

“River to Lough Festival 2019 – A Celebration of Lough Neagh Pollan PDO”

Presentation to Mid Ulster Council’s Development Committee

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Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Lough Neagh
Fishermen's
Co-operative



LOUGH NEAGH
Landscape Partnership



Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative

- Largest wild eel fishery in Europe, producing approx. 400 tonnes of eels per annum. 1965: 20% of the shares, 1972: LNFCS purchased remainder of shares.
- 80% to Holland and 20% to London, <1% for home market value of £3 million per annum.
- Brown eel fishing from May to Oct, after packaging & shipping, remaining monies returned to fishermen - Co-operative. Currently 230 eel fishers (110 licensed boats)
- Silver eel fishing from Aug to Dec, pays for the running of the premises, staff wages and restocking of Elvers. Cost of restocking is gross £5 million over last 25 years for the benefit of the fishing industry.
- 1992: Purchased fishing rights to scale fishing on the lough. 2016: LNFCS start to manage scale fishing permits and processing of scale fish – pollan, dollaghan, perch mostly for export to Europe. Approx. 400T in total from LN annually, with approx. 92 boats licensed but not full-time as some fish for eel during it's fishing season (May to Oct)
- Due Oct 2018: Visitor centre on LNFCS site to tell the story of the company, the products particularly eel and pollan, the heritage and tradition of fishing on Lough Neagh, fishing techniques (extracts from Seamus Heaney), life cycle of eel and other fish and the science behind the management of the fisheries. This will support on-going schools outreach programmes as well as be an additional visitor attraction in MUDC, to compliment SH HomePlace.



- **Joint project with Lough Neagh Partnership and LNFCFS.**
- **Food and Fishing Heritage focus**
- **Bespoke event celebrating Lough Neagh Pollan's accolade of Protected Designation of Origin (confirmed April 2018).**
- **First PDO for Northern Ireland and the first fin fish PDO in the UK & Ireland.**
- **As far as we are aware, we are the only food producer with 2 protected food names in UK & Ireland**
- **Pollan are the only European vertebrate found uniquely in Ireland, where their entire distribution is limited to 5 loughs, of which Lough Neagh is the only commercial source.**



Purpose of the Festival

This festival will celebrate every element of the accolade of PDO for Lough Neagh Pollan including:

- a. The heritage and traditions of fishing for Pollan on Lough Neagh**
- b. The current sustainable management of the fishery including the unique distinguishing features and the life cycle of Pollan in Lough Neagh, the environment in which it spends its entire life, and why this habitat is so important to the commercial production of this unique species of fin fish.**
- c. Demonstration of the capture and processing of Lough Neagh Pollan and revel in this authentic food culture which is highly sought after throughout Europe.**



What activities will take place?

- **Bespoke event centring on Lough Neagh Pollan, celebrating its PDO accolade, its importance to the area, to the fishing community and as a unique culinary experience, only available from Lough Neagh.**
- **A minimum of ten regional food producers will contribute to the celebration.**
- **The heritage importance of the fishing industry on the Lough will be promoted through historical based demonstrations with Chefs using traditional recipes and methods.**
- **The importance of Lough Neagh Pollan during times of poverty and hardship, including during World War II and the famine.**
- **Interactive tanks helping participants interpret the biodiversity of the Lough**
- **Displays of heritage boats both on and off the water and a range of activities for engaging young people and children.**

What activities will take place?

- A "Fishermen's Trail" which will take the visitors through the important sequence of chores for the preparation of nets and boats
- A fully equipped gill net fishing boat would be on display.
- Stories, myths and legends about the Lough.
- Audio visual images of the 2 main methods of production.
- A demonstration of descaling, gutting and filleting Pollan would be on offer for those hoping to learn more about handling and processing fish.
- An artisan marketplace with producers such as Abernethy butter & Anahorish Preserves
- **EVER ATTENDEE GETS TO TRY A PIECE OF BEER BATTERED POLLAN!**

Outcomes and Benefits

- **8,000 visitors will attend and participate in a series of activities related to the Pollan fishing industry on the Lough**
- **In excess of 5000 beneficiaries will come from the Mid Ulster Council area, especially Magherafelt and the western and northern shores of Lough Neagh. The remaining estimated audience will come from Toome, Cranfield, Antrim and further afield**
- **Mid Ulster region further recognised as an area of high quality food production**



Budgets

• Total Cost of Festival	£13,942.00
• Funding Secured	
• DAERA NI Regional Food Programme	£5,076.80
• Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership	£3,500.00
• Applications Pending	
• MUDC Community Local Festival Grant	£1,200.00
• Shortfall	
• ??????	£4,165.20

Next Steps

- **We would request that:**
 - a. Council give consideration to endorsing the River to Lough Festival 2019**
 - b. Council give consideration to providing a £4,165.00 contribution towards the delivery of the festival to help meet the budgetary shortfall**