

**MINUTE of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in
the BRAEHOLD RSR, 31 EAST MONTROSE STREET HELENSBURGH,G84 7HR
on FRIDAY, 25 JANUARY 2013**

Present: Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)
Andy Markey, Technical Officer, Argyll and Bute Council
Alastair MacBeth, Secretary Friends of Duchess Wood
Charlie Cairns, Area Manager, Lower Clyde Greenspace
David Chandler, Quality Improvement Officer, Argyll and Bute Council
Belinda Ruthven, Area Governance Assistant, Argyll and Bute Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were intimated from :-

Stuart McCracken – Service Development Officer, Argyll and Bute Council
Stewart Campbell – Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood
Simon Mills, Head Teacher, Lomond School
Iain Wilkinson, Luss Estates

2. GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and general introductions were made.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING 29 OCTOBER 2012

The Minute of Meeting 29 October 2012 was approved as an accurate record.

4. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEE

A paper on Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee was presented at the December meeting of the Helensburgh and Lomond Community Planning Group. Following this, it was suggested that Morevain Martin and Morag Bain be appointed to the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee to represent Health and Young People respectively. The Committee unanimously welcomed these appointments to DWLNRC.

5. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Andy Markey, Technical Officer, provided a short update on matters regarding maintenance. He advised that Japanese Knotweed was due to be treated in four areas. Work has now commenced on identified trees on the boundary of 22 Duchess Park and should be completed by the end of March.

Alastair MacBeth advised that much of the storm damage in the Wood was the remnant of the previous year's storms and that recent work carried out by West Coast Cutters had been well done.

Councillor Morton advised that she had received several complaints regarding potholes at the access to the Wood, however, following enquiries regarding this, it appeared that this part of the road was not adopted by the council and they are accordingly not responsible for its upkeep. As a gesture of goodwill, however, the potholes had been filled in by the council at the beginning of this week.

Alastair MacBeth reminded the Group that previously mentioned training sessions for Roads and Amenity Services staff on the eradication of the Japanese Knotweed were planned and he requested that this matter be followed up.

Action: Stuart McCracken

6. EDUCATION UPDATE

The Group was updated by David Chandler on the progress of the proposed Awareness Day, and were advised that he was currently in the process of arranging a meeting with Simon Mills to take this forward. Material had been received back from schools across Argyll and Bute, and Education Scotland are gathering best practice from across the country regarding outdoor education and forestry etc. It is anticipated that a short term working group of local schools will be set up to develop a project for community benefit and Lomond School will be included in this.

David advised that a meeting relating to Enterprise Education will take place next week with representation from the ten cluster areas in attendance. He informed that this would enable access to some good material and that this would link in to the Curriculum for Excellence.

Councillor Morton asked whether the Awareness Raising Day could still realistically be held in March as initially proposed and was advised that it was still possible to do this. It was suggested that it may be advantageous to hold an interim meeting with the sub group and this will be arranged on a date to be advised.

Alastair informed that voluntary assistance with work in the Duchess Wood had been provided by Duke of Edinburgh participants and David agreed to raise this with the schools. He also suggested that signage in the wood was of interest to all and that this should not be overlooked.

The possibility of an outdoor nursery was discussed and in this respect, it was agreed that a representative from Stramash and/or the council's Early Years team should be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss this and other ideas.

Action: Aileen Morton/David Chandler

7. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD UPDATE - DR ALASTAIR MACBETH

The Group noted the activities carried out in Duchess Wood since the last meeting of DWLNRC. These included :-

- FODW, together with Liz Reay, commemorated the late Councillor Al Reay by planting a Rowan Tree in recognition of his work for the Duchess Wood. A plaque will be added in the near future.
- Work parties to carry out bracken, bramble and rhododendron control, and gradual sycamore sapling felling. Much of this as a result of last year's storms/
- Culvert and ditch clearing continues and at request of FODW, the Community Payback Team have carried out repairs and resurfacing of the badly eroded western path, continued to level the Pony Field, introduced three new drainage runs and repaired a bridge.
- A number of oak and birch trees have been planted in suitable areas of the wood. Hawthorn and blackthorn hedging plants and around 15 fruiting trees will assist wildlife to flourish, especially birds.
- FODW has continued to liaise with a range of other organisation which have assisted with the Wood either directly or indirectly. The importance of this function should not be underestimated as it has resulted in benefits in kind and funding and is integral of FODW work. It supplements but does not replace the requirement for major external grants.

8. FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - CHARLIE CAIRNS

Charlie Cairns presented the Group with an updated version of the Funding and Implementation Plan which incorporated responses following discussion at the previous meeting and advised that there was still an opportunity for further input to the document prior to its distribution to the sub group for discussion.

Several suggestions were forthcoming and it was agreed in principle that the routine maintenance sections will be removed from the plan to form part of the Terms of Reference. Aileen Morton will liaise with Stephen Doogan and Stuart McCracken from Argyll and Bute Council to further develop the document. A meeting of the sub group will be arranged to further review the Funding and Implementation Plan, and the Committee agreed to delegate responsibility for signing off the Plan to the sub group.

Charlie also provided an update on his conversations with SNH and the Forestry Commission in relation to grant seeking. In addition to the sub group meeting, it was agreed that it would be beneficial for Charlie to arrange a walk round the Wood together with FODW with a map with a view to highlight areas which would most benefit from potential funding.

The Group also agreed to Charlie's suggestion to invite representatives of the Conservation Volunteers to attend the next meeting to provide information regarding the Green Gym Programme.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

An updated version of the TOR was distributed to the Group and noted and agreed. The appendix covering routine maintenance will come to the next meeting for approval.

10. COUNCIL WEBSITE

Aileen Morton advised that the Duchess Wood page was not yet up and running but that following some minor enhancements with the webmaster, should appear in the near future. The agenda and minutes of the meetings already appear and it is anticipated that links to other groups and related documents will also be added.

11. AOCB

Aileen informed the Group that following the success of the recent Helensburgh Winter Festival, suggestions would be welcomed as to how the Duchess Wood could be promoted and possibly incorporated into this year's event. The item will feature on the next agenda of DWLNR and also on that of FODW for further discussion.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 29 April 2013

