Registered Scottish Charity Number SC 037684
Company Registration No. SC 294401

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

LBCo Ltd
t/a Lees - Buckley & Co
16 Northfields Prospect
Putney Bridge Road
London SW18 1PE

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

STATUTORY INFORMATION

ORGANISATION STATUS

Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association and is a registered Scottish charity and a company limited by guarantee. Charitable status was granted on 20th December 2006.

SCOTTISH CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER:

SC 037684

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER:

SC 294401

REGISTERED OFFICE:

Corff House
Beauly
Inverness-shire
Scotland
IV4 7BE

PRINCIPAL BANKERS:

Clydesdale Bank, 32 Longman Road, Inverness, IV1 1RY

SOLICITORS:

Harper Macleod, Alder House, Cradlehall Business Park, Inverness, IV2 5GH

ACCOUNTANTS:

LBCo Ltd t/a Lees-Buckley & Co, Chartered Accountants, 16 Northfields Prospect

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

The Trustees of Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust have pleasure in presenting their Annual Report

Structure, Governance and Management

The Trust is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee and governed by the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Board comprises not less than four and not more than seven trustees. In addition two additional trustees can be co-opted by the board for their expertise in a particular field.

The Ness District Salmon Board and the Beauly District Salmon Board are entitled to nominate two trustees each to the Board.

At each AGM one-third of the trustees must retire by rotation. Retiring trustees are eligible for re-appointment.

The Trust is a member of the River and Fisheries Trust for Scotland. RAFTS offers guidance and assistance to its Member Trusts and in addition seeks funding at national levels and distributes these funds to the Member Trusts.

Chairman's Report

The trust reached a major milestone this year in celebrating its tenth anniversary since inception. It gives me great pleasure, as one of the founding trustees, to see the Trust grow into the organisation it is today imparting scientific knowledge and advice not only on a local basis but nationally as well.

There is uncertainty regarding the future of Trusts within the Fishery Management Network proposed by the Scottish Government under the Wild Fisheries Reform and this uncertainty will continue as the Draft Bill has been delayed until the 2017/18 parliamentary session at the earliest.

There are many unanswered fundamental questions such as size of and scope of Fishery Management Organisations, funding, transfer of staff, pensions and national pay scales, and not least the transfer of the charitable cash reserves into what will potentially be a non-charitable organisation, and how these reserves can be ring-fenced to the catchments in which they were originally intended. We are finding that the review process is taking up a considerable amount of time and effort that would be more usefully targeted elsewhere.

Last year the Scottish Government introduced conservation regulations for the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon. Both the Beauly and Ness catchments were assessed as grade 3 with the result that all captured salmon had to be returned to the river. With the assistance of our scientists the respective boards made submissions for a regrading and I am pleased to report that the River Beauly was moved up to a grade 2. The River Moriston remained in grade 3 and a further appeal on this grading has been rejected by Marine Scotland Science. A considerable amount of further work will be required to persuade MSS otherwise as the Moriston grading condemns the whole of the Ness system to grade 3 and this will be one of our top priorities in the coming year.

Dealing with Trust matters it is pleasing to note we just managed to stay in the black showing a very small profit but this helped maintain our cash reserves which is very important when running a small organisation such as ours. In a challenging funding environment credit must go to our staff for identifying and undertaking external contract work as an essential replacement for dwindling project work generated through RAFTS and the Scottish Government. Looking forward things will only get tougher with the advent of Brexit, EU generated project funding has dried up.

The Trust also contributed to the excellent Salmon Festival and credit must be given to the University of Highlands and Islands, Ness District Salmon Fishery Board and Inverness Angling Club for ensuring this was such a success with another in the pipeline for 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity in our tenth anniversary year to thank the Ness and Beauly Salmon Fishery Boards for the core funding they have provided annually since inception without which the Trust would not have been able to operate at the level it does and assist the Boards with the management of their respective catchments.

Finally I would like thank my co-trustees for their assistance, knowledge and guidance throughout the year, and our director Chris Conroy and biologists, Nick Barker and Chris Daphne for their sterling efforts in what has been a particularly challenging yet successful year.

Neil Cameron
Chairman

Key Activities

This section of the report provides a summary of the work carried out by the Trust during the period ended 31st March 2016.

Fisheries Monitoring

The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust completed a comprehensive fisheries monitoring programme across both the Ness and Beauly catchments. The results will be used to provide a measure of the extent to which spawning and nursery habitats are being utilised, an assessment of the demographic structure of the populations, identify adverse environmental impacts and highlight any recruitment failures.

Ness Catchment Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

River Ness Main Stem - In 2014, the NBFT reported record densities of salmon fry from their uppermost River Ness main stem electro-fishing site at Dochfour. The density of 417/100m^2 was the highest ever recorded from both the Ness and Beauly Catchments during a fully quantitative survey. The site was revisited in 2015 and from the outset it was apparent that there were many more fry in the section compared to 2014.

The 2015 salmon fry density was a staggering 726/100m^2. Older year classes of salmon parr were also well represented with a recorded density of 41/100m^2. Quantitative surveys were also carried out at Ness Castle. Again, densities of juvenile salmon were significantly higher in 2015 with fry recorded at 371/100m^2 – more than double the 2014 result of 133/100m^2. There was also a perceived increase in parr density from 40/100m^2 in 2014 to 50/100m^2 in 2015. Time delineated surveys were also executed to investigate habitat utilisation of juvenile salmon in areas out with the quantitative sites. Salmon fry were captured at each site from the tidal section downstream of Ness Bridge to Dochfour in numbers ranging from 2/minute to 16.2/minute.

River Enrick - Surveys of the River Enrick main stem were limited to a single site at Corrimony. During each quantitative electro-fishing survey, our team carry out a detailed assessment of the habitat which was fished. It was noted that the percentage of cobble substrate at the site had increased by 10 per cent whilst pebble had decreased by 10 per cent; presumably an artefact of high water events throughout the winter. It would appear that the winter floods have had a knock on effect on salmon fry numbers with the density dropping from 36/100m^2 to 20/100m^2. Conversely, parr density has remained very stable.

River Coiltie - Changes of habitat were also noted on the River Coiltie site at Lewiston. Again, it would appear that this may have affected the survival of salmon fry. The salmon fry density of 8/100m^2 is the lowest ever recorded on the River Coiltie. However, older year classes of salmon parr were well represented at a density of 30/100m^2; very much in line with previously recorded parr densities from the Coiltie site.

