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MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in BRAEHOLM, 31E MONTROSE STREET, HELENSBURGH on TUESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2015

Chair

Councillor Aileen Morton

Attending:

Charlie Cairns,
Morevain Martin
Johanna Urquhart
Stuart McCracken
Robert Bell
Stewart Campbell
Alastair Macbeth

Lower Clyde Green Space
Argyll Voluntary Action
Principal, Lomond School
Argyll and Bute Council
West Highland Photography
Chairman of Friends of Duchess Wood
Secretary of Friends of Duchess Wood

1. APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Audrey Martin
Iain Wilkinson
Eileen Kay

2. MINUTE

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 18 November 2014 was approved as a true record.

Matters Arising

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The Committee agreed that Dog Training would be on the Agenda for the next meeting in May.

3. LOMOND SCHOOL PROPOSAL FOR A FOREST SCHOOL SITE

The group gave consideration to a report which outlined the Lomond School proposal for a Forest School site in Duchess Wood.

Charlie Cairns highlighted that the proposal had previously been approved in principle by the Duchess Wood Committee and reported that a good response had been received from Luss Estates. He added that the next stage would be an exchange of letters between Lomond School and Luss Estates. Charlie Cairns confirmed that the Argyll and Bute Council Legal Department had determined that the existing management

agreement in place was adequate and that approval from the Duchess Wood Committee would suffice.

Joanna Urquhart informed the Committee that staff training was underway and that assessments would soon be undertaken. She thanked both Charlie Cairns and Stuart McCracken for all the help and advice they had provided.

The Chair requested clarification from Stuart McCracken that there were no major maintenance issues which needed to be addressed and he affirmed there were none.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. To approve the proposal from Lomond School for a Forest School in Duchess Wood;
2. That Lomond School and Luss Estates would instigate an exchange of formal correspondence in regards the procedure to implement the Forest School;
3. That the Chair would notify Network Rail of the change in site usage at Duchess Wood by the implementation of the Forest School;
4. That a review of the site would be undertaken once the Forest Schools is operational and a report come to a future Duchess Wood Committee meeting.

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS/COMMUNITY

(a) SUB GROUP OF DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

The Chair advised that Eileen Kay was not present to speak to the Minute of the Sub-group and if the Committee agreed, then she would consolidate the 2 Agenda items into 1 which Charlie Cairns would speak to.

Charlie Cairns pointed out that the outcome of the meeting with the Head Teachers had established that their use of the Duchess Wood would be intermittent and of occasional use. He continued that based on this, the Committee would need to assess the effort and input into a resource which would be used very occasionally.

The Head Teachers had indicated that they would like to have used Duchess Wood and were very complimentary about the previous resources created, but due to costs and time constraints it was more viable to use areas closer to their schools.

However, they were keen on the 'web-based idea' and would perhaps use Duchess Wood for orienteering and geo-caching. Discussion continued and the Chair advised that Eileen Kay was the agreed point of contact for the local primary schools in the area.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the update
2. That a focus on a more generic educational resource rather than

one aimed at schools may be of more use may be of more use in relation to encouraging use of Duchess Wood;

3. That the Education Sub-Group would schedule a further meeting prior to the Duchess Wood Committee meeting in May and provide a proposal for the Committee to enable further discussion at the May meeting.

(b) UPDATE ON MEETING WITH LOCAL TEACHERS

The Committee heard an update from Charlie Cairns in regards the recent meeting held with local teachers.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the update.

5. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS

(a) REPORT FROM FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) which highlighted various initiatives which had been undertaken by the FODW.

It was highlighted that the formal unveiling of the new information boards was planned for late March. Support from Babcocks for the new boards and Scottish Natural Heritage in the creation of the Flower Walk leaflet was very much appreciated.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the update.
2. That Stewart Campbell would notify the Committee of the date of the formal unveiling of the boards.

(b) FUNDING OF DUCHESS WOOD

The Committee gave consideration to the report regarding funding of Duchess Wood.

Discussion followed and various issues were raised and updates given. .

Stuart McCracken highlighted that due to foreseeable budget constraints, Argyll and Bute Council would not be able to absorb any additional maintenance costs for the Wood.

The need to source external funding and various options were put forward for discussion.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. That Stuart McCracken would provide a detailed report on the Council notional funding in addition to his normal maintenance

- report for the May Committee meeting
2. That Charlie Cairns would provide a response to the other issues raised for the May Committee meeting.
 3. That FODW would provide a detailed proposal for the All-abilities path for the May meeting.
 4. That the Chair would make contact with Iain Wilkinson, Luss Estates regarding the potential for the future ownership of Duchess Wood lying with the community.

(c) **COMMUNICATION ABOUT EVENTS**

An event had recently been held that most of the Committee were not aware had been planned.

Decision

Stuart McCracken re-affirmed the previously agreed procedure, and that he would notify FODW when an events pack had been received that involved Duchess Wood.

6. EVENTS

(a) **FAIRY TALE WOODS PROPOSAL - UPDATE**

The Committee heard an update from Robert Bell, West Highland Photography regarding the proposal for a Fairy Tale lighting event in Duchess Wood.

He reported that things were progressing well and he was meeting with Argyll Voluntary Action in regards fund-raising. A Committee has been formed and this includes – a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and 2 other Committee Members.

Discussion followed and Robert Bell confirmed that there would be only 1 entry point to the attraction. Stewards would be in situ and the lighting company would provide further security.

The Chair thanked Robert Bell for his informative update.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

- 1 To note the update.
- 2 That if the event was scheduled to commence in October 2015, then Robert Bell would attend the May Committee meeting with a full Business Plan.

7. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

The Committee heard a verbal update from the Amenity Performance Manager.

He highlighted that a rubbish collection service was still being provided and that in regards to the request for an additional bin, he hoped to look favourably upon this. However, this would be subject to other demands across Helensburgh and Lomond.

Treatment for the Japanese knotweed would commence again in May. He clarified that he would be seeking a further quote for the tree cutting near to the garages at Strathclyde Court and would endeavour to source rock for the culvert repair in Duchess Wood.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the update
2. That Stewart McCracken would obtain a further quote for the proposed treeworks at Strathclyde Court and would endeavour to source rock supplies to enable repairs at the culvert within Duchess Wood.
3. That Stuart Campbell would email Stuart McCracken with the amount of rock necessary to implement remedial work at the culvert.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

(a) DUCHESS WOOD GREEN GYM

The group considered an update from Charlie Cairns, Area Manager - Lower Clyde Greenspace.

Green Gym

Charlie Cairns highlighted that due to inclement weather, the gym had only been operational for 6 days. Anna Hamilton, who co-ordinated the activities, had reported on a low turnout from Helensburgh. However, volunteers from Glasgow had been in attendance.

He reported that a further advertising campaign would be initiated with posters and flyers being disseminated locally. He described the work which was currently being undertaken in the Wood which included some tree cutting.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the update.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Joanna Urquhart drew attention to a new initiative within the school, in

which local pupils between 16-17 were looking to volunteer in the local area. This would be both in school time and out with school hours and she asked the Committee to email her with any ideas.

Morevain Martin pointed out that local boards were being implemented for Integration and Partnership Funding and highlighted the considerable budget available. She emphasised that the Green Gym was a good example of effective partnership working. She would provide further detail to the Committee

The Chair informed the Committee of a John Muir Day which would be celebrated in April 2015. She advised that there was Film Festival planned at the Tower.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for

19 May 2015 - Braeholm (venue)

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and providing informative updates and reports.