater footfall/ number of anglers benefiting. Maximising the involvement and promotion with the local angling community is usually a good thing.

Q. We a community club, with 3 different ponds in 3 different parks, would we need to submit separate applications for each park pond?

A. I think that would probably answered by a conversation with your local fisheries officer to find out what your priorities are. 3 in the same year would be unlikely, and we would try and prioritise the most attractive of the 3. Regularly working with clubs, we often strike up really good relationships and find that they can bring a lot to the table. Something which is a big help for us is when the club is a trusted partner with a good track record, who we can rely on to deliver and manage the project effectively.

Q. When working before with the EA, permits were required for work on river platforms, can this be covered from any grant received?

A. Works in river do require something called a 'Flood Risk Assessment Permit' (FRAP) which is administered by a different part of the Environment Agency. There is a cost associated with that – it's something we are in discussion with to try and minimise, but unfortunately that is what the rules currently require. If needed, how the fee is funded would be discussed and agreed. Subsequently we can chase it up internally to ensure the permits are issued in time for the work to commence.

Q. Good Evening Alex & Roger, are FIPs available to commercial type fisheries run as a business? If, yes, then would natural venues canals, rivers, lakes etc be given priority. I say this as most of these natural venues are usually rented by clubs which are not in it for the profits as such.

A. We support FIP projects on any water under any type of ownership. We probably undertook half the projects on stillwaters and half on rivers or canals last year which is in recognition of the fact that many anglers mainly fish stillwaters, which is why FIP isn't only for river work. It's all about the quality of the applicant's idea from whatever water they own or fish to inform a conversation to see whether we can take it forward or not. On a commercial

water we might expect the partner to provide some actual funding e.g 50% of the costs at least.

Q. From personal experience over the past 5 years applying for grants I always had the impression that the FIP was for river work and the AIF was for lakes, from what you have said this is not the case but I wonder how many other clubs thought the same.

A. AIF's last round was geared towards predation measures. Otter fencing is something which is clearly restricted to stillwaters, but AIF has funded mink traps etc on rivers. The next round of AIF will seek applications aiming to tackle invasive non native species. As I have outlined in my presentation FIP has a much wider remit and is available for both river and stillwater fisheries.

Q. Firstly, as previous recipients of FIP grants, we would like to thank the AT and the EA for helping with funding of various projects which have been essential to our fishery and have enabled our club to provide improved angling facilities to our members that in the past few years had helped us achieve a 20% increase in membership. The next essential project we have which requires outside funding is the installation of a permanent aeration solution at our fishery. With increasingly hot summers and ongoing climate change, the risks of deoxygenation in the summertime is especially of concern. As we do not have mains electricity available off grid system is the only real choice for us. Having researched the different options we have identified that a solar powered generator coupled with a pump and air diffuser will be the most practical and cost effective solution. Hopefully, this is something that the EA would be able to assist us with.

A. The short answer again is yes – as I said in the presentation, we are concerned about the impacts on dry weather, and area teams do have a small budget allocated to improve their management and response to drought-related incidents. There are examples of where we've supported clubs to carry out routine monitoring on their waters. We've also part funded removable aerators on club waters that can be deployed if there is a problem. What Toby is referring to here though is probably a step up, where the best solution appears to be solar powered – in the last few years this has really come to the fore and I know of at least one company who produce these kinds of units. FIP has helped towards the funding of these aerators in past for clubs - they're pretty successful and I'm sure the technology and price will come down over time. Typically they cost around £5k at the moment which is just about within the realms of FIP.

It would be a question of assessing the proposal, making sure a club has the right insurance in place, with proper storage and maintenance regimes also considered, which can all be part of the voluntary contribution. Toby has obviously put a lot of research into this and I'd suggest putting the marker

down with your local fisheries officers and seeing if you can get the ball rolling.

Q. Can improvements be done on Council owned land which we have the fishing rights on and that the fishing areas/swims have been reduced over the years. This area was created to help in flood management on the River Medway. A side stream immediately below the Flood barrier used to have good flowing water with gravel beds where Barbel are present. We also had Sand Martins in the river bank but now it is virtually a stillwater as the flow was diverted. Can the flow be returned to its original status?

A. I don't think I'd be able to answer the specifics within your question, but I would suggest to raise this with your local officers who can look into the situation and advise you.

Q. Our Club has benefitted greatly from funding in the past for which we are truly grateful. I submitted an Application on 28th Feb 2020 for general upgrading work (improving swims, pathways etc) I received an email from Chloe (who has been brilliant) advising that Covid has upset smooth running of applications. This is totally understandable. However, I am still waiting to hear whether we have been successful on this 18 month old application.

A. The online applications are collated on a monthly basis and forwarded to me. I'll chase this up. As I receive them I send them out to the relevant areas. (RH Followed up after meeting)

Q. If you have a new water with a 10 year lease agreement, would this be a great project that can be delivered over time?

A. I think 10 years would be a reasonable time frame. I would hope that if you were entering this agreement with the owner of the fishery, they would be part of the discussion in how FIP could fund any work. With a lot of these FIP projects, it's about talking to the club and understanding what the plans are. I would advise any club to have a management plan with aspirations to improve the fishery, with steps to make that happen. If the landowner sees that your acting responsibly then it would only strengthen the relationship you have with them, with a view to perhaps extending the lease beyond the 10 year agreement. In principle, it's something which can certainly be incorporated into the agreement.

Q. On the river fishery I look after half a mile of my bank is always under water. Last year I dragged my local fishery officer up there over his wellingtons in mud and flood water. I have tried many ways to remove the water/mud but can only see a weir removal just below the flooded area will sort the problem. I was told my EA area has

a budget of £24,000 but to remove the weir will be £40,000 plus . The weir removal seemed to get a no answer from my Fishery officer. How can I get some movement our members are desperate to get back to that section of river?

A. I can't give a specific answer on this, but clearly there are some local issues with water levels. You would need to consider who owns the weir and how its removal would be funded. This is probably not within the confines of FIP and there would need to be money from elsewhere in order to make something happen. I have taken your name and will contact the local officers to follow up.

Q. Can FIP projects be done on Council owned lakes, i.e. Otter fencing within a Country Park?

A. Yes to the FIP projects being carried out on council owned lakes, but otter fencing is AIF. Before even thinking about otter fencing though, please talk to the relevant [Angling Trust Fisheries Management Advisor](#), who will be able to give some more immediate advice/ guidance.

Q. We are wanting to improve the control of Canadian pond weed so that fishermen can fish better in high summer. The original chemical was withdrawn a number of years ago.

A. It's not impossible that weed control measures could be included in FIP. What we want to achieve though is a sustainable solution, i.e we wouldn't want to pay for mechanical removal only for the problem to occur again the next year. What we might look at is if the club can do something for themselves with some better advice or equipment. There is some good information already out there online, but you may need seek professional advice and have someone come out to visit the water in question.

Q. Can you explain a little more about match funding, can this be done via membership money or does it have to be from an outside source?

A. Clubs aren't always cash rich, so they might not be able to provide actual money to support a proposal. Revenue from membership sales can of course be used but the key thing can be voluntary contributions as in-kind time. So you can include a cost for the time of volunteers whether this is unskilled labour or otherwise. This is how we build a business case – you might for example have a club member who can access/ operate a digger. Their volunteer time would count at the going rate- see in-kind contribution scale below.

Unskilled/labour = £50 per day

Semi-skilled = £75 per day

Skilled (e.g. project manager) = £150 per day

Professional (e.g. architect/legal) = £300 per day

Key Contact - Roger Handford, roger.handford@environment-agency.gov.uk

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