

Nutrient Management Scheme wins funding boost

The development of a Poole Harbour Nutrient Management Scheme (PHNMS) has taken a big step forward this week, with £145,000 funding awarded by the Esmée Fairburn Foundation.

The funding will pay for development of a farm level nutrient accounting tool for farmers to calculate their nitrogen losses and identify potential ways to reduce this. Alongside, a nutrient trading tool will be developed so that overperforming farms will be able to sell nitrogen credits to buyers looking to offset. Importantly, to make the scheme reputable and accountable, systems for good governance and management of the scheme will be set up too.



Working on the funding application, 2019

The project has been building steadily over the last year, thanks to the work of farmers from the catchment, the NFU, Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative, Wessex Water, Catchment Sensitive Farming, the Country Land and Business Association, Environment Agency, Natural England and local authorities. During 2019 the farmer group, supported by partners and led by the NFU, worked up a funding application to the Esmée Fairburn Foundation, which was finally submitted in September 2019. The application process has involved considerable work by all concerned, and has taken much longer than anticipated, with many detailed questions posed by the Foundation since submission. Both the prospective funders and the farmer group are keen to make sure that the final scheme will deliver nitrate reduction, be robust and transparent, as well as making sure all traders in the scheme are accountable and rewarded appropriately for the work done.



Aerial view of Poole Harbour

Why is the scheme needed?

High nitrate levels in Poole Harbour pose the threat of increased regulation on farmers, using a Water Protection Zone to force reductions in nitrate leaching. This would be an additional layer of regulation for farm businesses already working within Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. The PHNMS project represents a tremendous opportunity for farmers to show that by working together as a sector and taking control of the way nitrates are dealt with, voluntary measures can eliminate the need for additional regulation.

The project aims to develop a platform which enables collaborative work across the agriculture sector and beyond, to deliver significant reductions in nitrate leaching, benefiting water quality in Poole Harbour (and the rest of the catchment). All parties with an interest in the catchment are involved, with farming and farmers at the heart of the partnership.

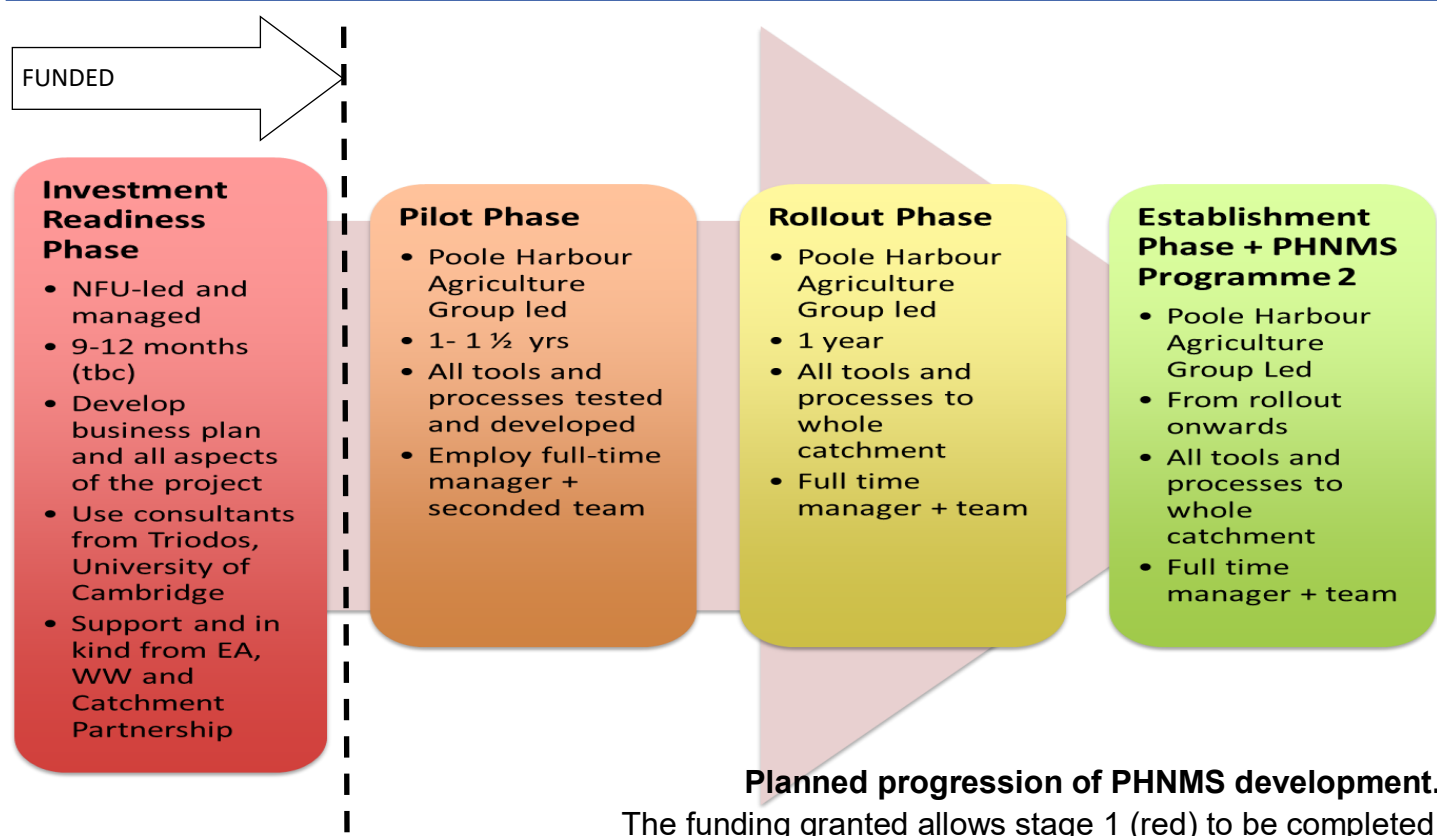
What happens next?

The first step in putting this funding to work is to make sure we have all the skills in the right place, and set up a core delivery team with defined roles to push the project forward. Where and when appropriate, the core team will bring in expertise from partners, farmers, contractors and consultants to make sure that the final result is fit for purpose as well as useful to all the scheme's participants. Now that work is underway for this important stage, regular updates will be made available for all partners, farmers and other stakeholders. More details will follow as we explore how best to do this.

What will it look like?

It is important to the success of the PHNMS that the final model is independent and transparent. For this reason, an early part of the work of the project will be to create branding which reflects the vision of the scheme— that the farmers in the Poole Harbour catchment will be the most nutrient efficient in the world.

This branding work will include development of a new logo and style, which will be adopted by all partners for work on the PHNMS project. A new website will also be developed as a one-stop shop for information for all stakeholders on how the project is progressing and how to get involved.



For more information:

To opt in to find out more about the PHNMS project, or how to get involved, please contact the Poole Harbour Catchment Initiative team at info@pooleharbourcatchment.co.uk. Your data may be shared within the PHNMS delivery team so we can email, call, write or text you about the PHNMS project, but will not be used for any other purpose. You can change your communication preferences by emailing us at the above address at any time.