River Moriston - A series of timed surveys were carried out on the River Moriston by trust staff during work to investigate habitat utilisation of salmon on the main stem and the efficacy of the fish pass at Ceannacroc. Downstream of the Ceannacroc fish pass, salmon fry were found at each site in numbers ranging from 1.8/minute to 10.7/minute. Upstream of the fish pass, salmon fry were absent from all but one of the surveys. The precise reason for the relative dearth of fry upstream of the pass remains unclear. NBFT intend to monitor this situation closely in the coming year.

River Garry - The focus of the 2015 season was to repeat the baseline surveys of 2013 to inform the Upper Garry Restoration Project. Although the 2015 results have yet to be fully analysed, it would appear that densities of salmon fry on the main stem of the Lower River Garry have dropped significantly since 2014. This was most prominent at the site in Invergarry where salmon fry density dropped from

98/100m² to 26/100m². Interestingly, parr density appears to have remained more stable throughout the Lower River Garry and its main tributary: Allt na Caillichie.

Previous reports from NBFT have highlighted the distinct lack of juvenile salmon from the Loch Garry tributaries. The series of surveys carried out on these burns during 2015 reinforced previous results with salmon being recorded as present in three out of the ten sites in extremely low densities. Results on the Upper River Garry were similarly disappointing, with juvenile salmon recorded as absent from 50 per cent of the sites surveyed. However, it should be noted that both salmon fry and parr were captured from a site on the Upper Garry that had previously yielded no salmon, albeit in very low numbers.

The River Kingie has long been heralded as the 'engine room' of the Garry system. It was therefore heartening to note the presence of salmon fry at each of the eight surveys carried out on the Kingie and its main tributary: Allt a' Chin Bhric. It would appear that the majority of spawning took place in the area surrounding Allt a' Chin Bhric during the winter of 2014. Most worthy of note is site KI/TIMED9 where numbers of salmon fry increased from 0.8/minute to 3.4/minute.

NBFT biologists carry out an electro-fishing survey on the River Kingie, tributary of the River Garry, in 2015

Beauly District Juvenile Salmonid Surveys

During the summer of 2015 the NBFT continued with its programme of electrofishing surveys across the Beauly district. A total of 20 sites were the subject of fully quantitative surveys, with a further 15 timed survey sites. The results indicate quite a lot of change as a consequence of winter spates, particularly in the upper Farrar catchment.

Glen Strath Farrar - The 2015 salmon fry density from CUL1 (Culligran Burn) was the lowest ever recorded. Given the changes to the site recorded in 2015; it is entirely possible that there was a degree of 'redd washout' caused by extreme winter spates. Density of 1++ parr was in line with previous results and above the mean density (61/100m2) for the site. The lack of 2+ parr may suggest that most salmon of Culligran Burn origin will smolt at two years old.

Site UM5 (Uisge Misgeach) also appears to have been negatively impacted by winter spates with some of the river bed now being classed as 'unstable'. This may have impacted on numbers of salmon fry as the result was the lowest recorded since 2005. Conversely, UM6 had its highest density of salmon fry since 2006 showing that the limited spawning media was well utilised in the winter of 2014. Unlike UM5, there were no major changes to the habitat at UM6. 2+ salmon parr were seen to be missing from UM5 whilst numbers of 2+ parr from UM6 were very low.

Results from site ACM2 (Allt Choire a' Mhuillidh) were disappointing in 2015, with salmon fry shown to be absent and the lowest density of 1++ salmon parr since 2006. There were no changes to the habitat in 2015 and the exact reasons behind the apparent downturn in numbers of juvenile salmon remain unclear.

In 2014, Site AIM2 showed good numbers of salmon fry for the first time since it was 're-watered' in the early 2000's. However, in 2015, fry were seen to be absent from the site indicating that spawning success in the vicinity of AIM2 is intermittent. Conversely, density of salmon parr (1++) was extremely encouraging with the second highest parr density ever recorded on the burn. Both 1+ and 2+ parr were present with 1+ being the strongest cohort.

Salmon fry density from Site NEA1 (Neaty Burn) was the third lowest result recorded for the site. 1+ salmon parr were seen to be missing from the 2015 survey whilst densities of 2+ parr were very low. This may be an indication of parr leaving the burn for the relative sanctuary of the mainstem.

Site DEA1 (Deanie Burn) once again showed salmon fry to be absent. A single salmon parr aged 2+ was captured indicating a severe underutilisation of the habitat at DEA1. The most probable cause behind this is the lack of discernible flow to attract salmon to the burn once they have ascended Beannacharan Dam.

Lower River Beauly Tributaries - It was heartening to note the increase in salmon fry density from Site BRU2 (Bruiach Burn) in 2015. It should be mentioned that there was evidence of severe gravel movements at the site in 2015. It is unclear if this has negatively impacted salmon fry densities. Salmon parr density (1++) was the highest since 2013. Both 1+ and 2+ were present with 1+ being the most dominant year class of salmon parr.

At Site BEL3 (Belladrum Burn), density of salmon fry was towards the lower end of the historical range (0/100m2 – 119/100m2) and below the mean density of 56/100m2. Like the Bruiach Burn site, there was evidence that the site had changed over the winter period with an influx of fine substrate and a departure of some of the larger cobbles and boulder. It is entirely possible that the site may have suffered from 'redd washout'. A 'good' density of salmon parr (1++) was recorded although the density is towards the lower end of the historical range of 0/100m2 – 56/100m2 and below the mean density of 29/100m2. Two year classes of salmon parr were recorded: 1+ and 2+ with the majority being aged 1+. The upper site (BEL4) showed salmon to be absent. These results would suggest that waterfall known locally as the 'Pot and Kettle' still acts as a barrier to salmon migration.

Beauly Firth Sea Trout Netting with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative (MFTI)

One of the key aims of the MFTI, to which the NBFT is a partner, is to learn more about our local sea trout populations and how they use the marine environment and in particular the inner firths. In 2015 we continued our programme of coastal seine netting surveys to catch sea trout and collect length data, scales and conduct sea lice counts.

Staff from the NBFT, Ness DSFB and MFTI hauling the net after a successful shot at 'The Ferry' at the mouth of the River Beauly

A survey carried out at our outer Beauly Firth site at Phopachy in May 2015 produced a single sea trout 'post smolt', one which had recently left freshwater. Rather than indicating an issue with sea trout numbers, it is more likely that adult sea trout were not present at this site in any significant numbers at this time of year. More positively, we did record large numbers of sprat, an important prey item for sea trout.

Sea trout post smolt and sprat captured at Phopachy in the Beauly Firth, May 2015

In June 2015 a new site was established at 'The Ferry' in the freshwater tidal reaches the River Beauly. Once again, no adult sea trout were recorded, with the catch instead being dominated by salmon parr. This was rather surprising given that the tidal reaches do not present 'classic' parr habitat. This observation suggests that salmon may utilise the tidal reaches of our river systems more than was previously thought, with potential implications with regards to wetted areas used to calculate conservation limits.

