

£24.5 million of catchment scale restoration

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Society needs water for life. To provide this, **we need to reduce pollution** that comes from the way land is used and improve the landscape through which water flows.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) created the **Catchment Restoration Fund (CRF)** to support this aim. A £28 million fund, providing between £8 million and £10 million for three years ending in 2015, was allocated for projects to be delivered between September 2012 and March 2015. The Environment Agency is administering the CRF to support third sector groups to bring forward projects that will at a catchment level:

- restore natural features in and around watercourses
- reduce the impact of man-made structures on wildlife in watercourses
- reduce the impact of diffuse pollution that arises from rural and urban land use.

How is the CRF administered and how was funding awarded?

By the end of May 2012, we at the Environment Agency received **131 applications for over £54 million of work** during two rounds of bidding to the fund.

A national panel chaired by the **Environment Agency**, with representatives from **Defra** and **Natural England** considered technical assessments and local priorities in recommending grant awards, with the **River Restoration Centre** acting in an advisory capacity.

Forty-two projects were approved, with a combined value of £24.5 million. Approval was given to those projects which were of a high priority within their catchment as assessed by liaison panels, and where the technical experts in the Environment Agency, Natural England and the River Restoration Centre had high confidence in delivery. Many of the successful bids embraced partnership funding, collaborative working and in some cases also supported innovation.

Anticipated impact of the successful applications

As a result of these projects, **over three hundred water bodies** will receive habitat improvement, improved access for fish or reductions in diffuse pollution, making significant steps towards more waters at good status as well as providing wider benefits to society and the environment.

These funds also bolster the contributions from hundreds of partners in local communities, led by charitable organisations such as **river trusts, wildlife trusts**, the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** and other **local action groups**.

Is there a deadline for further bids?

At this stage there will not be a further round of CRF bidding within the current Spending Review period (up to March 2015). This is due to the need to accommodate some increased financial pressures from some projects and from **delays caused by the bad weather in 2012**, leaving less flexibility in the fund than previously thought. In addition, there has been a continued need for Defra to manage spending in order to address a wide range of important environmental issues whilst living within its available funding.

We are aware that there are many organisations that had been looking to a third round. Indeed there are many projects that did not receive funding in rounds 1 and 2 anticipating a third round too. The Environment Agency is actively pursuing and advising on alternative sources of funding for strong project proposals.



Burley Mill weir half in flood. Fish passage at this weir on the River Aire is being addressed in one of the CRF projects



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