

Fisheries Improvement Programme 2025

Guidance for applicants

December 2024

In 2024 the Environment Agency will reinvest about £1.1M 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 £820k available to support projects, most of which are developed and delivered by angling clubs and other partners. We have been able to increase the amount due to the savings (£320k) from stopping the production of picture licence cards.

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 clubs, fisheries, NGOs, 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 an 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 and fisheries where the maximum number of anglers benefit and that the organisation actively promotes and checks the need for a rod licence. 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 and fish 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).

We will not pay for new or replacement fish stocks.

We encourage all fishery managers and applicants to have a documented development plan to show they have considered what needs to be actioned and prioritised to improve their club and fishery. See the [ATs Fisheries Support Service](#) for more advice and a template.

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 administered on our behalf by the Angling Trust. The AIF will be available again in the Spring 2025.

How much funding can I apply for?

We have £820k available initially for projects in 2025. If fishing licence sales go well, we may make available more money later in the year. We split the budget into [Environment Agency Area](#) allocations based on the level of coarse and trout fishing interests.

| Area | FIP Budget | Area | FIP Budget |
|--|------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Cumbria & Lancashire | 45k | Lincs & Northants | 45k |
| Devon, Cornwall & IoS | 35k | North East | 35k |
| East Anglia | 100k | Solent & South Downs | 50k |
| East Midlands | 50k | Thames | 55k |
| Gt. Manchester, Merseyside & Cheshire | 63k | Wessex | 55k |
| Herts & North London | 45k | West Midlands | 105k |
| Kent, South London & East Sussex | 55k | Yorkshire | 80k |

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

- Aim for every £ of rod licence money to secure £2 of match funding
- Every partner should provide a cash contribution (for 'commercial' clubs and fisheries the expectation is that they provide at least 50%)
- Volunteer time is also important and should be accurately estimated using the following rates (totals are automatically calculated in the portal application form):

| General, unskilled labour | Specialist, skilled, trained labour | Specialist services | Professional services |
|--|--|---|---|
| Per hour £11.44/ Per day £84.66 | £31.03 / £229.61 | £51.72 / £382.70 | £83.19 / £615.64 |
| Eg supervised scrub clearance, ditch-digging, planting, basic administrative support | Eg certificated activities which require training, such as operating dangerous equipment, driving off-road vehicles, using chemicals | Eg supervising, training, surveys, diving, designing, photography | Eg consultants, lawyers, planners, engineers, auditors, accountants |

Consider working with other partners and stakeholders. If you are leasing a fishery you will need to involve the landowner. Your local Rivers Trust or the Wild Trout Trust can help support projects on rivers and in urban environments contact your local authority or other community groups. As well as being able to provide advice these partners could contribute funding.

A small investment and providing appropriate advice/training enables proactive clubs and fisheries to take on more responsibility. Good examples are water quality monitoring, making floating islands, weed control and bankside vegetation management.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0345 988 1188

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

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

We will be unable to fund everything 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).

FIP funding support comes from rod licence income, therefore there is an expectation that recipients have a club rule that members must have a valid rod licence or at commercial venues a day-ticket is only sold to licenced anglers.

On completion of a successful project, we expect the work to be promoted such as onsite signs or using social media.

If we are unable to financially support your idea, we may still be able to provide advice on the issues faced.

Key Dates

| Date | What is required |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 16 December 2024 | Project on-line portal hosted by the Angling Trust opens. When a proposal has been it will be checked that all fields have been correctly entered. Applicants will either be contacted to clarify information. |
| 31 January 2025 | Portal closes and projects proposals are quality assured by the Angling Trust. |
| February- March 2025 | Project are forwarded to the Environment Agency for review, prioritisation and decision on whether to fund or not complete. |
| April 2025 | Commence delivery of 24/25 Fisheries Improvement Programme projects. Successful applicants contacted by Area officers to agree project arrangements. Unsuccessful applicants informed. |
| July 2025 | The portal may reopen if income from rod licence sales allows |
| October 2025 | Provide additional funding for further projects |
| March 2026 | 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.

It is good practice for a club or fishery owner to have a management plan setting out actions to improve the venue and stocks and therefore identifying where and how FIP investment is needed. A more general club development plan that could be used is available [here](#).

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:

- Evidence of prices or copies of quotations
- Confirmation of partnership 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 organisation's most recent audited accounts, recent bank statements, or equivalent

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.

The Angling Trust provide a [Fisheries Support Service](#), including some useful [Health and Safety advice](#).

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.

Any Questions?

Talk to your local Environment Agency fisheries officer to discuss your idea or if you have any fisheries management questions. If you don't have a named contact call 03708 506 506 and ask for your local officer.

For advice on filling out the online form contact Andy Petch (07495 433626) 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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