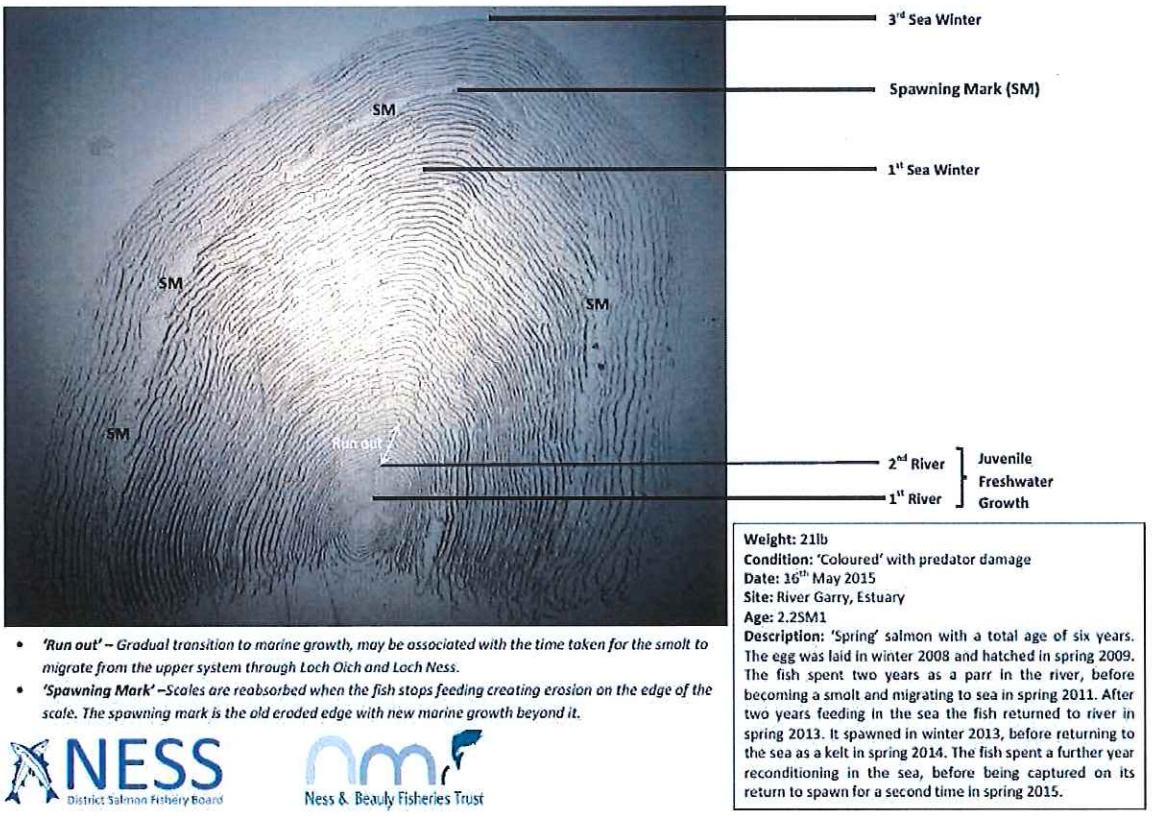
Scale Sampling Programme

The collection and ageing of Atlantic salmon scales has become a fundamental fisheries management tool. It allows determination of river age, sea age and various scale characteristics for stock discrimination. Many of the skeletal structures of fish exhibit growth rings. Scales are usually the chosen structure because they can be sampled without sacrificing the fish.

Ghillies and selected anglers across the Ness and Beauly catchments were issued with scale packets, tweezers and asked as a minimum to take samples from every third fish landed. Normal procedures for minimising trauma and damage to the fish were employed.

Ness District - Scale samples were submitted from a total of 81 adult salmon captured between the 28th February and 12th September 2015, equating to seven per cent of the total 2015 salmon catch (1,222 fish). One of the salmon sampled was found to be a 'previous spawner'. This is a fish that has entered the river and spawned, returned to the sea and then entered the river again for a second time.

Impression of a scale from a 2.2(SM) 1 'repeat spawning' salmon caught on the River Garry in May



- *'Run out' – Gradual transition to marine growth, may be associated with the time taken for the smolt to migrate from the upper system through Loch Oich and Loch Ness.*
- *'Spawning Mark' –Scales are reabsorbed when the fish stops feeding creating erosion on the edge of the scale. The spawning mark is the old eroded edge with new marine growth beyond it.*

NESS District Salmon Fishery Board

Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust

The majority of those samples for which it was possible to determine the freshwater age were found to have spent two years in freshwater before smolting and returning to the sea. A further 22 per cent were found to have spent three years in fresh water. The proportion of three freshwater year fish recorded in

the samples from the Garry and Oich catchments (19 per cent) and Moriston catchment (45 per cent) in the upper system were significantly higher than on River Ness (seven per cent) at the bottom of the system. This pattern is similar to that seen in other Scottish rivers, with the colder climate in the upper reaches resulting in slower growth of fry and parr.

The majority of the fish sampled (grilse and MSW salmon combined) during the 2015 season (52 per cent) were found to have a combined freshwater and sea age of four years (compared to 43 per cent in 2014). The majority of grilse (88 per cent) had a total age of three years, with a further twelve percent having a total age of four years. This compares to 2014 when 100 per cent of the grilse sampled were three years old.

The MSW salmon ranged between 4 and 6 years of age, the majority having a total age of four years (65 per cent compared to 50 per cent in 2014), followed closely by those having a total age of five years (23 per cent compared to 42 per cent in 2014), with a further 12 per cent at six years of age (compared to eight per cent in 2014).

It is clear from the results of the results of both the 2014 and 2015 scale sampling programs, together with analysis of the latest five-year average monthly rod catches, that the months of April and May are particularly important for spring salmon on the Ness system. This suggests that although welcomed, the Scottish Government's statutory conservation measures for 'spring' fish (all fish must be returned up to the 1st April) do not go far enough.

The scale samples collected in 2015 provide information relating to the size ranges (in terms of weight) of both salmon and grilse. The results suggest that fish over 8 pounds are most likely to be MSW salmon, with fish under 6 pounds most likely being 1SW grilse. Fish between 6.5 and 8 pounds could be either MSW salmon or grilse (compared to 6 and 8 pounds in 2014) and difficult to positively identify without scale reading.

