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| MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND FISHERIES FUND (MEFF)  THIS GUIDANCE IS FOR SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION APPLICATIONS |
| SUMMARY |
| Grant aid is available under the Marine Environment and Fisheries Fund (MEFF) to support Environment and Conservation projects.  The legal basis for the scheme is: The Fisheries Act 2020 (Scheme of Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024, S.R. 2024 No. 141  This Guidance Note is subject to change at any time during the scheme. The date of the latest revision is shown in the footer of this document. |
| USE THIS DOCUMENT FOR GUIDANCE ON SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION ACTION APPLICATIONS |
| In addition to this Guidance Note you must also read the **General MEFF Guidance Note** as this contains information relevant for **all** MEFF applications.  We want to give your project the best possible chance at succeeding and have produced a range of resources and guidance which you might find useful. Where to go for further information has been included throughout this guidance note.  **It is essential that the scheme delivers value for money and that applicants are open and honest when making applications under the scheme.**  **It is a criminal offence to supply information in the application knowing it to be false or not believing it to be true, and you may be liable for a fine or imprisonment if you do so.**  **DAERA will scrutinise your application and may from time to time conduct random checks upon your application and the supporting documents, including contacting proposed suppliers and in the event of irregularities may in its absolute discretion refuse applications.**  **In the event that false or inaccurate information is discovered, DAERA will give consideration to investigating the matter further and may take such enforcement action, including criminal prosecution for example under the Fraud Act 2006 as it considers appropriate. In such circumstances DAERA may also seek to recover any grant paid.**  **You are reminded that if your project is approved and grant offered, specific conditions will apply which will be set out in the Offer Letter. Any breach of these conditions may lead to recovery of any grant paid, and if necessary DAERA may seek recovery through appropriate criminal or civil action.**  **If the grant is not used for the purpose for which it was granted DAERA may seek recovery of any grant paid through appropriate criminal or civil action.**  **Projects that have been physically completed or fully implemented prior to receiving a written acknowledgement from DAERA even though they may meet the scheme objectives and priorities cannot be funded. Projects can commence after receiving a written acknowledgement from DAERA. Any costs incurred between receiving a written acknowledgement from DAERA and receiving your written decision may not be eligible if your project is not approved. Such costs are incurred at your own risk.**  **In exceptional circumstances, costs incurred prior to submission of your application to DAERA and up to a value of 10% of the total eligible project costs can be considered eligible for reimbursement at the funding rate applied providing they are directly related to your project you are applying for and essential to bringing the application to submission stage. The eligibility of these costs are at the DAERA discretion, and are not guaranteed and are subject to the approval of the full project and are undertaken entirely at the applicant’s own risk. Contact DAERA for more details.**  **It is the responsibility of you as the applicant to ensure that the project which is the subject of this application is technically viable, complies with all relevant health and safety legislation and any other project specific safety requirements. This is not the responsibility of DAERA.** |
| TYPES OF PROJECTS YOU CAN APPLY FOR |
| The application form should be used for projects relating to: adapting the impact of fishing on the environment and the protection of species, Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources, protection and restoration of marine biodiversity eco systems and regimes in the framework of sustainable fishing activitiesand blue carbon restoration.  **Measure 3.a Adapting the impact of fishing on the environment the protection of species**  This includes:   * equipment improving size selectivity or species selectivity of fishing gear * equipment that eliminates discards by avoiding and reducing unwanted catches of commercial stocks * equipment that deals with unwanted catches * equipment that limits and, where possible, eliminates the physical and biological impacts of fishing on the ecosystem or the sea bed * equipment that protects gear and catches from mammals and birds * V notching programmes * Restocking initials under a recognised legal act   **TO APPLY FOR PROJECTS FOR ADAPTING THE IMPACT OF FISHING ON THE ENVIRONMENT THE PROTECTION OF SPECIES, PLEASE SELECT THE “THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND INLAND*****FISHING” APPLICATION FORM ON THE E-SYSTEM.***  **Measure 3.b. Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources**  This includes:   * Projects aimed at developing or introducing new technical or organisational knowledge that reduces the impact of fishing activities on the environment, including improved fishing techniques and gear selectivity, or aimed at achieving a more sustainable use of marine biological resources and coexistence with protected predators.   ***TO APPLY FOR PROJECTS FOR INNOVATION LINKED TO THE CONSERVATION OF MARINE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES, PLEASE SELECT THE “THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND INLAND******FISHING” APPLICATION FORM ON THE E-SYSTEM.***  **Measure 3.c Protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the framework of sustainable fishing activities**  This includes:   * the collection of waste by fishermen from the sea such as the removal of lost fishing gear and marine litter   It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that gear purchased with MEFF funding meets all necessary legal requirements. If a gear purchased subsequently becomes obsolete or illegal then this is at the applicant’s own risk there can be no refunds or claims against the scheme.  ***TO APPLY FOR PROJECTS FOR PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE FISHING ACTIVITIES, PLEASE SELECT THE “THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND INLAND******FISHING” APPLICATION FORM ON THE E-SYSTEM.***  **Measure 4.d Blue Carbon Restoration**  This includes applications for:   * Collection of new or extended Blue Carbon related data * Feasibility studies on Blue Carbon opportunities (for example - management, restoration and creation projects) * Land purchase for restoration of Blue Carbon * Outreach, education, and public engagement     ***To apply for projects for Blue Carbon Restoration, please select the “support for internal partners” then select “Integrated Maritime Policy – Protection of the Marine environment ” application form on the E-system.***  Applicants must comply with all relevant legal requirements of their projects. |
| ELIGIBLE COSTS |
