



LOCH ACHONACHIE ANGLING CLUB NEWSLETTER 50: DECEMBER 2023



WINTER LEAGUE 2023-24

After three legs, our intrepid team of “Rainbow Warriors” were looking forward to completing the pre-Christmas part of the competition without weather cancellations before resuming at Geddes on 11 January. However, the Saturday 7 outing to Lagg has been switched to Sunday 8 December hoping Storm Darragh has passed by then.



The first three legs fished were Rothiemurchus - with very mixed fortunes; Geddes with its tricky pontoons system bringing luck of the draw to some but empty bags to others; then a superb outing to Artloch near Huntly – next up Lagg NW Sutherland. Thanks to all the fisheries for the hospitality received and the warm, friendly welcomes. Current top three in the league table are :- **Dave MacGregor, Derek Williamson, Lewis Ross** - with their points totals higher than usual at this stage, only Derek in the top three having won a leg. There have been quite a few normally ever-present competitors have had to miss legs so far, but the competition will no doubt heat up from January to March.

CATCH RETURNS SALMON 2024

Pleasing to report that the river ticket returns to Contin Filling Station have increased significantly which makes it an easier job to collate returns and compile a report by 31 December. As you'll know Marine Scotland (now called Marine Directorate) demands a considerably detailed account of all salmon caught per beat whether kept or returned. The club also has to set out what is called Rod Effort – the number of rods/day actually fishing the rivers. Any disparity between these figures and the catch returns reported could cause problems for our club. Detailed final figures will be available by the new year but in the meantime, with low water and no generation flows in the Upper Conon all season, I have to report numbers of salmon caught are well down on the previous year. Upper Conon and Upper Blackwater combined catch – only 29 salmon caught with at least 26 of them safely returned. Biggest reported was 16lb off the Blackwater. All numbers down significantly from last season. Will the Rod Effort be similarly down which might help explain?

More to follow and more of this needed in 2025



Committee member Scott McMath also ranges far and wide to fish – we spotted this wee success below on the Tummel/Tay system

A cracking sea liced fish of about 8lbs caught last Tuesday by Scott McMath on his first visit to East Haugh. Scott caught it on a super snaelda using a floating line and fast sink tip



Kerri McEwan Marketing Assistant at Gael Force Marine has been in touch again with discount offer for **LAAC** members. Here are the details of the December discount code that can be used by your club members [online](#) or via our telesales desk (01463 229400) until 31st December.

Code to be entered at checkout: **M8XU22**

This gives you **10% off** your order with a minimum spend of £30.

IN THE NEWS – WORRYING VISIONS OF THE FUTURE?

HYDROGEN BOMB

Dani Morey identifies a powerful new threat to river health



THERE'S A NEW BUZZWORD emanating from the green corner of politics just now. Hydrogen. You might think, as I did, that this has nothing to do with fishing, however a report in the local paper about a planning application for a hydrogen plant on the banks of my local river got me thinking. The idea is to use local water to power local industries, in this case distilleries. It's not just this corner of Scotland that's been earmarked, there are 75 proposed sites across the UK, several of which are on the doorstep of our most iconic fly-fishing rivers.

The UK Government aims to hit net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and hydrogen, seen as "clean energy" because it releases only water in production, is part of this plan. Hydrogen can power industry and vehicles (the main market now), generate electricity and heat homes. But what has this got to do with fishing?

Electrolytic hydrogen is formed through electrolysis of water in land-based facilities near renewable energy sources such as wind or solar power; electricity is used to split the water into hydrogen (gas) and water. My concern is how much water is needed to power this and will it be taken from mainstem rivers or feeder burns and tributaries?

Global demand for water is increasing at a rate of 1% a year. Meanwhile, we're seeing increasingly low water levels and high water temperatures; some rivers, even in the north of the UK, are reaching 70 deg C; that's the same temperature as a swimming pool! Surely this hike in temperature isn't just down to a lack of trees or global warming, but that less water is having an impact, too?

Since salmonids are cold-water fish, perhaps it's no coincidence we're seeing fewer of them in our rivers. Greater demand on river water means shallower, slower-moving pools and lower reservoirs and lakes that all heat up quicker and have lower oxygenation. Those numerous

sewage spills and pollutants running into our waterways that we hear about daily will be far more concentrated and take longer to dissipate in low-flow areas, causing more damage to an already fragile environment.

When I asked one of the green energy companies how environmental impact during the construction stage would be managed (siltation and pollution risk at construction sites has proved troublesome) I was told it would be closely monitored by SEPA. This didn't exactly inspire me with confidence. Another company admitted that hydrogen schemes on this scale are currently unfeasible as we don't yet have the capacity to store or distribute large quantities, the suggestion being the proposals were greenwashing and gesture politicising.