Beauly District - Scale samples were submitted from a total of 85 adult salmon captured in the Beauly catchment between the 14th April and 15th October 2015, equating to ten per cent of the total 2015 salmon catch (877 fish).

The majority of those samples for which it was possible to determine the freshwater age (64 per cent) were found to have spent two years in freshwater before smolting. The other 36 per cent were found to have spent three years in fresh water. The proportion of three freshwater year fish recorded in the samples from the Farrar catchment (42 per cent) in the upper system was significantly higher than that from the Lower Beauly (32 per cent).

The majority of the fish sampled (grilse and MSW salmon combined) during the 2015 season (48 per cent) were found to have a combined freshwater and sea age of three years. The majority of grilse (62 per cent) had a total age of three years, with a further 38 percent having a total age of four years. The MSW salmon ranged between 4 and 6 years of age, the majority having a total age of four years (67 per cent), followed by those having a total age of five years (28 per cent), with a further six per cent at six years of age.

The results of the 2015 scale sampling programme demonstrate that April and May are particularly important months for spring salmon on the Beauly system. This suggests that the Scottish Government's statutory conservation measures for 'spring' fish (all fish must be returned up to the 1st April) do not go far enough.

The scale samples collected in 2015 provide information relating to the size ranges of both salmon and grilse in the Beauly district. The results suggest that fish over 10 pounds are most likely to be MSW salmon, with fish under 6 pounds most likely being 1SW grilse. Fish between 6 and 10 pounds could be either MSW salmon or grilse and difficult to positively identify without scale reading.

Fisheries Management

The principle aim of our fisheries management activities is to maximise the natural production of fish populations in our rivers, lochs and coastal areas through the protection and enhancement of spawning success and juvenile survival. The Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust works with a wide range of partners to achieve these aims and objectives. This includes the local Fishery Boards, regulatory bodies such as the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and SNH, together with individual land owners and tenant farmers.

Fisheries Management Plans

The NBFT worked with the Ness and Beauly DSFBs to jointly publish up to date Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) in 2014. These set out priority actions identified as being required for the management of fish populations within the Ness and Beauly districts. They provide a framework for the protection and enhancement of such populations and to ensure that their exploitation is undertaken in a sustainable manner. The lifespan of the FMPs is six years, commencing in August 2014 and ending in August 2019, during which time they will be regularly reviewed.

Control of Invasive Non-Native Species

The NBFT is a partner in the Inner Moray Firth Invasive Non-Native Plants Project. This aims to control invasive non-native plants (INNPS) located along watercourses and on adjacent flood-prone areas in the Lower Ness, Lower Beauly and Nairn catchments. Control efforts are being focussed primarily on giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and rhododendron, but certain populations of white butterbur and American skunk cabbage are also being tackled.

Glenurquhart Catchment - Of all the areas where the project operates, the longest-running and most sustained control programme has been in Glenurquhart. Work started here in 2008, and has continued every year since. While population levels of INNPS in the Glenurquhart catchment are now generally low, it is likely that control operations and monitoring will be required for some years. Small Japanese knotweed plants are still present at a low density, scattered over a fairly extensive area, mainly in Urquhart Bay Woods SSSI. The population of Himalayan balsam is now reduced to a fraction of its former abundance. However, this year, efforts to eradicate balsam were hindered by the after-effects of the floods which affected the lower Coiltie and Enrick rivers in March. Flood-water carried balsam seed into areas from which balsam had been previously cleared.

Despite the removal of over 2000 plants, a small number were discovered late in the season after they had shed seed. While the frequency and range of both Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam are much reduced, white butterbur is still moderately widespread in the lower part of the catchment. Efforts to control it have reached an impasse, as the project has been refused access to a single land-holding immediately upstream from Urquhart Bay Woods SSSI. Without continuing systematic control of white butterbur, it will re-colonise the flood-prone parts of the SSSI from which it has been largely removed.

Spring emergence of white butterbur in Urquhart Bay Woods SSSI

Lower Ness Catchment - The project has been tackling several INNPS species at sites close to Inverness since 2011. By far the most well-established and extensive of these species is Himalayan balsam, which has colonised several watercourses in Inverness. After five years of control, several of these populations are now close to being eradicated. There are also several small scattered populations of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed, American skunk cabbage and Tibetan cowslip. As in Glenurquhart, several stands of Japanese knotweed were still show signs of life, even after repeated spraying.

American skunk cabbage on the Mill Burn in Inverness

Beauly Catchment - Almost all the sizeable population of Japanese knotweed in the lower reaches of the river Beauly were stem-injected last year. Relatively little re-growth appeared this growing season. All injectable stems were injected, and all growth was sprayed. Populations of Himalayan balsam were tackled around Beauly. Although nowhere dominant, plants are scattered over a fairly wide area, and many are only accessible at low tide. Priority was given to controlling a well-established population of balsam at Kinerras, 12 kms upstream from Beauly. Although close to a watercourse, seed appears not to have yet reached flowing water. Between November and March, the project turned its attention to controlling rhododendron in the Beauly catchment. The stands vary greatly in age and structure, and are treated using a variety of techniques.

The annual meeting of the Highland Invasive Species Forum made a field visit to view Japanese knotweed control on the lower Beauly

Reviewing Project Workplan and Priorities for 2016 - The current funding package for the Inner Moray Firth Invasive Non-Native Plants Project comes to an end in 2016. It is clear that several more years will be required to achieve eradication, especially for species such as giant hogweed which are known to persist in the soil seedbank for 10 years. It is foreseen that funding to continue INNPS control operations beyond 2016 will be channelled directly through the NBFT and the Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Fisheries Trust. The project's aim in 2016 is to continue control in all catchments, giving highest priority to upstream populations.

Predator Management

Significant numbers of goosanders, mergansers and cormorants frequent the Ness and Beauly catchments. These birds predate on a wide range of fish species, with juvenile salmon and trout forming a major component of their diet. In particular, the relatively wide, shallow and clear waters of the River Ness below Loch Ness make ideal feeding grounds for these birds.

Sawbills are known to take advantage of 'pinch points' or 'bottlenecks' during smolt migrations. Cormorants will take larger prey items than sawbills, including adult trout and even small adult salmon. They are also known to cause damage to larger fish that they attack but are too large to swallow.

A bird damaged salmon smolt recorded on the River Garry in spring 2015

The NBFT and Ness DSFB and teams completed detailed bird counts on the Rivers Ness and Beauly in April 2015. These fed into a detailed supporting document accompanying a Moray Firth wide Bird Management Licence application. The application was successful, permitting the shooting of a number of goosanders and mergansers as an aid to other non-lethal scaring techniques.