| Please note this table is for guidance only and is not exhaustive or binding. If you are unsure whether an item is eligible please check the MEFF General Guidance and if you are still unsure contact DAERA.  **Scheduled or preventive maintenance costs of any piece of equipment which keeps a device in working order shall not be eligible for support**.  Table of Eligible Costs |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Item/Area | Eligible Costs | Ineligible Costs | | | **Adapting the impact of fishing on the environment the protection of species (Measure 3.a)** | equipment improving size selectivity or species selectivity of fishing gear | Support shall not be granted more than once during the MEFF funding period | | | equipment that eliminates discards by avoiding and reducing unwanted catches of commercial stocks, or that deals with unwanted catches to be landed | | equipment that limits and, where possible, eliminates the physical and biological impacts of fishing on the ecosystem or the sea bed; | | equipment that protects gear and catches from mammals and birds), provided that it does not undermine the selectivity of the fishing gear and that all appropriate measures are introduced to avoid physical damage to the predators. | |  | Support shall only be granted where the gear or other equipment stated above has a demonstrably better size selection or a demonstrably lower impact on the ecosystem and on non-target species than the standard gear or other equipment permitted under national law. |  | | | **Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources (Measure 3.b)** | projects aimed at developing or introducing new technical or organisational knowledge that reduces the impact of fishing activities on the environment, including;   * improved fishing techniques * gear selectivity   projects aimed at achieving a more sustainable use of marine biological resources and coexistence with protected predators. | net revenue generated by the participation of the fishing vessel in the project must be deducted from the eligible expenditure of the project  The term ‘net revenue’ means the income of fishermen from the first sale of the fish or shellfish caught during the introduction and testing of the new technical or organisational knowledge less the selling costs such as auction hall fees  Projects which do not qualify as fishing for scientific purposes and which consist of testing new fishing gear or techniques must be carried out within the limits of the fishing opportunities allocated to the UK  Contact DAERA for details. | | | V notching Programmes | | Restocking initials under a recognised legal act | | **projects funded under this Measure must be carried out by, or in collaboration with, a scientific or technical body recognised by DAERA which must validate the results of the project** | | **Protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the framework of sustainable fishing activities (Measure 3c)** | The collection of waste by fishermen from the sea such as the removal of lost fishing gear and Marine litter |  | | | The construction, installation or modernisation of static or mobile facilities intended to protect and enhance marine fauna and flora, including their scientific preparation and evaluation | | Contributes to a better management or conservation of marine biological resources | | The preparation including studies, drawing up, monitoring and updating of protection and management plans for fishery related activities relating to NATYRA 2000 sites and spatial protected areas and other special habitats | | The management restoration and monitoring of NATURA site | | The management restoration and monitoring of marine protected areas | | Increasing environmental awareness, involving fishermen with regard to the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity | | Schemes for compensation for damages to catches caused by mammals and birds- This is subject to the formal recognition of such schemes by the competent authority within NI. | | The participation in other actions aimed at maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services, such as the restoration of specific marine and coastal habitats in support of sustainable fish stocks including the scientific preparation and evaluation | | Operations may be implemented by scientific or technical public law bodies, advisory councils, fishermen or organisations of fishermen which are recognised or by non-governmental organisations in partnership with organisations of fishermen or in partnership with FLAGs | | **Blue Carbon Restoration (Measure 4.d)** | Collection of new or extended Blue Carbon related data |  | | | Feasibility studies on Blue Carbon opportunities (for example - management, restoration and creation projects) | | Land purchase for restoration of Blue Carbon | | Outreach, education, and public engagement | | Full report provided by applicant on completion of project | | Data and GIS provided to DAERA on completion of investment. | | **Items and services that are statutory or mandatory requirements of law and byelaws cannot be funded by the MEFF.**  MEFF is designed to assist those who cannot afford to fund projects without support. If it is considered that you can afford your project without support your project will not be approved.  **To Note**  **Measure3.b Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources**  **Net Revenue**  The net revenue generated by the participation of the fishing vessel in the project funded under this measure must be deducted from the eligible expenditure of the project.  The term ‘net revenue’ means the income of fishermen from the first sale of the fish or shellfish caught during the introduction and testing of the new technical or organisational knowledge less the selling costs such as auction hall fees.  Operations which do not qualify as fishing for scientific purposes and which consist of testing new fishing gear or techniques must be carried out within the limits of the fishing opportunities allocated to the UK. | | | |
| INFORMATION REQUIRED TO APPLY FOR FUNDING |
| Before you proceed with creating an application you may wish to have the following items at hand or be aware that they will be necessary to accompany your application when it is submitted.   * A business case – You **must** submit a business case for any project relating to **support for diversification and new forms of income** regardless of the cost of your project. In all other instances you should only provide a business case if the total cost of your project is £25,000 or more (this is grant funding and your own money added together) **and the proposed investment would have an impact on the operation’s profitability, income or operational costs.** Use the template provided in the Business Case Template document **or contact Fisheries Grants Unit to discuss the requirement for submitting a business case as part of your application.** * Financial information - current and expected turnover and balance sheets. * Quotes for costs to be incurred – advice is provided in this guidance on what you need to supply * Company/charity and Value Added Tax (VAT) Registration numbers if applicable to your circumstances. * Organisation headcount numbers if applicable to your circumstances |
| DEFINITIONS |
| In these notes:   * **You** means the applicant. You can employ an agent or consultant to help you complete your application form but you must sign the form. You will be responsible for ensuring that all of the terms and conditions for grant are fulfilled. Responsibility for the content of the application and any supporting information and documentation rests with you and cannot be transferred to your agent or consultants. In particular, this means that you will be expected to retain ownership of the work which is being funded. * **We** means the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). * **Fisherman** means any person engaging in commercial fishing activities, as recognised by the Member State. * **Fisheries area** means an area with a sea, river or lake shore, including ponds or a river basin, with a significant level of employmentin fisheries that is functionally coherent in geographical, economic and social terms and is designated as such by a Member State. * **Inland fishing** means fishing activities carried out for commercial purposes in inland waters by vessels or other devices. * **Vessels operating exclusively in inland waters** means vessels engaged in commercial fishing in inland waters and not included in the Union fishing fleet register. * **A public law body** is an organisation financed, managed or supervised by the government.   The information provided in this Guidance Note must only be taken as a guide to the grants which are available. The legal basis for the grants is The Fisheries Act 2020 (Scheme of Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024, S.R. 2024 No. 141 |

