

## **LOCH LEVEN FISHERIES – ANNOUNCEMENT**

Faced with mounting losses totalling over £500,000 in the last five years, Loch Leven Fisheries is now in a position where it is forced to announce a significant reduction in its angling operation on Loch Leven from the end of the current season.

The Fishery's hatchery and rearing ponds at Tarhill on the north shore of Loch Leven will be closed down and decommissioned at the end of the season. All of the Loch Leven brown trout, currently being reared there, will be released either directly into the loch or into its feeder streams depending on their stage of development. Loch Leven will revert to being a natural brown trout loch, with its trout population dependent on natural recruitment from the burns.

The number of clubs and individual anglers fishing Loch Leven has been declining steadily over the last decade but the rate of decline has undoubtedly accelerated over more recent years partly due to the well-publicised problems associated with the stocking of rainbow trout which was ceased in 2004. Loch Leven has found it difficult to compete on equal terms with the growing number of much smaller, better stocked, fisheries. The Scottish Executive, on advice from SNH, have repeatedly turned down applications from the Fishery for a licence to shoot cormorants which have increasingly found freshwater fisheries such as Loch Leven easier pickings than their traditional feeding grounds in the North Sea and the damage they have been causing is considerable.

With the closure of the hatchery and rearing ponds, which are costing in excess of £80,000 per annum, Loch Leven will no longer be artificially stocked from the end of the current season and it is inevitable that this will result in a further significant reduction in the number of clubs and individual anglers wishing to fish on Loch Leven in 2007 and beyond. Most of the current 30 strong fleet of boats operated by the fishery will no longer be required and will be disposed of next winter. However, it should be stressed that this is not the end of fishing on Loch Leven – a small number of boats will be retained for next season and beyond for those anglers still wishing to fish on the loch.

It is sadly ironic that this announcement comes at a time when the loch is fishing as well as it has for many a year. However, the economic reality is such that the loch has to be allowed to revert to being a natural brown trout fishery once more, as it was prior to 1983 when declining catches prompted the establishment of the hatchery and rearing ponds at Tarhill.

It is hoped that the natural recruitment from the burns will improve over the next few years leading to an improvement in the fishing and as a result to an increasing demand for boats. Additional boats would then be gradually added to the fleet.

Loch Leven Fisheries will endeavour with, it is hoped, the help of the other agencies involved to ensure the survival of Loch Leven and its renowned trout in the future.

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