

Decade of transformation: Environment Agency marks £10 million milestone in fisheries restoration

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Fishing licence income delivers £10 million of investment in fisheries since 2015.

The Environment Agency is celebrating a £10 million milestone for its Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP), marking a decade of community-led conservation that has improved fisheries and supported outdoor recreation across England.

Since 2015, the programme has delivered 1,585 projects, with £10 million of fishing licence income matched by £15 million from partner organisations, creating £25 million of combined investment in local fisheries. In 2024/25 alone, FIP improved or protected 61 kilometres of rivers, enhanced 204 hectares of stillwater fisheries, and directly benefited 180,000 anglers.

The programme supports projects developed by angling clubs, volunteer groups, schools, charities and local organisations. From stabilising eroding riverbanks and restoring overgrown ponds to installing accessible fishing platforms and planting thousands of trees, the work spans nature recovery, social inclusion and community wellbeing.

In Cumbria, more than 5,300 trees were planted along the River Derwent in 2025, with thousands of volunteer hours invested in restoring spawning habitats and improving access for families and anglers.

In Shrewsbury, FIP has helped make 2.5 kilometres of riverbank safer and more accessible by replacing hazardous, flood damaged platforms with new fishing pegs. The improvements mean local anglers, including junior anglers, older visitors and people with disabilities, can return to stretches of the River Severn that had become difficult and unsafe to reach.

And at the Wish Stream in Sandhurst, FIP funding supported habitat improvements to 600 metres of river running through the Royal Military Academy. Working with the Wild Trout Trust and military volunteers, the project removed obstructions, tackled invasive plants and restored natural flow. These changes have helped support the stream's wild trout population and the estate's wider wildlife.

Heidi Stone, Fisheries Partnerships Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

For ten years, fishing licence income has helped deliver thousands of improvements that make a real difference to anglers and the communities around them.

This milestone is a testament to the volunteers, clubs and partners who have matched our commitment with their own time, expertise and energy.

Every fishing licence sold helps create lasting value for local fisheries where the money available allows local innovation and improvements, increasing the fairness of opportunity for everyone. We look forward to continuing that work with the angling community for years to come.

As families begin planning their spring and summer outdoor activities, the Fisheries Improvement Programme continues to support safer access, improved habitats and inclusive opportunities for people to enjoy spending time by the water.

Andy Petch, Fisheries Funding Manager at the Angling Trust, said:

The Fisheries Improvement Programme is a fantastic opportunity for clubs and organisations to gain grant funding to improve their fisheries for the benefit of anglers, and a great way for people to see how their rod licence money is reinvested into the sport.

Over the past ten years more than £10 million has been awarded to clubs and fisheries across the country, from Alnwick in the North East to the tip of Cornwall.

It's not all about licence checks on the bank – improving accessibility and safety through reinvested funds will help shape the future of our sport for years to come.

Full details of how rod licence income is reinvested to protect and improve England's fisheries can be found in the Environment Agency's annual fisheries report.

Information about future rounds of the Fisheries Improvement Programme will be available later this year on the Angling Trust's website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/decade-of-transformation-environment-agency-marks-10-million-milestone-in-fisheries-restoration>