**When you have selected the appropriate application form on the E-System you will be asked to complete the application as follows:**

# About You

You will be asked to provide details about yourself such as you name, address and telephone numbers. You will also be asked your gender if you do not self-identify as either male or female, select ‘Other’. If you would prefer not to give your gender then you have the opportunity to select ‘Prefer not to say’.

## What Type of Organisation Do You Represent?

You will be asked to choose **one** option and select the correct box. A sole trader is someone who is running their own business as an individual, and is therefore self-employed. You can have staff working for you, but you must be solely responsible for running the business. A joint partnership is a group of sole traders or organisations who are applying for funding for a project together. Answer ‘**Other**’ if your organisation is neither of these, you will be able to tell us what type of organisation it is in the next question in the application.

## Proof of Identification

If you are a sole trader or a joint partnership then you have to provide identification. You will need to provide a copy of either your passport or your driver’s licence. You will then need to take it to your solicitor, post office or DAERA Port Officer, who can sign the copy and certify that the copy you send is taken from an original document. If the copies you provide are not from an original document and have not been certified, your application may be rejected. If you do not have photographic ID, we will accept two different utility bills from the last 3 months where your name and home address are clearly shown. Please note that we will not be able to return the copy of the document to you. Do not send original identification documents to DAERA.

## Authority to Commit Your Organisation

If you are anything other than a sole trader, you must confirm that you have the authority of your organisation or joint partnership to apply for MEFF funding. This may be verified as part of our eligibility checking. If you are a joint partnership, then a signed and dated letter from all of the other partners must be provided to show proof of authority to act on their behalf.

## Organisation/Business Name

You will be asked to give the name of the organisation/business that you are applying on behalf of, if this is relevant. The name of your business needs to be the same as that listed on the Companies House website.

## Value Added Tax (VAT) Number (If Applicable)

If you are registered for VAT then enter your VAT number. **To Note** - Grants claimed under the MEFF scheme must normally be based on expenditure exclusive of VAT. If however, you or your organisation is not registered for VAT, you may claim grant including VAT.

## Relationships to Any Other Organisations

Give the name and relationship of any organisations which are related to yours, if applicable. For example, your company may own a subsidiary company.

## Alternative Contact Details

If you would like us to contact someone else about the progress of your application, perhaps because you might be away for a period of time, then enter their contact details into the space provided. Give their full name, address (including postcode), telephone numbers and email address, and state their relationship to you. For example this might be ‘son’, ‘father’, ‘consultant’ or ‘agent’. This person cannot sign the application form or any Acceptance of Grant made to you as the applicant. If you have used an agent or consultant to help you complete the application form, then they must countersign the form alongside you as the applicant, to prove that they have been involved.

Applicants must ensure that any agent or consultant used has knowledge of the MEFF rules and regulations as these can change during the programme as policy priorities of Northern Ireland change. Costs associated with using private agents or consultants are not eligible for funding.

# About Your Project

**Project Duration**

You will be asked to estimate your expected start and end dates for your project. This should be in the format DD/MM/YYYY. Think about how long your project will take to complete and make sure you add on a few days for possible delays. You will be required to start and complete your project within the timescale entered in your application. It is your responsibility to provide a realistic timetable. If your project takes less time than you think, it won’t affect your ability to claim your funding when you are ready to. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and the grant award may be cancelled if a claim is not submitted within the prescribed period.