Fish Passage Improvements

The Rough Burn is a coastal burn running close to the Norbord plant at Dalcross. Significant scour occurred downstream of a railway crossing during an extreme high water event in October 2014, resulting in the undermining of a bridge and significant risk to the railway network.

Emergency works were carried out by Network Rail to stabilise the bridge, however these did not consider fish passage. As is the case with many of the small coastal burns across the Ness District, the Rough Burn is believed to support important populations of sea trout.

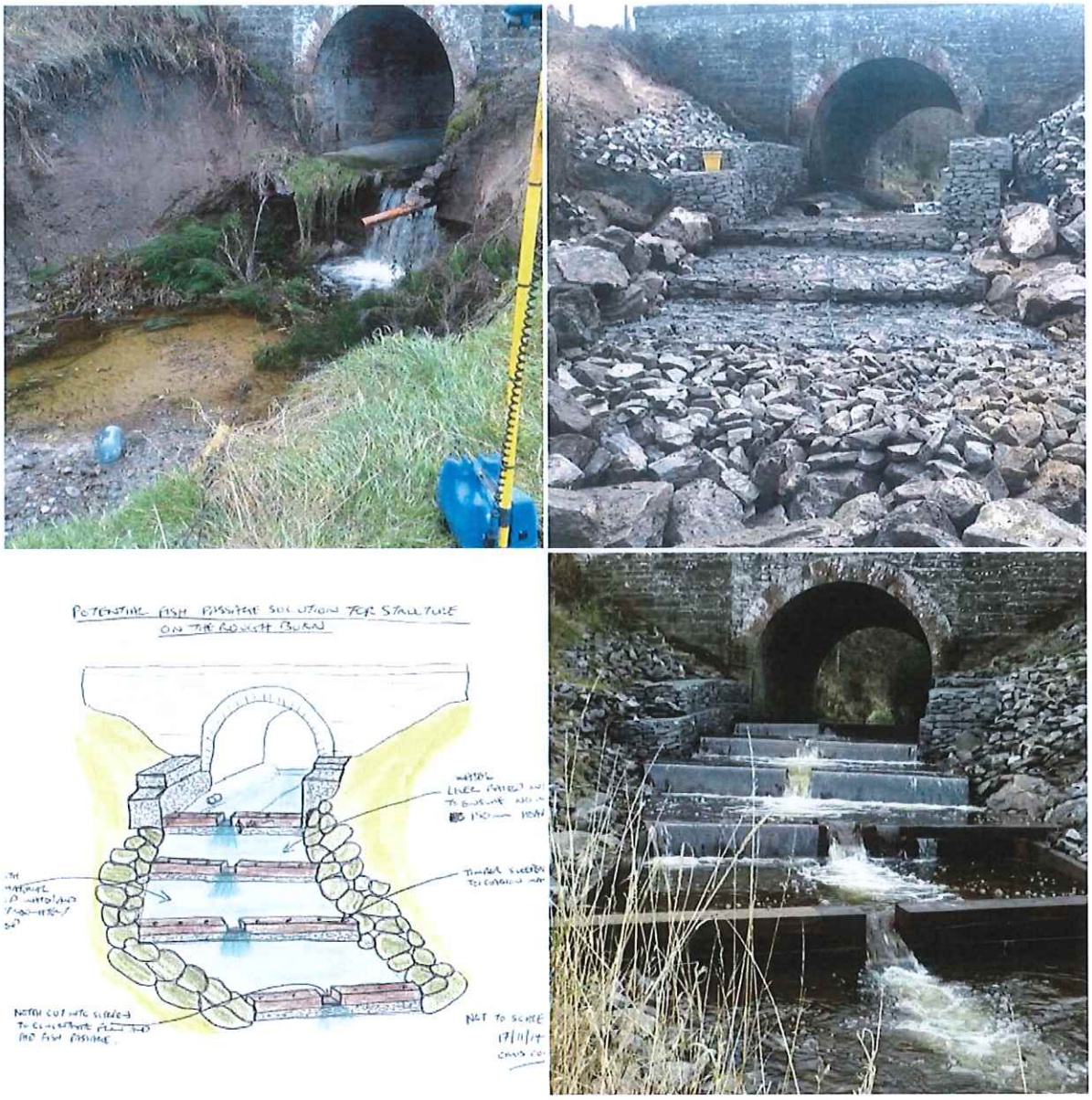
The NBFT advised SEPA that the 'emergency' works were rather more permanent than expected. The idea of emergency works is that temporary repairs can be put in place, while a long term solution is considered. SEPA agreed and Network Rail was subsequently instructed to provide a fish pass over the structure.

The task of designing and building a fish pass was made more complicated by the fact that the bed of the river had been filled with porous rock armour and gabion baskets. It was not possible to remove this material, so a water tight solution had to be constructed on top of it.

The NBFT and Ness DSFB produced some initial sketches, which were then translated into design drawings by Network Rail and their contractors. The final design consisted of a series of pools, lined with water tight concrete matting material, with 'notched' sleeper weirs on their downstream edges

allowing fish passage. The resulting structure has a few 'leakage' issues that the contractors are currently attending to. However, we are confident that once these are addressed the structure will facilitate fish passage.

Various stages in the provision of fish passage on the Rough Burn



FISA Static Gear Fishermen's Recording Scheme

Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust are currently acting as science partners working with local inshore creel fishermen in the Moray Firth to devise and establish a self-sampling and reporting scheme. This will allow static gear fishermen to reliably record and report the constituents of their routine catch, including juvenile stages of commercial fish and shellfish. Through representative reporting of bycatch, combined with fishing and landings information, the work aims to improve scientific understanding of fish stocks within the Moray Firth and may provide the framework for application in other Inshore Fishery Group areas.

Daily and weekly recording sheets were produced allowing creel fishermen to record information on:

- Landings and discards of target species;
- Bycatch (the catch of other non-target species);
- Environmental data (sea surface temperature, depth, substrate type, tide and weather); and
- Fishing effort (location, number and type of creel, soak time and bait).

For all target species the sex was recorded where possible. NBFT scientists carried out additional sampling on two days each month, collecting data on the size distribution, maturity status and sex of target and bycatch species.

A lobster recorded during the FISA Static Gear Fisherman's Recording Scheme project

Sixty trips were conducted by commercial fishermen between June and November 2015 on board the Argossy II and seven trips were monitored by the NBFT between August and November, sampling 331 creels, 7.7% of the total numbers of creels hauled.

The collection of data from a second vessel operating on a ground further to the North, which was initiated in November 2015 and continued until March 2016 to provide data from another area in the inner Moray Firth. In year two, video recording equipment will be trialled to assist with identification and sex determination of the catch. Further investigation will take place to ascertain the level of additional sub-sampling required to estimate the size composition of the catch.

Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project

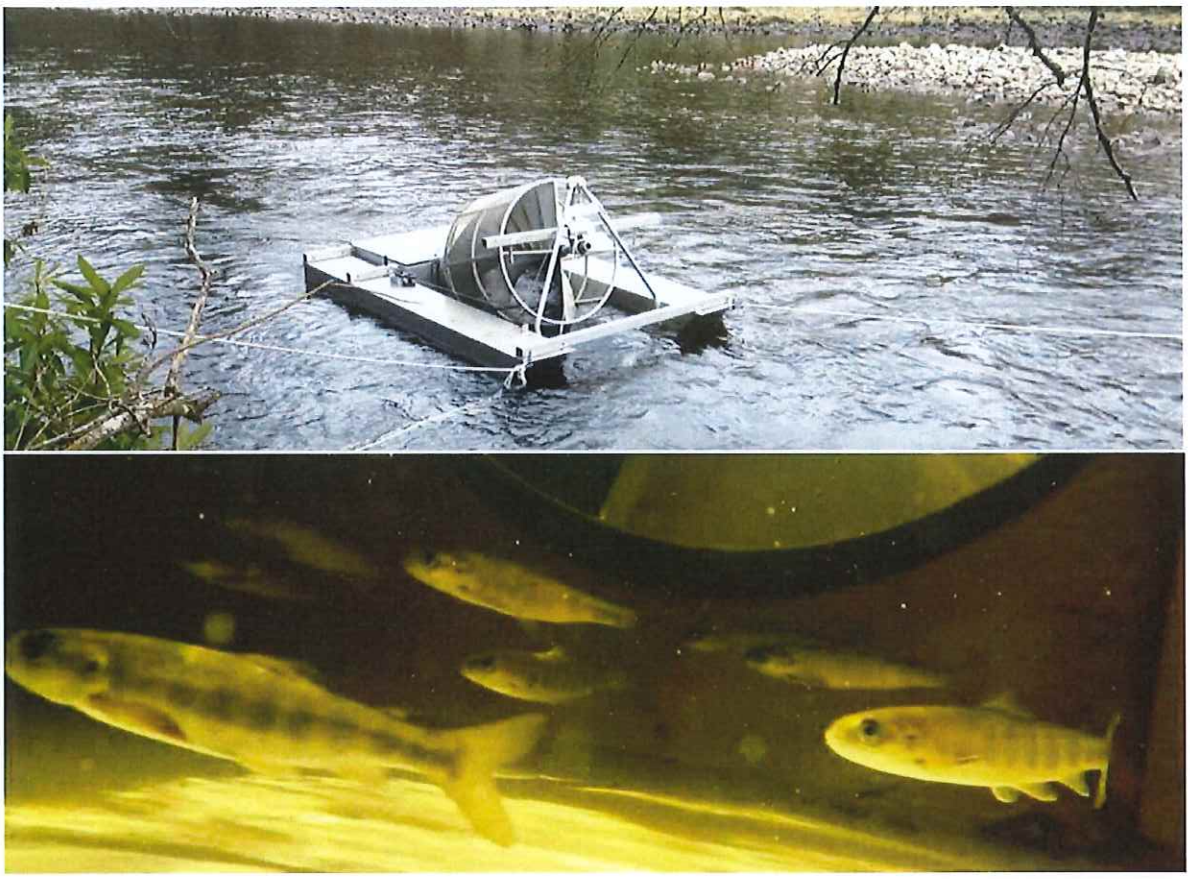
In 2012 the UHI Rivers and Lochs Institute RLI were commissioned to carry out a scoping study for the development of a salmon stock restoration programme for the Upper Garry. The abundance of Atlantic salmon in this system has declined over the last 50 years and is showing little sign of recovery.

Their recommendations included the implementation of carefully targeted, designed and linked enhancement initiatives, encompassing habitat improvement and stock rehabilitation through supportive breeding and supplementary stocking. Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE), the NBFT, the Ness DSFB, Marine Harvest (MH), the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and RLI have

come together to collaborate on the delivery of what is now known as the 'Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project'.

The supportive breeding and supplementary stocking element of the project entails the capture of a proportion of the wild Garry salmon smolts as they migrate downstream towards the sea between April and May.

Rotary screw trap in position in the River Garry in spring 2015 with smolts in the collection box



Each fish is anesthetised on removal from the trap and a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag implanted into its abdomen. This allows each individual fish to be identified using a hand held reader. The fork length and weight of each fish is recorded and tissue and scale samples taken. The fish are then transported to a temporary freshwater holding facility at Loch Garry.

Once the fish are deemed to be ready for the transition to the marine environment, they are transferred to a salt water holding facility and grown on to maturity in the marine environment. It is intended to stock the eggs produced from these fish to areas accessible to salmon upstream of Garry Dam for a period of four years in an attempt to 'kick-start' the population. It is hoped that this will enable a sufficient number of eggs to be produced to have a meaningful impact on the system.

Processing the smolts before transfer to the temporary holding facility on Loch Garry

The first two operational years of the 'Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project' have proven that the capture of adequate numbers of wild smolts from the Garry system is achievable. However, issues have been experienced in relation to the successful transition of the smolts from freshwater to salt water. In response, an option appraisal exercise has been completed, problem areas identified and solutions put in place for the 2016 operations.

Pearls in Pearl LIFE+ Project

In terms of the practical elements of the Project, NBFT staff have spent a considerable amount of time in the field monitoring the development of pearl mussel glochidia to enable successful artificial encystment of juvenile salmon and trout in the upper reaches of the River Moriston. The development of glochidia is intrinsically linked to water temperature and according to scientific literature, pearl mussel glochidia will be fully developed and ready to encyst on to the gills of salmon/trout after 443 degree days (31 days at 14.3°c in August).

In 2014, glochidia were fully developed on the 29th August and NBFT staff successfully encysted around 150 juvenile salmon and trout. By the 29th August this year, the glochidia were almost three developmental stages behind where they were at the same time in 2014. On the 7th of September, the glochidia had "caught up" somewhat and it was estimated that they would be fully developed and ready to encyst on the 10th of September. Following an agreement with SSE to not generate from Ceannocroc, NBFT managed to encyst in excess of 300 juvenile salmon and trout over six sites on the Upper Moriston. Initial success of the most recent work will be gauged in the spring of 2016 when NBFT will electro-fish the areas where artificial encystment was carried out.

Education

Education is a vital component of the work carried out by the NBFT. It provides an important link between the work of the trust and local communities and the general public. In addition, it raises awareness of both the freshwater and marine environments and the need for their protection/conservation.

