

Rod licence income benefits fisheries in Wessex

The Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme (known as FIP) has seen nearly £27,000 of rod licence income invested in projects in Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire over the last 12 months.

The projects were delivered in collaboration with many different partners, including local angling clubs, rivers trusts and landowners.

Kitty O'Shea, for the Environment Agency, said:

Anglers often ask us about how we spend the money raised from the sale of fishing licences. The Fisheries Improvement Programme is a prime example of the wide range of activities this income pays for in order to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries.

All of the projects we fund must demonstrate benefits for anglers. The Fisheries Improvement Programme allows us to identify and invest in work supporting a local, sustainable future for angling.

The programme is also a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, with many of the projects completed with the support of landowners, local businesses and fisheries clubs – it's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest.

Local FIP projects across Wessex in 2021/22 included:

The Weir Warden Project

This is the 5th year of a joint project between the Frome, Piddle & West Dorset Fisheries Association and Westcountry Rivers Trust, funded by FIP. The partnership has set up the Frome, Piddle & West Dorset Barrier Group, which focusses on addressing barriers to fish migration on the rivers Frome, Piddle (its tributaries) and the West Dorset Streams. Two Weir Wardens, administered by the Westcountry Rivers Trust, focus on managing third party structures with owners to ensure they are blockage free and do not pose a threat to fish during optimum migration periods.

Lavington Lakes, Great Cheverell, near Devizes, Wiltshire

Improved access facilities have been made possible through the Fisheries Improvement Programme at this fishery, home of Lavington Angling Club. Better drainage and footpaths for anglers during winter months allows better access to swims. Overgrown vegetation has been cleared from the lakes, returning them to prime condition.

Damerham Wild Trout Project on the River Allen, Hampshire

Funds from the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvements Programme have enabled the Wild Trout Trust to enhance the biodiversity of a one mile stretch of the river Allen. They have installed brush mattresses and pinned in logs in different positions to create good habitats for insect life and small mammals and as well as cover for fish fry and holding pools for trout.

River Yeo, Near Yeovilton, Somerset

Following issues with fish numbers, the Westcountry Rivers Trust, in partnership with the Ilchester & District Angling Association (IDAA) and the Environment Agency, investigated the habitats and barriers to migration in the River Yeo. A programme of work was identified to improve fish populations as well as improve the river's ecosystem overall. Work was carried out to allow light on to spawning gravels and provide additional habitats within the river.

Lower Wood Ponds, near Peasedown St. John, near Bath

Bath Spartans have installed new lily beds, 6 semi-permanent floating islands and created new marginal weed beds to improve the habitat and provide refuge areas for fish. They have also improved access to 8 fishing pegs.

Teffont fly fishing club on the River Nadder between Chicks Grove and Dinton, Wiltshire

Funded by FIP, Teffont Fly Fishing Club, in partnership with the Wild Trout Trust, have improved spawning habitat and flow diversity by installing habitat features such as large woody debris, flow deflectors and berms. This will create faster flowing riffle areas for spawning and juvenile habitat and also create areas of refuge for larger fish.

Fishponds Lido, Bristol

Due to the steep banks and steps at Fishponds Lido, access was difficult for those that are less able bodied. FIP funding has enabled the Alcove Angling Association to construct a new sloped access point from the car park area to the existing path around the lake, stabilise the path and install a hand rail to improve access for all.