## Tell Us Your Position With Regard to Planning and Environmental Consents/Authorisations.

If this is ‘Not applicable’ then you do not have to provide any information. If you have ‘Applied for and received’ then complete the table in the application. If you have ‘Applied for but not yet received’ or ‘Needed- haven’t yet applied’ then you must list the descriptions of the consent/authorisations and write ‘to be confirmed’ in the space provided. You will need to provide us with a copy of each consent/authorisation alongside this application form.

No offer of funding can be made until all planning consents/authorisations have been received and copies sent to DAERA. In some circumstances an Offer in Principle can be issued pending receipt of consents/authorisations.

If your planning consents and/or licences are not in place when you apply to DAERA for funding you should supply details of when these are expected and forward to DAERA as soon as they have been received. An offer of funding cannot be issued without required planning consents and/or licences being in place can receive an offer in principle if they are eligible and meet the requirements of the scheme. An offer in principle is not an offer of funding and you cannot claim funds until you receive an offer of funding.

## Have You Considered the Marine Policy Statement, or Any Adopted Marine Plans in Force in the Area(s) Your Project Will Take Place?

If you have considered the Marine Policy Statement, or any adopted marine plans in force in the area(s) your project will take place, as part of your project development, then answer ‘Yes’ to this question. If you answer ‘Yes’ then explain how you have considered the Marine Policy Statement, or any adopted marine plans in force in the area(s) your project will take place, as part of your project development. In particular have any Marine Planning policies influenced this project? If so please give the policy reference and details.

If you answer ‘**No**’ then explain why you have not considered the Marine Policy Statement, or any adopted marine plans in force in the area(s) your project will take place, as part of your project development. See the following website for more information on Marine Plans:https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/marine-planning-in-Northern Ireland

# Your Project Costs

You will need to provide details of your project including the costs of the items you would like to apply for. You will need to provide quotes for these items. Below is a table of the numbers of quotes we require.

You can find out if you are a public applicant or a private applicant in the General Guidance.

Minimum Number of Quotes Required

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Individual Items With a Value (excluding VAT) of: | Number of Quotes or Tenders |
| Up to £5,000 | Two price checks with suppliers to ensure value for money has been achieved; this can include internet price checks. The price checks should be documented and retained on file as an audit trail. |
| £5,000 to £30,000 | At least two original quotes/tenders **(if there is an incumbent supplier, then use the incumbent plus two further tenders).** If at least two quotes have not been provided, then an explanation why must be provided.  Quotes must provide a breakdown of the total project costs in order to demonstrate value for money for each part of the proposed investment.  Applicants are also required to provide a copy of the invitation to quote/tender document that was issued to prospective suppliers. |
| £30,000 to  EU Thresholds | Publicly advertised tender competition Thresholds. |
| EC Threshold[[1]](#footnote-1) | Official Journal of the European Union |

* Work contracted to different contractors or items of equipment bought from different suppliers are individual items.
* Labour costs of a contractor/supplier for fitting can constitute a separate item.
* You should obtain at least the minimum number of quotes for any individual item, as shown in the table and include all original quotes, signed and dated by the supplier with your application form.
* In exceptional circumstances we may consider accepting fewer quotes than the minimum numbers. For example it may not be possible to obtain three quotes for specialist equipment. If you are unable to provide the minimum number of quotes or tenders required, you should speak to DAERA for advice and your application should explain why this has not been possible.

The quotes and tenders you send must:

* come from suppliers that trade independently of each other and don’t share any ownership
* be from the last 3 months and be valid
* be comparable in terms of the quality, size, quantity, and type of product, if you’re using multiple quotes to show you’ll get value for money when buying a product

Don’t send quotes or tenders that come from suppliers you’re related to or that your business is linked to.

Quotes supplied must include:

* a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs
* the supplier’s address, phone number and a contact name
* the supplier’s VAT number, if they’re VAT registered and they included VAT on the quote
* the supplier’s company registration number, if they’re a limited company

These documents will all be used to show that you’re getting the best value for money in your project.

Applicants must ensure that the companies requested to quote for items or services for their project know that their quote is being submitted as part of an application of funding to the MEFF in Northern Ireland.

All quotes provided must come from independent companies and will be verified by DAERA, which reserves the right to seek independent advice on the validity and value for money of quotes and tenders supplied. DAERA may contact your suppliers directly.

See the General Guidance for information on how to deal with any quotes you may have in Euros.

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# Your Project Funding

## How Will Your Project Be Funded?

We need to know how your project will be funded and where this money will come from. This includes funds you are intending to seek as well as those already obtained. Part of your project funding will come from grant funding and the remainder from yourself or another source. This can include private savings, money from your organisation, a loan or another grant and is referred to as your match funding. Your match funding should be in place before you apply for MEFF. If your match funding is not in place at the time of application, an Offer Letter will not issue until you have demonstrated that the total funding is in place to deliver the project. You must indicate this in your application form. Contact DAERA for advice if you think this will affect you.