Our staff delivered a number of educational events throughout the area as part of the Pearls in Peril LIFE+ project. This EU funded project spans four years from 2012 to 2016 and includes measures to communicate with local, national and international audiences and raise awareness of freshwater pearl mussel conservation issues. Although the emphasis has been on freshwater pearl mussels, river ecology, fish biology and freshwater habitats were also covered. A number of school visits and field trips were also carried out, these events are always well received and the trust spoke to over 200 pupils from schools across the Ness and Beauly catchments.

Pupils having fun with some 'mini beasts' during a 'Pearls in Peril LIFE+ Project' educational event

The trust also attended a number of public events in 2015. This included the Highland Field Sports Fair in Moy and the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust's River festival which attracted over 100 members of the general public. The NBFT was a leading partner in the development of 'Scotland's Salmon Festival' in Inverness. This was a unique event held in Inverness between the 31st August and 5th September 2015. Its primary aim was to raise awareness of the Atlantic salmon, its lifecycle, cultural and economic importance in Scotland and the pressures that it currently faces.

For the first time the festival brought together a range of interests from across the wild fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The NBFT, in common with others, has concerns about the potential impact that poor fish farm management practices can have on salmon populations. That said, we also have an appreciation of the benefits an environmentally sustainable and competitive salmon farming industry

can bring to Scotland. In recent years our understanding of the interactions between wild and farmed salmon has improved greatly. There is still much more to be done, but we believe that it is best achieved by working together in the spirit of partnership and trust.

One of the key events of the festival was an international science symposium hosted by the UHI Rivers and Lochs Institute (RLI) at their new campus in Inverness. The event entitled 'Salmon, Science and Society' was targeted at industry professionals. It explored the role that science plays in the management of Scotland's wild salmon and how it can be better applied in practice.

A selection of photographs taken at the International Science Symposium at UHI Inverness College

Continuing the theme of raising awareness of the Atlantic salmon, Scotland's Salmon Festival included a number of public orientated evening events. A 'Salmon Film Festival' at Eden Court Theatre included short salmon-related films and public lectures on salmon issues. This was followed by an evening of public lectures on the theme of 'Salmon, Science and Society' delivered by leading industry experts. Public engagement even extended into Inverness's night life. The band 'Shakalovesyou', in association with Scotland's Salmon Festival, played a Friday night in the cities multi-award winning pub and live-music venue Hootananny.

Perhaps the highlight of the festival was the two day 'Alexander Grant Memorial Speycasting Competition'. Alexander Grant cast his personally-designed rod in to the General's Well pool of the River Ness 120 years ago and reached a record 65 yards, earning him the title 'Godfather of Speycasting'. Since then, salmon fishing has become an ever-increasing asset to this country.

A selection of photographs taken at the Alexander Grant Memorial Speycasting Competition

Staged 120 years after Grant set his original record; the event was led by Inverness Angling Club in association with three times world Speycasting champion Scott Mackenzie of Mackenzie Flyfishing. A total of 20 competitors from the USA, Ireland, Norway, England and Scotland came to pay their own tributes to Grant. The ladies event was won by Donna O'Sullivan of San Francisco who cast a distance of 34 metres. The overall winner was Geir Hanson from Bergen with a 52 metre cast. Both were presented with an engraved Quaich in recognition of their achievements by Alexander Grant's great grandson, Michael Kerr.

The salmon festival fair has held on the adjacent Bught Park, with the first of the two days dedicated to local primary schools. Over 100 children engaged in a range of activities including fly casting lessons, fly tying, mini beast hunts, electro-fishing demonstrations, arts and crafts, and traditional music.

Scotland's first salmon festival went so much better than any of us on the steering group could have hoped. The breadth of engagement was outstanding as was the co-operation between academics, the aquaculture industry, government advisers, the local authority, the wild fisheries sector and the general public.

We had a range of superb sponsors and now we all need to work hard to build on the achievements of the week and ensure that it has a lasting legacy. The steering group plan to host the next Scotland's Salmon Festival here in Inverness in 2017.

A selection of photographs taken at the Bught Park Fair

Emergency Response

Caledonian Canal Breach - During an extreme high water event in the early hours of Sunday the 8th March 2015, the banks of the Caledonian Canal breached at Cullochy weir. Large amounts of material were deposited in the River Oich downstream of the breach as the force of water eroded the canal banks. As water escaped through the breach, the level upstream in both the canal and Loch Oich fell rapidly. There was no longer a flow of water over the weir from Loch Oich into the River Oich, with the upper reaches of the river becoming rapidly de-watered. All of this occurred at a time when the salmon smolt run was about to begin and salmon eggs were incubating in the river gravels.

The over the following months the NBFT team liaised closely with Scottish Canals and SEPA to ensure that the potential impacts of the incident on salmon populations (together with those associated with subsequent repair works) were minimised as far as practicably possible. Initial priority works involved the protection of the exposed bank with rock armour to prevent any further erosion. Scottish Canals then used rock armour to dam the mouth of the canal. This significantly reduced the flow of water through the canal and raised the levels in Loch Oich. This in turn meant that water once again spilt over the weir, with a base flow returned to the upper reaches of the River Oich.

Sheet piling was used to close the breach, after which the temporary rock dam at the mouth of the canal was removed. This allowed the canal to re-open to all craft on the 30th of April 2015 whilst repair works continued behind the piling. A large bank of displaced sand, gravel and cobbles which had formed in the River Oich downstream of the breach was then carefully removed. This provided material for the repair works and acted to reduce the potential long-term impacts of the material on the river system. The fill was completed to formation level with concreted poured soon after.

A site visit during repair works, and creation of the temporary rock dam at the mouth of the canal

The works on the replacement weir were subsequently completed in October 2015. The Ness DSFB and NBFT will monitor the long-term impacts of the event over the coming years.

Whin Park Lade Fish Rescue - During a routine visit to the 'Electric Burn' on the 1st October 2015, we discovered that it had become dewatered. This was a repeat of a similar incident which occurred at the same time in 2014. In response an emergency fish rescue was carried out by the NBFT team on the morning of the 2nd October 2015. This concentrated on the most effected reach below the boating pond intake weir, extending down to the small ornamental pond below the shop. In total approximately 1000 three spined sticklebacks, 50 European eels, 12 salmon parr, 2 brown trout and a single lamprey ammocete were transferred to the relative safety of the main River Ness. In addition to this we saw large numbers (100s) of juvenile newts in the areas of standing water.

