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## River Forth Fisheries Trust Secures Heritage Lottery Fund support for major catchment restoration project in Central Scotland

The River Forth Fisheries Trust has received continued support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Scottish Government, Scottish Environment Protection Agency's Water Environment Fund (SEPA WEF), City of Edinburgh and West Lothian Councils to deliver RiverLife: Almond & Avon, a project totalling £6.7 Million.

The Trust has been awarded £1.65 Million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help the River Forth Fisheries Trust deliver a major integrated catchment improvement project in the central belt of Scotland within the catchments of the River Almond and River Avon. The project has been developed alongside communities over the past year and will now be delivered over a four-year period from mid-2016 until mid-2020. The project will focus on improving urban rivers whilst engaging communities so rivers can be used as a resource for recreation and learning whilst promoting sustainable stewardship of our rivers.

RiverLife: Almond & Avon is made up of multiple projects. These projects include:

- The Almond Barriers Project – easing six weirs along the River Almond to help migratory fish such as salmon and sea trout into spawning habitat upstream.
- Killandean Blue/Green Network Project – easing a weir and improving instream habitat for aquatic wildlife whilst improving paths, bins, benches, public art and more.
- Bathgate Water Restoration Project – restoring 1.2km of river through the heart of Bathgate, improving path networks, viewing platforms, natural play areas and community facilities.
- Upper Avon Restoration Project – working with landowners to restore instream habitat and the banks of the river for the benefit of wildlife.
- Almond / Avon Invasive Species Project – continue to control a number of Invasive Non-Native Species along rivers in both catchments.
- Riverfly Monitoring Project – a citizen science project engaging communities to monitor riverfly to create an overview of water quality within both catchments.

Throughout the project interpretation and activities will be organised for communities and families, these will range from guided river walks, an interactive salmon viewing station, a

small grants scheme for community groups, public art, promotion of river trails, and an introduction to angling and lots more.

Training and enabling community stewardship will be promoted with a number of learning opportunities for communities, primary and secondary schools delivered by the River Forth Fisheries Trust.

Part of the works will be delivered via volunteering opportunities to allow communities to get involved and be part of the decision making process with some of the restoration projects.

Five new jobs will be created within the Trust to deliver the project and it is anticipated over 500,000 in-kind hours will be provided through volunteering and engagement activities.

If you would like to be involved and kept up to date with the progress of RiverLife please email [riverlife@fishforth.co.uk](mailto:riverlife@fishforth.co.uk) or visit our website [www.fishforth.co.uk/rfft](http://www.fishforth.co.uk/rfft) and sign up to our mailing list. You can also follow us on Twitter @[forthfishtrust](https://twitter.com/forthfishtrust) or “like” us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/riverforthfisheriestrust](https://www.facebook.com/riverforthfisheriestrust).

### **Roseanna Cunningham MSP Comment**

*Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, said:*

*“I am delighted that the Scottish Government is supporting this exciting catchment-scale project which will deliver significant improvements in the Rivers Almond and Avon and bring considerable benefits for the local communities and wildlife. I welcome today’s news that the Heritage Lottery Fund is committing this significant funding and I would like to congratulate the River Forth Fisheries Trust for its vision, drive and enthusiasm in developing this far-reaching project in conjunction with its partners. I look forward to many more such partnership projects as we take forward the implementation of Scotland’s River Basin Management Plans.”*

### **River Forth Fisheries Trust comment**

Commenting on the award, Alison Baker, Catchment Manager for the River Forth Fisheries Trust said: *“We’re delighted to be able to deliver all the exciting projects which form part of RiverLife: Almond & Avon which have been planned over the past year. This project is the first of its kind in central Scotland, potentially the whole of Scotland, engaging communities with rivers and I am pleased that the Trust is able to be at the forefront of this kind of work. We are grateful to our funders; Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Government, SEPA Water Environment Fund, City of Edinburgh and West Lothian Councils making this project possible. There has been enthusiastic support for the project and I would like to thank everyone who has been involved to date. The Trust looks forward continuing to work with the*

*communities and organisations within both the Almond and Avon catchments to deliver this exciting project.”*

### **HLF Comment**

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Lucy Casot, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said:

*“Thanks to players of the National Lottery, these rivers will provide powerful and memorable experiences making outdoor learning fun and equipping those taking part with skills which will carry them forward. Importantly, they will also spark a passion for looking after our environment, a passion which is vital if our natural heritage is to be passed on in good order to future generations.”*

### **Angela Constance MSP Comment**

Angela Constance, MSP for Almond Valley commented: *‘I am delighted to hear that RiverLife’s funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund has been successful. The improvements that this will bring to our local rivers and the green spaces along them will be enjoyed by many local people including myself and my family. I look forward to seeing the project develop and deliver for both the environment and local communities over the next few years.’*

### **SEPA WEF Comment**

Francis Hayes from SEPA’s Water Environment Fund said *“SEPA welcomes partnership projects which will improve the quality of Scottish rivers and also have the potential to provide access, recreational, and other benefits for local communities, particularly in urban areas.*

*Projects designed to remove artificial barriers to fish migration, or to renaturalise river channels, may also align directly with our objectives for river restoration. Our Water Environment Fund may be able to offer financial support for projects which meet the fund’s eligibility rules and which represent value for money.”*

### **West Lothian Council Comment**

Executive councillor for the environment Tom Conn said *“We are delighted to hear about this fantastic award of £1.65 million from the HLF, it will help to enhance the biodiversity of our rivers in West Lothian and enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of our communities. I would like to congratulate the River Forth Fisheries Trust on its efforts to secure this award from the Heritage Lottery Fund.*

*“The project also brings with it jobs and volunteering opportunities. I hope that the improvements and activities which are planned will encourage local people to get involved and support the action which is being taken to enhance local biodiversity.”*

### **Edinburgh Council Comment**

David Jamieson, head of Parks & Greenspace for the City of Edinburgh Council, *welcomed the news, stating that this was a significant step forward in enabling the Council to open up the River Almond, one of the city's major green corridors, to migratory fish and other wildlife. He looked forward to working with the Trust and the residents of Cramond to find the most suitable way of achieving these benefits.*

### **Further information**

For further information, images and interviews please contact (Jonathan Louis) at (River Forth Fisheries Trust) on (0131 4451527 or [riverlife@fishforth.co.uk](mailto:riverlife@fishforth.co.uk) ).