**Grant Rates**

Total public money in the following tables is the maximum grant rate for each category. The grant rate is variable up to this maximum and there is no guarantee of assistance. The next columns are for information and show how the maximum grant is split. The Private column shows the minimum amount of money applicants will have to contribute to the project.

Most commercial projects will be eligible for a maximum of 50% grant support; the exceptions are detailed in the table below. Also some projects which can show they meet all 3 criteria in the last row of each table may be eligible for higher rates of assistance, again these are maximums and there are no guarantees.

Some projects may have other national funding from bodies such as local authorities, coastal communities fund, enterprise companies. If applicable the details of such funding must be entered on your application form.

**Grant Rates Key;**

SSCF – Small scale coastal Fishing – vessels 11.99m or less not using towed gear

PO – Producer Organisation

SME – Micros, small and medium enterprises – see General Guidance note for further advice

| **Measure 3.a Adapting the impact of fishing on the environment the protection of species** | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Applicant | Grant Rates as Percentages of Eligible Costs | | | |
| Total public money % | MEFF National % | National other %\* | Private % |
| Private | 50 | 50 |  | 50 |
| Private (SSCF) + 30% | 80 | 80 |  | 20 |
| Private (organisations of fishermen/collective) +10% | 60 | 60 |  | 40 |
| Private (POs) +25% | 75 | 75 |  | 25 |
| If any of the types of applicant above has a project in the category below, the grant rates above will be superseded by the rates below; see note 3; | | | | |
| Projects which meet all the following three criteria – see General Guidance for details;  1. Project has collective interests  2. Project has collective beneficiaries  3. Project has innovative features (if applicable) | 50 - 100 | 50-100 |  | 0-50 |

| **Measure 3.b Innovation linked to the conservation of marine biological resources** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Applicant | Grant Rates as Percentages of Eligible Costs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total public money % | | MEFF National % | | | National other %\* | | | Private % | | |
| Public | 100 | | 75 | | | 25 | | |  | | |
| Private | 50 | | 37.5 | | | 12.5 | | | 50 | | |
| Private (SSCF) + 30% | 80 | | 60 | | | 20 | | | 20 | | |
| Private (organisations of fishermen/collective) +10% | 60 | | 45 | | | 15 | | | 40 | | |
| Private (POs) +25% | 75 | | 56.25 | | | 18.75 | | | 25 | | |
| If any of the types of applicant above has a project in the category below, the grant rates above will be superseded by the rates below; see note 3; | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Projects which meet all the following three criteria – see General Guidance for details;  1. Project has collective interests  2. Project has collective beneficiaries  3. Project has innovative features (if applicable) | 50 - 100 | | 50-100 | | | 0-50 | | | | 0-50 | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Measure 3.c Protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the framework of sustainable fishing activities** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Type of Applicant | | Grant Rates as Percentages of Eligible Costs | | | | | | | | | |
| Total public money % | | MEFF National % | | | National other %\* | | | | Private % |
| Public | | 100 | | 100 | | |  | | | |  |
| Private | | 50 | | 50 | | |  | | | | 50 |
| Private (SSCF) + 30% | | 80 | | 80 | | |  | | | | 20 |
| Private (organisations of fishermen/collective) +10% | | 60 | | 60 | | |  | | | | 40 |
| Private (POs) +25% | | 75 | | 75 | | |  | | | | 25 |
| If any of the types of applicant above has a project in the category below, the grant rates above will be superseded by the rates below; see note 3; | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Projects which meet all the following three criteria – see General Guidance for details;  1. Project has collective interests  2. Project has collective beneficiaries  3. Project has innovative features (if applicable) | | 50 - 100 | | | 50-100 | | |  | | | 0-50 |

| **Measure 3.d Blue Carbon Restoration** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Applicant | Grant Rates as Percentages of Eligible Costs | | | | | |
| Total public money % | MEFF National % | | National other %\* | | Private % |
| Public | 100 | 100 | |  | |  |
| Private | 50 | 50 | |  | | 50 |
| Private (organisations of fishermen/collective) +10% | 60 | 60 | |  | | 40 |
| Other (eg eNGO) | 100 | 100 | |  | |  |
| If any of the types of applicant above has a project in the category below, the grant rates above will be superseded by the rates below; see note 3; | | | | | | |
| Projects which meet all the following three criteria – see General Guidance for details;  1. Project has collective interests  2. Project has collective beneficiaries  3. Project has innovative features (if applicable) | 50 - 100 | | 50-100 | |  | 0-50 |

Note 1 An applicant may be able to secure funding from another public source to match the MEFF funding; if not, the applicant will need to provide their own (private) match funding

Note 2 DAERA may decide to provide the public match funding if no other source of public funding is available and the project is judged to make a strong contribution to a priority policy objective

Note 3 These projects can receive up to 100% of the total eligible expenditure from grant funds

**In Kind Funding**

In Kind costs are those where no actual costs have been incurred.

For example, an organisation allowing a member of staff to work on an MEFF funded project for 1 day per week, but while paying the person is not an In Kind cost. Alternatively, the same person volunteering outside of work hours, for which they are not paid, is an In Kind Cost.

