

Scotland's water environment is not only an intrinsic part of our landscape but also a vital asset, providing habitats to support wildlife and ecosystems, as well as resources for our tourism, recreation, agricultural and energy industries. However, over the years Scotland's water environment has been subjected to various physical pressures, resulting in many of our rivers, lochs, wetlands and coastlines being a shadow of what they once were.

Photos: SEPA contributed funds to a project run by the Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust (ERFT) to restore the course of the Rottal Burn, a major tributary of the River South Esk in Glen Clova.

Improving our water environment

At SEPA, we work to preserve and improve the water environment through regulation, monitoring and planning. We also manage the Water Environment Fund which provides funding to projects that aim to enhance and improve those waters in need of restoration.

Funding of over a £1 million is available annually, which is provided by SEPA and the Scottish Government. The primary focus of the funding is to tackle impacts on the morphology or physical condition of these ecosystems.



Before



During construction



First flow



After the first flow

Why are we doing this?

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires us to prevent the deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and, where possible, restore surface waters and groundwaters damaged by human activities to 'good status' (as defined by the directive) by 2015.

We are improving Scotland's water environment through regulatory means by licensing and monitoring individuals and companies that carry out activities that can adversely affect the water environment. However, where impacts of a historic activity or structure exist, for example a redundant weir associated with an abandoned mill, the potential to restore through the funds exist.

What will we fund?

We are keen to see improvements delivered through partnership-working, with external stakeholders taking forward projects that will deliver improvements beyond what is required through regulation or normal duties.

We welcome applications from projects which help contribute to the WFD objectives, as set out in Scotland's river basin management plan and tackle physical pressures affecting the water environment. Ideally, the project should also deliver wider environmental, social and economic benefits.

Projects can be as simple as promoting native bank side vegetation or as complex as tackling catchment scale restoration whilst incorporating natural flood management.

Examples include:

- restoring natural processes in rivers or lochs;
- engineering degraded rivers to restore natural profiles by, for example, recreating meanders;
- removing or modifying weirs to improve fish passage, flow and sediment movement;
- restoring flood plains, coastal intertidal zones and wetlands;
- scoping studies to assess costed options for physical restoration works.

Who can apply?

The fund is open to anyone, including community groups, fishery trusts, environmental charities and landowners. Councils can apply for funds towards capital costs for projects where they do not have a duty to carry out the work.

How and when can I apply?

Applications for under £10,000 will be considered at any time during the year and we aim to respond within six weeks of receipt of application.

Applications for greater than £10,000 are considered four times a year (deadlines are posted on our website). We aim to respond within six weeks of the closing date for each round.

Applicants should be aware that, at present, they must deliver the proposals by the 1 March of the same financial year.

For more information, visit our website, email or write to us at:

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More information

River basin management plans:
www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx

Current water body classification status:
<http://gis.sepa.org.uk/rbmp>



Water environment fund

- your questions answered

