

**GUIDANCE NOTE**  
**Angling Improvement Fund 2025/26**  
**FISH PROTECTION & PREDATION MANAGEMENT**



**Introduction**

The Angling Trust, with the support of the Environment Agency (EA), is seeking new applications for the 2025/26 Angling Improvement Fund (AIF).

The AIF is funded by income generated through the sale of the EA's coarse and non-migratory trout fishing licences and aims to provide a direct benefit to anglers. It was established in 2015 and since then has reinvested £3m of fishing licence income into projects that directly benefit fisheries in England.

In the 2024/25 round, 39 projects were funded.

**When does the Fund open and close?**

The application portal **opens on 17<sup>th</sup> March and will close during the summer for 6 weeks and for a period of 4 weeks around Christmas.**

The year-round opening process means that applicants do not have to rush their application to fit within a set limited period as in previous years. The Fund will be able to respond to predation problems quicker when they arrive. Therefore, we will only seek to make awards to applicants who are in a position to proceed with their project promptly.

Applicants will be notified if they have been successful or not within 3 weeks of submitting their application form.

**Who is eligible?**

- Angling clubs
- Commercial angling venues
- Syndicate fisheries
- Local authorities who provide angling facilities
- Charities
- Community Organisation or CICs

Governance documentation, proof of insurance, statement of accounts, lease or rental agreements, written landowner consent and any other documentation deemed necessary, may be required to be provided in order for an application to be considered for funding.

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

Any project **must** be based in England and involve a form of angling covered by a valid EA non-migratory trout and coarse fishing licence.

**There must already be angling taking place at the site.**

We will prioritise awards to clubs and fisheries where there is the greatest benefit to rod licence holders. Therefore, free fishing waters, or clubs with open membership will be preferred to venues with restricted access arrangements (syndicates for example). The number of anglers, or day tickets sales will also be considered.

**Contacts:**

**Andy Petch – Angling Improvement Fund Manager – [andy.petch@anglingtrust.net](mailto:andy.petch@anglingtrust.net)**

**Chloe Guy – Angling Improvement Fund Administrator – [chloe.guy@anglingtrust.net](mailto:chloe.guy@anglingtrust.net)**

**[anglingtrust.net](http://anglingtrust.net)**

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### **What is the maximum award applicants can apply for?**

The maximum award will be restricted to **£6,000** per project. (please refer to page 3 for treatment of VAT).

Applicants should attempt to match the award with a similar amount of funding from their own sources. This may include cash, volunteer time, donations, or a combination of all three. However, the greater a contribution by an applicant in cash, the more favourably their application will be scored.

Commercial venues cash contribution must be equal to or greater than the grant applied for. An applicant may be offered less than the total amount requested.

### **Notification of results and payments**

**All communication will be with the main contact person as detailed on the form,** by email or by phone. Successful applications will be required to sign and return an Award Acceptance Form.

**Payment is made on completion of the project once receipts and photos have been received.** This may necessitate a site visit.

Your organisation must have a bank account for business purposes in the name of your organisation. Payments will be made directly to the organisation's bank account, not to individuals.

### **When must successful projects be completed by?**

Successful applicants will be expected to complete any funded project works within 3 months of the award acceptance form being received. This includes sending copies of receipts/invoices and photographic evidence of the completed project to [AIFadmin@anglingtrust.net](mailto:AIFadmin@anglingtrust.net).

### **What species are eligible?**

Funding is available to support non-lethal and legal techniques to manage unsustainable predation at sites by:

- Mammals such as otters and mink
- Birds such as cormorant, goosander, and other fish eaters

We **do not fund** projects involving the removal of:

- Signal crayfish
- Seals
- Catfish
- Zander
- Any other non-native species or predatory fish

Projects solely benefiting migratory salmon or sea angling projects are not eligible.

If you are uncertain whether your predator is eligible, please contact one of our Fishery Management Advisors before making an application.

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### **Suitable projects for funding**

Please note: **The fund will not pay for work already completed or materials/services already purchased.**

- Well planned projects that demonstrate a good understanding of the current impacts of predatory species at the site
- Evidence is shown of the real need for action
- Independent expert advice has been sought, preferably from an Angling Trust Fishery Management Advisor (FMA)
- The project should be sustainable over several years thereby safeguarding fish stocks and angling opportunities

We need evidence that the applicants have at their disposal the expertise to deliver their project within the timescales permitted.