As no actual costs are being incurred, In Kind costs cannot receive a financial contribution from the MEFF scheme. However, In Kind costs may be an important part of delivering a project.

When applying for funding, In Kind costs should not be included in the actual costs associated with the project but should be detailed within either the application form or the business case to explain why these are important.

In Kind costs should not exceed 10% of the total budget for a project

**Leases**

On land or buildings – where an applicant has leased land or buildings within their project for example the fitting out of a leased building into a processing unit. The land or building must have a lease remaining of at least 10 years.

In certain exceptional circumstances the lease period can be reduced however this is at DAERA’s discretion and the file/e-system must be updated to show the decision and reasons.

Leased items (e.g., Hire Purchase) – items that comprise part of a project for which funding is being applied for must be paid for in full by the applicant before claiming. Items applied for which have payments remaining on them are not eligible for reimbursement. Payments on leased goods are not eligible for reimbursement.

**Leasing**

Where leasing an item rather than buying it makes value for money sense even if it won't meet Durability of Operations (the rule that projects and items with projects must be retained and not modified by the applicant for a minimum of 5 years following the end of the project) it can be considered for grant support. Items can include but is not limited to plant for site works; porta-cabins for temporary work spaces and other equipment only needed for a limited time but is required for the delivery of the project.

Where leases are part of your project the appropriate numbers of quotes must be supplied to ensure value for money is delivered. You must also provide a rationale with your application explaining why the use of leased items is better value for money than purchase.

## Estimated Claim Dates

You will be asked to provide the forecast date or dates on which you expect to claim your grant money, if you are successful. The total forecast amount (£) you will claim should add up to the total grant amount you expect to be awarded.

You will be expected to claim on these dates and must seek DAERA approval to change them by informing us in writing. The final claim date of your project will be detailed in you Offer Letter.

All Final claims by successful applicants must be submitted to DAERA by the date specified in the offer letter.

## Previously Sought or Awarded Funding for This Project?

We need to know if you have applied for or have been awarded a grant from another source for this project including European Union funding. Your MEFF grant may be reduced if you answer ‘**Yes**’. Please provide further details if you answer ‘**Yes**’, including who provided the grant and how much it was for.

## Previously Applied for or Awarded European Union (EU) Grants for Any Fisheries Projects?

You will need to tell us if you have ever applied for or received a grant for any fisheries-based projects previously (excluding this application form). **You cannot match an MEFF grant with another grant.**

# What Will Your Project Achieve?

## What Are the Targets and Benefits of Your Project?

**Targets**

Targets tell us what your project will achieve and how it will contribute to the development of your business. Targets are set by yourself based on your knowledge of your business and project. We may work with you to develop these targets further.

We will use these targets to measure the progress and success of your project. These targets and any benefits you have outlined will be included in your Offer Letter.

Good targets must be specific to your business and project, be able to be easily measured, must be directly achievable by your project, be realistic and have timescales to make them easy to assess.

There are explanations and examples below;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Example target** | **What makes it a good target?** |
| Development work on the systems underpinning the implementation of intertidal conservation measures in the coastal region identified will be undertaken over 3 years with annual reviews in April of each year. | The target is specific to a region and is addressing a key concern within that region. The target also has a clear timescale with milestones.  Making a target achievable is important as we don’t you to tell us something you will struggle to meet. Make sure your target is something you can control to have the best chance of meeting it. We want your project to be a success. |
| Discards will be reduced to >5% in first year reducing to >3% in the third year and >1% in the subsequent two years. | This example has clear percentage targets within it that be easily measured against. It also has clear timescales for achievement at year 1, year 3 and year 5.  Measurements can be almost anything depending on your project including but not limited to events, participants, increases in sale prices/value, discards or profits made. |
| This project will assess the evidence needs that will inform the protection of marine biodiversity in the 10 mile coastal region identified. | This example is specific to evidence needs and to an identified stretch of coastline in which the activity undertaken can be clearly mapped.  You must make sure that your targets are specific to your project. You must be able to control the activity that relates to your target to have the best chance of meeting them. |
| To improve migration routes for eels along the 2 miles of waterways identified by previous research undertaken within the specified region. | This target is achievable as previous research has underpinned the decision to improve the stretch applied for.  Targets should be able to be met by you without too much difficulty. If you make them unrealistic and overestimate your achievements and you don’t reach them you may put your funding at risk. |
| Develop and implement a resource management system to be developed in the first year be tested and running by the end of year 2 with 6 partners contributing data per year for the subsequent 3 years. | The year by year timescales on the project help to assess its progress along the way and makes it easy to report on as you can see clearly where things are going well and were things have not gone so well and helps to inform how things might change going forward if necessary.  Putting timescales on your project helps you to keep an eye on progress. The length of time depends on the project but in most cases we would expect to see a minimum of 3 years. Timescales will also help you report on your progress. |