Fish rescue at Whin Park Lade including photographs of a salmon parr and three spined stickleback (top left), lamprey ammocete (top right), silver eel (bottom left) and numerous sticklebacks (bottom right)

The low number of lamprey ammocetes recorded in the main affected reach was concerning, particularly given the high numbers recorded in previous years. In comparison, the lower canoe slalom reach was found to contain extremely high densities of lamprey ammocetes. After a brief 'look see' we decided to leave these fish where they were given their sheer numbers, the fact that by this time the flow had been restored and that levels were beginning to rise. The levels in the slalom reach are influenced by the amount of water coming down the lade, together with that 'backing up' from the main River Ness.

The fact that we only found one dead stickleback during the operation suggests that large scale fish mortality was averted by the swift response by fisheries board and trust staff, together with those from THC who restored the flows. Discussion with SEPA and the Highland Council aimed at preventing a reoccurrence are ongoing.

Plans for Future Period

In addition to delivery of its core monitoring programmes, the Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust Intends to progress the flowing key objectives over the coming year:

- Efficiently and effectively manage the Trust through full compliance with all statutes, compliance with the RAFTS Code of Governance for Trusts, provision of effective administration, ensuring sound financial control and being a good employer;

- Ensure the delivery of ongoing projects, including EU Funded Pearls in Peril LIFE+ Project, the Upper Garry Restoration Project and the Ness and Beauly Invasive Plant Project; and

- Engage positively in the Scottish Government's Wild Fisheries Reform process and continue to manage the Trust in a professional and business-like manner, ensuring an organised passage into the new structure.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

Trustees

The trustees (who are also directors) who served during the year were:

James Eric Braithwaite
Neil Cameron (Chairman)
Graham John Mackenzie
Joseph Michael Martin
James (Jock) Miller (Vice Chairman)
Christopher Frank Spencer-Nairn
Murray Cameron Stark

This report was approved by the board of trustees on and signed on its behalf.

Neil Cameron
Trustee

Independent Examiner's Report to the Directors of the Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31st March 2016 which are set out on pages 25 to 30.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (a) to (c) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1 Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and

to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations have not been met, or

2 To which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

L G Lees-Buckley FCA
Chartered Accountant and Registered Auditor
16 Northfields Prospect Business Centre
Putney Bridge Road

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING AN INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

	Note	Year Ended 31st March 2016 Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total £	Year Ended 31.03.2015 Total £
INCOMING RESOURCES					
Voluntary Income					
Donations and Gifts		50,000	-	50,000	50,000
Grants for Core Activities		-	22,994	22,994	26,640
Other		6,728	-	6,728	2,347
Membership Subscriptions		288	-	288	535
		57,016	22,994	80,010	79,522
Generated Funds					
Bank Interest		-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES		57,016	22,994	80,010	79,522
RESOURCES EXPENDED	2				
Charitable Activities		(52,927)	(21,345)	(74,272)	(76,241)
Support Costs		(3,741)	(1,509)	(5,250)	(5,257)
		(56,668)	(22,854)	(79,522)	(81,498)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		348	140	488	(1,976)
Funds Balances Brought Forward		23,495	13,200	36,695	38,671
Funds Balances Carried Forward	6	23,843	13,340	37,183	36,695

All the amounts relate to continuing operations.
The charity has no other recognised gains or losses for the year.

The notes on pages 27 and 28 form part of these accounts.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31ST MARCH 2016

	Notes	2016		2015
		£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets	3		2,567	3,655
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at Bank and in Hand		37,626		48,168
Debtors	4	2,027		1,807
		39,653		49,975
CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year	5	5,037		16,935
NET CURRENT ASSETS			34,616	33,040
NET ASSETS			37,183	36,695
RETAINED FUNDS				
Restricted Funds	6		13,340	13,200
Unrestricted Income Funds	6		23,843	23,495
			37,183	36,695

The trustees consider that the company is entitled to exemption from the requirement to have an audit under the provisions of s.11 (1) of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 and section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2016 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees acknowledge their responsibilities for ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with s.44(1)(a) of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and Regulation 4 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and for preparing accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Regulations and which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at 31st March 2016 and of its surplus for the year then ended.

The accounts, which have been prepared in accordance with the provisions of s.4 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006, were approved by the board of trustees on .....and signed on its behalf.

.....

Neil Cameron
Trustee

The notes on pages 27 and 28 form part of these accounts.

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of Preparation of Accounts
The accounts are prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2015).

Incoming Resources
Incoming resources represents grants received, donations and fees earned in the year.

Tangible Fixed Assets
Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Motor vehicle - 25% reducing balance
Computers - 25% straight line
Plant and equipment - 20% straight line

2. RESOURCES EXPENDED

Resources expended includes:	2016	2015
	£	£
Depreciation		
Owned Assets	1,088	1,219

3. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Motor Vehicle	Computers	Plant and Equipment	Total
	£	£	£	£
Cost				
At 1st April 2015 and at 31st March 2016	10,344	4,767	5,018	20,129
Depreciation				
At 1st April 2015	8,713	3,029	4,732	16,474
Charge for the Year	407	577	104	1,088
At 31st March 2016	9,120	3,606	4,836	17,562
Net Book Value				
At 31st March 2016	1,224	1,161	182	2,567
At 31st March 2015	1,631	1,738	286	3,655

4 DEBTORS

	2016	2015
	£	£
Prepayments and Accrued Income	2,027	6,810

5 CREDITORS: amounts falling due within one year

	2016	2015
	£	£
Deferred Income	2,500	2,500
Trade Creditors	231	561
Social Security and Other Taxes	1,206	1,216
Accruals	1,100	12,658
	5,037	16,935

6. RETAINED FUNDS

	2016		2015	
	Restricted	Unrestricted	Restricted	Unrestricted
	£	£	£	£
Surplus Brought Forward	13,200	23,495	13,862	24,809
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year	140	348	(662)	(1,314)
Surplus Carried Forward	13,340	23,843	13,200	23,495

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

NESS & BEAULY FISHERIES TRUST

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2016

	2016		2015
	£	£	£
INCOME			
Grants Receivable		80,010	79,522
EXPENDITURE			
Salaries and Staff Costs	63,736		63,450
Fishing and Mapping Equipment	0		640
Contributions and Projects	3,469		3,750
Subscriptions	1,200		1,200
Insurance	1,933		1,813
Motor Expenses	2,846		4,023
Travel and Subsistence	0		146
Printing, Stationery and Website	863		1,250
Repairs and Renewals	595		195
Office and Miscellaneous Expenses	531		598
Telephone	792		801
Legal and Professional	558		414
Accountancy and Bookkeeping	1,738		1,881
Bank Charges	173		118
Depreciation of Tangible Fixed Assets	1,088		1,219
		79,522	81,498
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		488	(1,976)