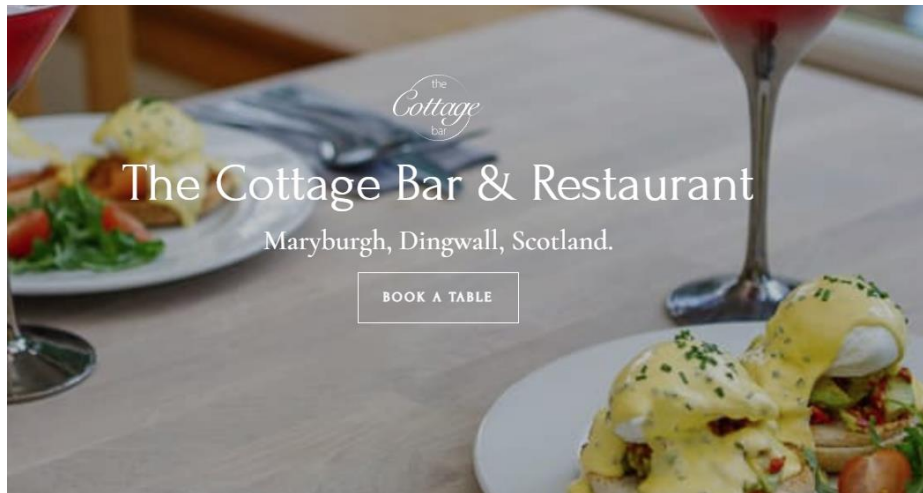
In a bid to hit targets is Government overlooking the consequences of this "clean green energy"? I appreciate salmon aren't top of the political agenda, but as an indicator species shouldn't they be considered part of the bigger picture? Is one problem being solved by worsening another? Energy firms admit that hydrogen production can have a large environmental impact.

We need to reduce our carbon footprint, but we must protect our waterways and the life within them. Our rivers are already a shadow of what they were, and even the sparkling chalkstreams of my childhood have lost their lustre; it's noticeable nationwide. Sadly, man's greed and man's need has much to answer for. We want warm homes at the flick of a switch, we have a far greater dependency on tech that needs power and constant recharging, we yearn to travel but we need to wake up to the fact our daily life is taking its toll on the environment, and the fish, we try so hard to protect. ■

Dani Morey is a salmon-fishing guide on the River Spey where she runs Ladyfisher (ladyfisher.co.uk). She has more than 30 years of experience and enjoys sharing her passion for the river and the art of spey-casting in a professional, fun and relaxed manner.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Been out last minute Christmas present shopping – need some restoration - have a think about visiting our club's supportive partners at the Cottage Bar & Restaurant in Maryburgh. Excellent food, refreshments, great service and a welcoming atmosphere here, and we thank Hannah & Scott and staff for their support for our club in 2024. Cheers !



www.thecottagebar.co.uk

A festive graphic for 'CHRISTMAS BOOKS'. It features a red circular background with the text 'CHRISTMAS BOOKS' in large, white, bold letters. Below it, in smaller white text, is 'Shop Local. Shop Independent.' The graphic is decorated with white snowflakes, green pine trees, and a white reindeer with red antlers. At the bottom, there is a stack of books. The entire graphic is set against a dark green background.

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Come and see us for your free guide to the best books for giving this Christmas

Each Christmas LAAC club members are given a **special 15% festive discount** at two of the stores on Dingwall High Street.

Both have an online presence if you want to browse ahead of your visit and you'll receive a very warm welcome when you visit their absolute treasure trove shops.



Just up the street from the Town House you'll find Andy & Debbie Downie ready to help you get just the right gifts for your family at **The Sports & Model Shop** - and with a generous **15% discount to club members** your Christmas spending money will go much further. recently started a loyalty card where you can earn points to redeem against purchases, this would be in addition to the discount we already give LAAC members. Also please wish everyone a very Happy Christmas from us and thank them for their support over the year. Shopping local supports the local economy, the local high street and gives many people a sense of community that is often sadly lacking. You have no idea how many people pop in just for a chat.. Without the support of people using shops like us this could so easily disappear. You might even see Santa Andy Downie in particularly HoHoHo cheery form this Christmas after pulling off a tremendous win in the Winter League at Artloch➔ with the wonderful owner Ruth Wright's amazing hospitality and friends enjoying a wee ceilidh with the club's musicians after the fishing.



MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL STAFF AT CONTIN FILLING STATION

Your support for our club and your tremendous service to anglers is hugely appreciated – Heather Cormack and your team have a tremendous festive season.

If you have enjoyed this newsletter and found it useful, please let us know. Many thanks to all who have taken the time to do this already. Next edition will carry articles on the club's AGM, your renewal arrangements for 2025 and plans to create more truly wild fishing access on our waters.

Do please remember your contributions in stories and photographs are always very welcome!

Our Club website <https://highlandfishing.net/> our Facebook page and Instagram site are all available to stay up to date with LAAC activities and news. Always email the club at achonachie.angling@gmail.com

Finally, to all our members, families, friends and visitors we wish you a very **Happy Christmas** and sending every best wish for 2025.

Stephen Dowds

Stephen Dowds
LAAC Chairman/Secretary
DECEMBER 2024