**Benefits**

You will need to describe the expected benefits of your project on yourself, your organisation and the wider fisheries sector. For example, you could describe how installing new and more efficient refrigeration equipment will enable you to get better quality fish back to shore without increasing your catch.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Financial benefits | When writing about the benefits of your project, you should include any financial benefits. For example an increase in profitability, turnover or job creation. Explain how you will determine your project has been a success and has been value for money.  Confirmation whether your project will result in safeguarding jobs including those which are under threat (jobs can be safeguarded by a project only if the completion of your project will directly contribute to the prevention of staff being made redundant).  You must provide details of how you have calculated any financial benefits, including what discount rates are applied. You should indicate how the benefits of your project will continue to be delivered after the grant support comes to an end.  Additionally you should provide details on whether your project will result in increased profitability (either in terms of reduced losses or increased returns) and whether your project will lead to increased turnover and/or demand. |
| Environmental benefits | For example relieving pressure from pressurised fishing stocks or discards. You should set out any benefits on the environment associated with your project. These may include improvements to air quality, water quality, wildlife habitats, biodiversity and the use of primary materials. |
| Other benefits | Such as social benefits. You should set out any expected social benefits associated with your project. This might include improvements to your company’s reputation which is very real but harder to prove or whether your project will provide benefits to the local community e.g. establishing a network. |
| Monitoring | Outline how you will measure these benefits during your project and after its completion. Make sure they are relatively easy for you to monitor, you do not have to make things difficult for yourself. |

If you do not meet the targets and benefits originally agreed and set out in the offer letter issued to you by DAERA then the level of achievement of the targets and benefits will be considered. DAERA will take a proportionate approach to this consideration and where possible work with you to address the issues. DAERA must protect the public funding elements of the MEFF scheme and any match funding wherever possible so recovery of funding already paid to you or the withholding of funding outstanding may occur if it is considered necessary.

## Will Your Project Go Ahead as Planned if an MEFF Grant is Not Awarded?

You will be asked if your project will go ahead as planned if MEFF funding is not awarded to you. If it will but only part of what was planned will happen, then you should answer ‘**Yes- in part’**. If your project will go ahead as planned Answer ‘**Yes- in full**’, and if your project will not go ahead if an MEFF grant is not awarded answer ‘**No**’.

If you answer ‘**Yes- in part**’ or ‘**No**’ then you will need to explain why and what might change in the box. For example without the grant money it may take longer for your project to be completed, or perhaps only part of your project can go ahead, or it won’t be able to go ahead at all. If you answer ‘**Yes**’ to this question then you may not be eligible for a grant.

**Part 6 Promoting Equality and Diversity**

You will be asked to provide information about which section or sections of the Section 75 groupings that your Project is intended to benefit. You must also describe how your project will promote equality of opportunity for and good relations between the groups indicated under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

**Part 7 Declaration and undertaking**

Once you are satisfied that you have completed the form correctly you must sign and date it. Your application will not be valid if you do not enclose all the correct information and documents as requested.

**Part 8 Data protection Act**

This section informs you how your personal data will be used by DAERA in compliance with the, Data Protection Act 2018.

# Part 9 What To Do Now

**If you are ready to apply for funding you should make sure you have addressed the following (if applicable);**

1. **Certified Copy of Applicant's ID (Passport/Driving Licence/Utility Bill(s)) (If Applicable)**

If you are a sole trader or a joint partnership then you do have to provide identification. If you are a sole trader you will need to provide a copy of either your passport or your driver’s licence. If you do not have photographic ID, we will accept two different utility bills from the last 3 months where your name and home address are clearly shown. You will then need to take it to your solicitor, post office or a DAERA Port Officer, who can sign the copy and certify that the copy you send is taken from an original document. If the copies you provide are not from an original document and have not been certified, your application may be rejected. Please note that we will not be able to return the copy of the document to you. Do not send original identification documents to t DAERA.

1. **Letter To Show Proof Of Authority For (Joint) Partnerships (If Applicable)**

If you are a joint partnership, then a signed and dated letter from all of the other partners must be provided to show proof of authority to act on their behalf.

1. **Planning Consents and/or Authorisations Needed To Enable Your Project To Proceed (If Applicable)**

You will need to provide a copy of all the planning consents and/or authorisations if applicable. No offer of funding can be made until all planning consents/authorisations have been received and copies sent to DAERA. In some circumstances an Offer in Principle can be issued pending receipt of consents/authorisations. Contact DAERA for further advice.

1. **A Business Case (If Applicable)**

You **must** submit a business case for any project relating to **support for diversification and new forms of income** regardless of the cost of your project. In all other instances you should only provide a business case if the total cost of your project is £25,000 or more (this is grant funding and your own money added together) **and the proposed investment would have an impact on the operation’s profitability, income or operational costs.** Use the template provided in the Business Case Template document **or contact Fisheries Grants Unit to discuss the requirement for submitting a business case as part of your application.**

**e) Your Organisation‘s Finances**

**If your project has a total value of up to £25,000**

You should provide a copy of your organisation’s accounts for the last three financial years to demonstrate that your organisation is financially sound. These can be audited or non-audited. If you are a new company you should provide other evidence of trading.

If your organisation is one or two years old, you only need to provide the organisation’s accounts for the financial years that you have been in operation.

