



**LOCH LOMOND FISHERIES TRUST (LLFT)-CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT FOR LLFROG AGM
Monday 21st March 2016**

The Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust (LLFT) is an environmental charity which exists to champion the conservation of Loch Lomond's native fish populations and their habitats. We work closely with the Loch Lomond Angling Improvement Association (LLAIA) and several members of the Association are Trustees & Directors.

The Trust has continued to monitor the state of the juvenile Atlantic Salmon and Trout populations within the Loch Lomond system using standardized methods such as Smolt trapping and Electro-fishing. During 2015-16 we have continued to outsource this work to Carolyn Bryce, our Consultant Biologist.

Our Smolt trapping began in early March as usual. However on the 11th March 2015 the Endrick Water rose by an astonishing eleven feet in one night due to substantial rain fall. As a result, the Smolt trap at James Bilslands' in Croftamie was very nearly destroyed when a tree trunk was found jammed into the rotary drum of the trap. One of the guide ropes had snapped due to the pressure of water and the smolt trap ended up on its side jammed between the steep left bank and some willow trees. In other words, it could have ended up in Loch Lomond as a scrap trap! Once again, many thanks to our core team of volunteers who saved the situation from total disaster.

Our Smolt monitoring this year coincided with an innovative fish tracking project led by Prof Colin Adams and Hannele Honkanen based at the Scottish Centre for Ecology and the Natural Environment (SCENE), University of Glasgow. In the UK to date this type of Salmonid smolt tracking has only been carried out in river systems. This project plans to answer questions relating to the movement of smolts through large bodies of freshwater such as Loch Lomond before they reach the sea. To be at the forefront of this project is very exciting, as it will provide new and Lomond specific information. This will be incredibly beneficial for the management of Atlantic Salmon within our system. One of our tasks was to capture and tag 60 Salmon smolts. Given the earlier disaster in early March, the majority of the smolts circum-navigated our smolt traps on the Blane & the Endrick, so we were forced to use our initiative over the next ten weeks and undertake other methods of capture!

Carolyn and her team successfully completed several electro-fishing surveys at our core sites across the Endrick, Blane and Fruin catchment areas. Timed surveys were also carried out in a number of previously un-surveyed or urbanised burns such as the Gruggie Burn in Dumbarton & the Ballagan Burn, downstream of the Carrochan Burn in Balloch. This provided an indication of the fish species present and the health of a site. Again this data will demonstrate to the Trust where work may need to be focused in the coming years.

Following on our work since 2012, we were commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to continue Phase 1 & 2 of the Invasive Non-native Species project (INNS). This has proved to be exceptionally challenging due to the extent and widespread invasion of these plants. The continual bad weather did not help us, so we ended up with very few dry days to spray and inject the plants. Carolyn and her team have managed to eradicate a substantial amount on the Blane and had a particularly arduous task around the Moss where the invasive plants were so dense and extensive due to the buildup of seeds carried downstream and deposited on the silt meanders. We have just heard 10 days ago that SNH due to £5m cut backs are unable to fund the project this year as anticipated.

During 2015, we also worked on other exciting projects, the first being Rare Fish in the National Park. This is principally centred on the Powan where classroom lessons were delivered by Carolyn to Luss Primary School & Renton Primary School to help educate local school children about this extraordinary fish and its habitats. Renton Primary came third in their category for the West Dumbartonshire Council, "Amazing Things Awards". From December 2015, this project has now been expanded to three Primary Schools and one High School based in and around the Vale of Leven and wider Lomond area.

We have made particular positive strides this year with Petroineos on the Auchengaich Burn on the River Fruin, which is encouraging after many years of neglect. Unfortunately, the Redd counting this year was particularly poor due to the high waters in the system in late autumn & early winter.

I know that I mention this every year but I would like to emphasize that, all this would not have been possible without financial support & encouragement from the Riparian Owners, local farmers, the LLAIA, SNH, SCENE and our sponsors such as Cameron House & Alan Paterson at Lomond Auto Motors.

Our most important asset is our volunteers whose enthusiasm and commitment is mission-critical to the success of these projects. Many of them have come from the LLAIA and again I would like to express our immense gratitude to everyone who has given us their time and hard work. Again, we would like to encourage more volunteers, especially young enthusiasts, from all over our catchment area. The National Park has bought into our projects for 2016 and will be encouraging their volunteer network to assist the LLFT with their tasks during 2016 which is a great step forward.

I mentioned in my report last year that "The Thinn Report", which was circulated by the Scottish Government was going to present the whole of Scotland with some interesting & difficult challenges. This was no understatement. It has not only unsettled the majority of Fisheries in Scotland but left many regions feeling very vulnerable. The Lomond System is one of three fishing bodies in Scotland which does not have a District Salmon Fisheries Board (DSFB). Within the next five years, the Scottish Government has stated its intent to develop a network of new Fish Management Organisations (FMO). One of the new FMOs is almost certain to have responsibility for the Loch Lomond System and thereby much of the work currently managed and funded by the LLFT & LLAIA. As a result, in July 2015, the LLFT Directors commissioned Dr Susie Jackson from The Building Futures Partnership Limited to conduct an Independent Strategic Options Review to formulate our direction going forward. A comprehensive document has now been drawn up & available with a variety of options to consider and thus produce a workable plan to present to Scottish Government accordingly. The overall conclusion is very clear, the LLFT & the LLAIA will be forced to make some big, bold and radical decisions to ensure that the Lomond system is best placed going forward.

Yours Aye

Eddie Edmonstone
Chairman of the LLFT