

Fisheries Improvement Programme 2024

Guidance for applicants

December 2023

In 2023 the Environment Agency will reinvest about £1.3M in projects to support clubs, fisheries and other partners to improve local fish stocks and angling opportunities.

The Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP) is funded from the coarse, trout and eel fishing licence income and provides a direct benefit to anglers.

We are initially making £730k available to support projects, some of which are delivered by partners. This note is aimed at guiding you through the initial submission of ideas via the [Angling Trust portal](#).

Who can apply?

We welcome project proposals from angling clubs, fisheries, NGOs (such as Rivers Trusts and the Wild Trout Trust), local authorities or other community organisations involved in angling.

To be eligible, the projects must be in England and involve a form of angling covered by a valid Environment Agency non-migratory trout and coarse fishing licence. Projects only benefiting salmon or sea trout, and 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 particularly encourage proposals from small angling clubs with limited finances; usually run by volunteers and with smaller needs. Our support 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.

It is not necessary to be an Angling Trust member club or affiliated organisation to apply.

What can you apply for?

To be considered a project must provide angling benefits and the water where the project is planned must be fished. We will prioritise applications from clubs with open membership or fisheries selling day tickets to maximise the number of rod licence holders benefitting. The funding criteria is as follows-

1) Sustainable and resilient fisheries: maintain, improve and develop fisheries to address impacts and pressures, including -

- **Coarse, trout and eel habitat/passage projects:** these are the key reasons for sub-optimal fish stocks.
- **Proactive management of prolonged dry weather and/or climate impacts:** including equipment to monitor water quality and limit the impact of an incident.
- **Improving fisheries management:** it may be sometimes necessary get expert advice or undertake investigations to better understand and manage fish stocks.

Or **2) Accessible angling:** providing better angling access and safe facilities for all, including -

- **Angling infrastructure:** new and upgraded platforms, pegs and pathways for rivers and stillwaters. Considering the needs of less able-bodied anglers and health/well-being benefits.
- **Community and urban fisheries:** supporting partners to develop and manage fisheries in local areas where a need and interest has been identified (may require both habitat and access work).

3) Match funding: all projects should seek to secure additional funds or 'in-kind' support. The ambition is for every £ of rod licence money to be matched by a £2 contribution from partners or external funding sources.

We will not pay for new or replacement fish stocks.

Please be aware that we also reinvest licence income to deliver the [Angling Improvement Fund](#) (focusing on otter/cormorant predation and biosecurity), and the [Get Fishing Fund](#) both are currently administered on our behalf by the Angling Trust. The intention is to offer these funds again in 2024, more details will be made available when these opportunities become available.

How much funding can I apply for?

Initially we have up to £730k available in 2024 for projects to commence in May. If fishing licence sales go well, we expect to release additional funds later in the year (October) and may invite further project ideas over the summer.

We split the amount available in each [Environment Agency Area](#) based on the level of coarse and trout fishing interests.

Area	FIP Budget	Area	FIP Budget
Cumbria & Lancashire	40k	Lincs & Northants	40k
Devon, Cornwall & IoS	30k	North East	30k
East Anglia	90k	Solent & South Downs	45k
East Midlands	45k	Thames	50k
Gt. Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire	55k	Wessex	50k
Herts & North London	40k	West Midlands	95k
Kent, South London & East Sussex	50k	Yorkshire	70k

Most individual projects receive less than £5k each and we expect all to provide evidence of match funding: applicants should contribute additional funds, secure grants/contribution from other sources, and offer 'in-kind' support.

We would expect commercial partners to provide more actual cash funding than charities or volunteer groups/clubs.

The value of volunteers can be calculated using the following rates:

General, unskilled labour	Specialist, skilled, trained labour	Specialist services	Professional services
Per hour £8.91/ Per day £71	£26.10 / £208	£43.50 / £348	£70 / £560
Supervised scrub clearance, ditch-digging, planting, basic administrative support	Operations for which certificated training is a requirement, such as operating dangerous equipment, driving off-road vehicles, using chemicals	Supervising, training labour teams, surveys, counts, trapping, ringing, diving, printing, designing, photography	Consultants, lawyers, planners, engineers, accountants, auditors

We encourage you to identify and work with other partners and stakeholders. For example, if you are leasing a fishery you will need to involve the landowner. Working on rivers may benefit from working with your local Rivers Trust or the Wild Trout Trust. In an urban setting there may be a good reason to contact your local authority or other community groups. As well as being able to provide advice these partners could contribute funding.

