

£39,000 invested in fisheries in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire

This financial year, over 170 projects were funded by the Environment Agency's Fisheries Improvement Programme (FIP).

The FIP funding has been matched by partners including local angling clubs and fisheries, resulting in a total estimated investment of over £3.2 million.

The Environment Agency fisheries teams in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire were assigned just under £39,000 to deliver local improvements which would benefit wildlife and anglers.

Overgrown vegetation which was covering a section of the river, making it impossible fish. The Environment Agency worked with partners to remove this.

£15,000 was used on a backwater enhancement project on the river Great Ouse at Eaton Ford on the lower section.

A backwater is an aquatic habitat which connects to the main river and has two important functions depending on the flow.

In high flows the backwater becomes a refuge for adult fish to rest in until the normal flows return.

In normal flows, the shallower water left in the backwater will warm up quicker than the main channel and promote the growth of young fish.

The £15,000 project was a partnership with the Environment Agency, St Neots Angling society, Huntingdonshire District Council and St Neots Town Council.

The river once the vegetation was removed.

The work involved removing silt which increased the depth of the channel and clearing plants which were making it impossible for anglers to fish.

Several fishing platforms were also constructed and fallen tree branches were removed to improve accessibility for fishing.

An additional £10,000 was spent on a separate backwater enhancement project further along the river Great Ouse at Eaton Ford.

Taken before the project, the overgrown vegetation and willow which were causing problems for anglers.

This partnership project was carried out with Luton Angling Club. The project enhanced habitat on the river by removing over grown willow which grows rapidly and causes accessibility issues for anglers.

Silt was also removed from the backwater to deepen the area for fish and to provide better fishing conditions and safer access.

This area is used by members of Luton Angling Club with mobility impairments who find accessing the main river bank difficult.

The same section of river as the previous image but after the work had been completed.

The silt removed from both of the backwater projects was used to re-profile the banks, this makes the bank stronger. It was also re-seeded with wild flower mix to benefit pollinators.

Four other projects benefited from the FIP funding, which included an in-channel restoration project on the river Nar and access improvements at Hinchingsbrooke Park Lake. This consisted of new fishing platforms, signage and vegetation control.

Chris Middleton, a fisheries officer in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, said:

The Fisheries Improvement Programme gives us the opportunity to make a real difference that benefits anglers, wildlife and the environment. It is also a great way of re-investing fishing licence income in projects that improve fisheries and angling.

It was great being able to work with our partners who delivered these key projects and we are looking forward to getting stuck in with this year's projects.

Roger Handford, Environment Agency Senior Fisheries Advisor, said:

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

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Manager said:

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 a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, many of the projects completed with the support of land owners, local businesses and fisheries. It's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest.

Looking forward, the Environment Agency wants to hear from more clubs and fisheries about the work and projects they would like to see undertaken.