**Ten steps to a successful Water Environment Fund (WEF) application**

**Step 1: You have identified an opportunity to improve the water environment**

Many of Scotland’s watercourses have been impacted by centuries of development. In some cases exploitation has led to a serious degradation of the health of the watercourse. Improvements to the channel morphology can reverse these impacts and bring about benefits to both society and biodiversity.

**Step 2: Consider the options for improvement**

It is likely that you have an idea as to the type of options for habitat improvement. However, funding a formal assessment of the options is often the first step before moving to full restoration works. The Water Environment Fund is available to support morphological improvements that raise the ‘Ecological Status’ of the watercourse. Think about the type of project you envisage and check the Funding processes and principles section of the website.

**Step 3: Discuss your idea with one of SEPA’s restoration specialists**

A SEPA Restoration Specialist will be able to discuss the eligibility of a proposed project with you and can support you through the application process. You will need to provide a contact name, preferred method of correspondence and National Grid Reference along with your enquiry.

**Step 4: Establish the type of project you have**

The WEF supports various phases of river restoration from scoping out options through to in-channel works. It is important that you understand which phase you project will fall under. Speak to a SEPA restoration specialist or use the flow chart on the website.

**Step 5: Develop a project plan**

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.

**Step 6: Apply for funding**

If you have reached this step a SEPA Restoration Specialist will be assigned to your project. They will be responsible for helping you through the application process and can review you application form prior to submission. 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 three times a year. We aim to respond within six weeks of the closing date.

**Step 7: Restoration Group consider application**

Your application will be assessed by the Restoration Group, consisting of representatives from Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland. The Group is chaired by SEPA who have who have the final say in approval of applications.

**Step 8: Application is either successful or returned**

SEPA will contact the applicant to let them know whether the application has been approved for funding or not. In the case of applications for >£10K this will be within 6 weeks of submission. For larger applications notification will be issues within 6 weeks of the application deadlines. If your application is declined you should speak to the assigned Restoration Specialist for feedback and help with a resubmission if this is desired.

**Step 9: The Funding priority is assigned to the project**

In years when the Fund is oversubscribed, the release of funds may be dependent on the prioritisation of the project. Projects that aim to deliver a range of different benefits are likely to be prioritised for funding within the financial year.

**Step 10: Funds will be released**

Funding will be released and the progress of the project will be reviewed periodically by the Restoration Specialist