It is often the case that with a little investment and providing appropriate advice/training that a proactive club or fishery can take on more responsibility. There are good examples of water quality monitoring, making and deploying floating islands and having a tool bank to enable owners to cut weed and undertake bankside tree and vegetation management.

We cannot pay for work already completed or pay for materials/services already purchased.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0345 988 1188

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We will be unable to fund everything, and therefore applicants should be realistic in their expectations. We will review all ideas and seek to progress the best ones. It is important that any approvals or permits are either already in place or are being progressed (we will not support projects without the necessary assurances). If we are unable to financially support your idea, we may still be able to provide advice on the issue you are facing.

Key Dates

Date	What is required
14 December 2023	Project on-line portal hosted by the Angling Trust opens. External partners are encouraged to provide potential project ideas. When a proposal has been completed and submitted it will be checked that all fields have been correctly entered. Applicants will either be contacted to clarify information or receive a confirmation.
14 February 2024	Portal closes and projects proposals are quality assured by the Angling Trust.
March- April 2024	Project are forwarded to the Environment Agency for review, prioritisation and decision on whether to fund or not complete.
1 May 2024	Commence delivery of 24/25 Fisheries Improvement Programme projects. Successful applicants contacted by Area officers to agree project arrangements. Unsuccessful applicants informed.
June-August 2024	The portal may reopen if income from rod licence sales allows
September- October 2024	Repeat review and make additional funding decisions
March 2025	Complete all FIP projects and ensure payments are made in full.

How to proceed

Therefore, if you have any ideas we need to know about these soon!

We cannot stress enough the importance of engaging early with your local fisheries officer- it is much better to discuss your plans taking on board any advice, before applying, rather than just submitting a speculative idea.

Complete the online application form. Answer all the questions as this will enable us to assess your project, we are looking to fund works where there is a good understanding of the need and benefits. We also need to be confident that the work required can be safely delivered on budget and to time.

Projects will be reviewed and funded using the following assessment criteria:

- The size of your club/number of angler visits
- Justification of the need and design details
- A robust project delivery plan
- An accurate budget that shows match funding offered

We may ask to see copies of:

- The organisation's most recent audited accounts, recent bank statements, or equivalent
- Evidence of prices or copies of quotations
- Confirmation of partnership funding, or offers/promises of funding
- A copy of the lease agreement for the site where the project will take place (if applicable)
- Confirmation that Public Liability Insurance cover is in place

The following is a selection of permissions or consents that you may need to obtain:

- Utility/Services search
- Land registry search (if required)
- Planning Permission. The Local Authority should always be consulted on construction projects. This will have cost and timescale implications and may require supporting information such as ecological surveys, archaeology interest and a formal flood risk assessment
- [Flood Risk Environmental Permit](#)

Organisations you may need to consult, depending on the nature of the project:

- Landowner consultation. Also if entry or access over land is required
- Natural England - works in a designated conservation area are likely to need formal assent
- Historic England
- Forestry Commission
- Other local interest groups

All communication will be with the main contact person as detailed on the form, by email or by phone.

Successful applicants will be required to sign a project agreement and accept our Terms and Conditions (T&C's) governing the delivery of the project. In some circumstances, offers may be made for less than the amount applied for. Payments will be made directly to the organisations bank account, not to individuals, and in most cases after the work has been completed or with evidence of spend.

Before commencing your project, you should consider your responsibilities under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM 2015) and the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. Appointing a contractor to do the work does not mean that you do not have responsibilities. A [free leaflet](#) can be downloaded from the HSE website.

To comply with insurance requirements, it is normally expected that you must carry out a risk assessment, to consider the safety of your members and the public. This should be completed by a person with the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience, and training.

A good reference for Health and Safety advice is a recent [virtual forum](#) presentation and accompanying notes on the subject.

On completion of a successful project, we expect the work to be promoted either through a traditional press release or using social media channels. We want to spread the word about good news angling stories and how we reinvest licence income to support clubs and fisheries.

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 licence sales remain strong then we plan to make more money available for FIP projects later in 2024 and we plan to repeat this offer in future years.

Any Questions?

If you want to discuss your idea with an Environment Agency fisheries officer call 03708 506 506 and ask for your local officer.

For advice on filling out the online form contact Andy Petch or Chloe Guy at the Angling Trust (aifadmin@anglingtrust.net).

For general questions about the Fisheries Improvement Programme contact Roger Handford (roger.handford@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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