If your organisation is new, you should provide a cash flow forecast for a minimum of 5 years. See General Guidance for an example cash flow forecast.

If your organisation is currently loss making, this does not necessarily mean that your application cannot be considered. However, you will need to explain carefully in your application form the steps you are taking to make your organisation financially viable, including the contribution you expect your project to make to this.

You must also tell us about any interest rates on start-up finance that is not clear from the Cash Flow Forecast.

**If your project has a total value of between £25,000 - £100,000**

You should provide a copy of your organisation’s accounts for the last three financial years to demonstrate that your organisation is financially sound. These can be audited or non-audited. If you are a new company you should provide other evidence of trading.

If your organisation is one or two years old, you only need to provide the organisation’s accounts for the financial years that you have been in operation.

If your organisation is new, you should provide a cash flow forecast for a minimum of 5 years. See General Guidance for an example cash flow forecast.

If your organisation is currently loss making, this does not necessarily mean that your application cannot be considered. However, you will need to explain carefully in your application form the steps you are taking to make your organisation financially viable, including the contribution you expect your project to make to this.

All applicants must provide a cash flow forecast for a minimum of 5 years. See General Guidance for an example cash flow forecast.

You must also tell us about any interest rates on start-up finance that is not clear from the Cash Flow Forecast.

**If your project has a total value of more than £100,000**

You should provide a copy of your organisation’s accounts for the last three financial years to demonstrate that your organisation is financially sound. These can be audited or non-audited. If you are a new company you should provide other evidence of trading.

If your organisation is new, you should provide a cash flow forecast for a minimum of 5 years. See General Guidance for an example cash flow forecast.

If your organisation is one or two years old, you only need to provide the organisation’s accounts for the financial years that you have been in operation.

If your organisation is currently loss making, this does not necessarily mean that your application cannot be considered. However, you will need to explain carefully in your application form the steps you are taking to make your organisation financially viable, including the contribution you expect your project to make to this.

All applicants must provide a cash flow forecast for a minimum of 5 years and a discounted cash flow. See General Guidance for an example cash flow forecast.

You must also tell us about any interest rates on start-up finance that is not clear from the Cash Flow Forecast.

A full financial and economic appraisal will be conducted on your evidence and you may be asked for further information.

**Please note that we will not be able to return the copies of any documents to you.**

**f) All original Quotes**

You must include all quotes with your application form along with evidence that the quotes were request in writing.

**g) All projects, where there is a workforce of one or more persons**

Whether permanent or temporary workers, you must comply with any sanitary rules appropriate to the UK. You must tick the relevant box on you application to indicate that you have considered the above.

**h) You must confirm that you have read the associated General Guidance and**

# If you have not ticked this box your application will not be accepted by DAERA. If you do not provide all the required supporting documentation your application will be returned to you.

**Document Retention**

If your application is successful, you must keep all documents related to your project for 5 years from the date of your last MEFF claim, including:

* licences
* consents
* quotes
* invoices
* receipts or other documents which record your spending
* all accounting documents related to your application
* claim forms

You must give DAERA any information or documents that they ask for at any stage.

DAERA may give your name and address to an independent person they’ve hired to evaluate your project.

Where possible, you should also keep your project documentation under a separate accounting system or accounting code to ensure it is easily differentiated from your businesses other accounts and transactions.

**Durability of Operations**

Items purchased using public funding from the MEFF must be owned and used for their original purpose for a minimum of five years, except where State Aid rules provide for a different period or the items are leased, see the “Leasing of items or equipment section” for more advice.

In the case of an operation comprising investment in infrastructure or productive investment, and where the applicant is not a micro, small or medium enterprise (SME), the applicant will be required to repay the funding contribution from the MEFF if, within 10 years of the final payment to the project, the project or its activity is subject to relocation outside of the United Kingdom.

Some or all of the funding for projects that do not meet the Durability of Operations above will be recovered.

**Part 10 Ready to Apply?**

The E-system can be accessed on the below.

[MFF E System](https://mffs.marinemanagement.org.uk/MFFS/Public/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fMFFS%2fApplications%2fApplicationAction.aspx%3fctxid%3d&ctxid)

The E-system is simple to use and you will be able to log-in and see the status of your application and upload documents such as quotes and invoices.

**Part 11 Contact Details**

**Write to;**

DAERA Fisheries Grants Unit

First Floor

Rathkeltair House

Market Street

Downpatrick

Co. DOWN

BT30 6AJ

**Telephone;**

028 9052 8093 or 028 9052 8099

**Email;**

[MEFF.queries@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:MEFF.queries@daera-ni.gov.uk)

You will receive an acknowledgement of your application within 10 working days of receipt by DAERA. We will aim to inform you in writing within 8 weeks if your application has been successful or not, provided you have supplied all the necessary information and documentation. If it has been successful then you will be sent an Offer Letter which will contain further instructions.

If you are unsuccessful, please refer to the DAERA website for more information on re-applying, appealing and the Department’s complaint procedure.

1. *Currently £122,976 for goods and services or £4,733,252 for works* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)