

Winners of new Wild salmon river conservation award raise more than £44000

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New Community Salmon Conservation award raises over £44,000 for UK salmon-river restoration

The first projects supported by the 'The Orri' Award have raised more than £44,000 for endangered wild salmon conservation in UK rivers, exceeding their initial fundraising targets with more than 300 donors to the cause. Offering hope to riverine communities faced with mounting pressures on cherished local rivers.

The Orri award, launched by North Atlantic Salmon Fund UK (NASF) in memory of Icelandic founder and environmentalist Orri Vigfússon, is designed to fill a funding gap for community-based, direct action wild salmon conservation projects.

Vigfússon, an internationally recognised conservationist, played a key role in agreements from the 1980s onwards to reduce industrial overfishing of Atlantic salmon across the North Atlantic which led to them nearing extinction. He described wild salmon as:

"The king of fish, the most beautiful fish. They are born in here in our rivers, they travel out to sea, and like our children they come back home."

Two winning projects were selected from a strong field of UK applicants in late 2025: the River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust and the Ribble Rivers Trust Hodder project. Both began with £20,000 targets supported by £10,000 match funding alongside campaign support, including film content and messaging that helped both projects exceed their targets.

Together, they raised £44,700.

The River Cree project raised £22,750, funding expansion of its hatchery work to increase the number of wild salmon fry released into the river, alongside education and volunteer programmes.

Murdo Crosbie, co-ordinator at the River Cree Hatchery and Habitat Trust, said:

"The Orri Award has filled an important gap for smaller organisations. It has enabled us to go ahead and build the extension to expand our hatchery and increase the number of wild salmon fry released into the River Cree to support recovery of the system."

The Ribble Rivers Trust Hodder project raised £21,578, supporting habitat restoration and community monitoring work.

Jack Spees, director and CEO of Ribble Rivers Trust, said:

"The Orri Award fills a funding gap, enabling local community-based salmon conservation projects to move forward quickly and at the right scale."

Volunteer angler, Greg Earnshaw added, that participants would be trained to monitor salmon redds to measure the impact of restoration work on fish populations.

The projects reflect NASF UK's aim to support locally led conservation through practical, measurable interventions at river level, complementing larger-scale conservation programmes.

Robert Sloss, chairman of NASF UK, said the results demonstrated the effectiveness of the approach giving local people agency to quickly take action to improve their local rivers in a way that can see has a tangible impact of increasing wild salmon numbers.

Applications for the 2026 The Orri Award will open in the autumn.

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