### **What works are eligible?**

- Installation, repair and material costs of otter proof fencing (Stillwaters only)
- Provision of fish refuges including marginal planting (Stillwaters only)
- Removal or modification of bird loafing and roosting sites
- Non-lethal equipment such as auditory and visual deterrents
- Fees to bona-fide professional contractors to implement the project
- Mink management - Mink control should ideally linked to existing catchment wide mink control/eradication projects. As a result there are some parts of the country now considered mink free (such as most of East Anglia). For more information on this work visit [Waterlife Recovery Trust - Saving our native wildlife from the introduced American Mink](#).
- Other measures aimed at reduction of predation

### **What is not eligible for AIF funding?**

- Routine maintenance of the fishery
- Advertising, marketing or promotion costs
- Purchasing new or replacement fish stock

**If you are uncertain that your project will qualify, please contact [aifadmin@anglingtrust.net](mailto:aifadmin@anglingtrust.net) before applying.**

### **Advice on the prevention of otter predation**

More information about otter predation can be found by following the links below:

<https://anglingtrust.net/fma/otters/>

<https://anglingtrust.net/regional-forums/virtual-fisheries-forums/#maintaining-your-otter-fence>

The Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) is native to the UK and protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is an offence to disturb or kill otters without a license from Natural England.

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### **Advice on cormorant and goosander predation**

More information about fish eating birds can be found by following the links below:

<https://anglingtrust.net/fma/cormorants-goosanders/>

<https://anglingtrust.net/regional-forums/virtual-fisheries-forums/#cormorant-management>

The Angling Trust employs two **Fishery Management Advisors** who can offer free advice to applicants.

Richard Bamforth (North and Midlands)

[Richard.bamforth@anglingtrust.net](mailto:Richard.bamforth@anglingtrust.net)

Jake Davoile (South and East)

[Jake.davoile@anglingtrust.net](mailto:Jake.davoile@anglingtrust.net)

### **Assessment criteria**

Provision of funding will be based on the information given on the application form.

It is therefore essential that:

- Evidence of predation is provided. For example, photographic evidence from the affected venue, catch reports or reduction in attendance as a result
- Confirmation and evidence that you have sought expert advice
- A clear project delivery plan
- An effective design that meets the objectives of the project by the specified completion date
- A concise accurate budget plan that shows the applicant's contribution which should preferably be a minimum of 50% of the total value of the project
- Commercial venues cash contribution must be equal to or greater than the grant applied for.
- Clear evidence of the benefits the project will provide
- Clear evidence that the improvements made will be sustainable into the future

### **Treatment of VAT**

Many angling clubs will not be VAT-registered and therefore unable to recover VAT on purchases. These clubs will receive the amount in full including VAT up to a maximum of £6,000.

Where the organisation is VAT-registered, and so able to recover VAT, the award will only cover the net amount, which again must not exceed £6,000.

### **Match funding and voluntary time**

Preference will be given to projects that offer a significant cash match-funding commitment. However, labour, materials or expertise will also be considered and taken into account.

When assessing the costs of voluntary labour, the budget section of the application form has pre populated rates based on national minimum wage. This gives uniformity to applications. Applicants therefore, only need to input the number of days or part days contributed from the following categories.

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<b>General, unskilled labour</b>	<b>Skilled, trained labour</b>	<b>Specialist services</b>	<b>Professional services</b>
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

### **Application process**

1. Read the Guidance Note
2. Complete an Expression of Interest Form and email it to [aifapplications@anglingtrust.net](mailto:aifapplications@anglingtrust.net)
3. The Angling Improvement Fund Manager will notify you of the next steps in the application process. This can take up to 10 working days.
4. Contact with your relevant Fishery Management Advisor will be made, if it has not been already
5. If the project is suitable, access will then be granted to the portal where an application form must be completed
6. Your application will be considered by the judging panel
7. Notification of the decision will be communicated within 3 weeks of submission

In the event of any queries or questions please contact the AIF Admin Team on; [AIFAdmin@anglingtrust.net](mailto:AIFAdmin@anglingtrust.net) or ring 0115 822 4561 or 07495 433626.

### **Terms and Conditions**

Successful applicants will be required to read sign and accept our Terms and Conditions (T&C's) governing the delivery of the project.

### **Health and Safety**

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. Remember, just appointing a contractor to do the work does not mean that you do not have responsibilities.**

**You must carry out a Risk Assessment before starting any work as without doing so may invalidate any insurance cover you have.** This should be completed by a person with the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience, and training.

We strongly recommend that you view our forum held in December 2023.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSICRNOqlrA>

A free leaflet can be downloaded from the HSE website at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg411.pdf>

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The following are examples of permissions or consents (but not restricted to) that you may need to obtain, and organisations you may need to consult, depending on the nature of the project.

- Utility/Services Search
- Land Registry Search (if required)
- Flood Risk Environmental Permit, refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>

External consultation (could) include:

- Landowner consultation if entry or access over land is required
- Local Authority (planning and potentially archaeology). The Local Planning Authority may need to be consulted on construction projects. This will have cost and timescale implications and may require supporting information such as ecological surveys and a formal flood risk assessment
- Natural England - if the project is in a designated conservation area, works are likely to need formal assent
- Historic England
- Forestry Commission
- Other local interest groups

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