

**MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in  
the BRAEHOLM, 31 E MONTROSE STREET, HELENSBURGH  
on MONDAY, 12 AUGUST 2013**

**Present:**

	(Chair)
	Councillor Aileen Morton
Stuart McCracken	Argyll & Bute Council
Alison McKenzie	Argyll & Bute Council
Morevain Martin	Argyll Voluntary Action
Charlie Cairns	Lower Clyde Green Space
Stewart Campbell	Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood
Simon Mills	Head Teacher, Lomond School
Alistair Macbeth	Secretary, Friends of Duchess Wood
Niall Urquhart	STRAMASH

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Iain Wilkinson  
Morag Bain

**2. MINUTE**

The minute of the previous meeting which was held on 13 May, 2013 was approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:-

Item 3. The Conservation Volunteers

The various types of models and benefits of the scheme were outlined a full day session led by the Conservation Volunteers would cost £265.00.

Matters Arising:

Maintenance update:

Aliastair Macbeth enquired on the status of the tree work adjacent to Strathclyde Court. Stuart McCracken replied that a contract had been awarded and the work would be undertaken over the next few months.

**3. OUTDOOR NURSERY**

The Committee heard a short video presentation from Niall Urquhart, Stramash, and Alison McKenzie, Argyll and Bute Council on the Outdoor Nursery in Oban.

Niall detailed the ethos and background to the Nursery and provided information on the various activities and projects which this encompassed. He assured the group that there was no intention to displace existing nurseries in the local area, but to explore the potential to offer another nursery model. He detailed the timetable for the Nursery as Registration would need to be completed in February, 2014, and then determine staffing numbers to enable setting up for operation by August, 2014. Alison McKenzie highlighted that the Argyll and Bute Planning Department would need to review the proposed 'change of usage' and gauge any increased traffic implications.

Discussion followed of the feasibility of instigating an Outdoor Nursery in Duchess Wood. Niall detailed his concerns on the following issues:-

- Children encountering dogs which were not on their leads. Alison McKenzie informed the group of an existing outdoor nursery within Pollok Park in Glasgow and thought that there was an enforcement order by Glasgow City Council to ensure that dogs were on leads within the park. However, she assured the group that the Care Inspectorate would deliberate and advise accordingly. The Committee were all supportive of potentially creating a dog-free or dog-managed area within the Wood.
- Access for parents and emergency services. Niall advised the group that a risk assessment would be undertaken to address this.
- Ratio of children to nursery staff. Simon Mills stated that perhaps the ratio of staff to children would need to be higher in view of being an outdoor facility.
- Open Space Protection Area and Green Belt area
- Proximity of weir within Duchess Wood

The group gave further discussion to the employment opportunities for local young people taking up employment at the Outdoor Nursery and the advantage of having an additional nursery facility within the area.

The Chair summarised that the potential Outdoor Nursery would present a good opportunity for the Helensburgh area and she hoped that the Committee would work together to endeavour to get the correct balance and perspective to address any issues which may arise. Alastair Macbeth advised on the forthcoming AGM meeting for the Friends of Duchess Wood which was scheduled for 21 October and the Committee felt that this may be an appropriate forum for discussion and collect local views on the Outdoor Nursery.

## **Decision**

The group agreed:-

1. To take the proposal for an Outdoor Nursery forward for further consideration.
2. That Argyll and Bute Legal Department would determine any leasing implications.

3. That Niall Urquhart would liaise with the Stramash Board of Directors in regards the potential Outdoor Nursery in Helensburgh.
4. That Alison McKenzie would instigate contact with the Care Inspectorate.
5. That Niall Urquhart and Simon Mills would liaise to explore partnership opportunities between Stramash and Lomond School.
6. That the Chair would inform the Committee by email on the progression of these issues.

#### **4. MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

The Committee was updated by Stuart McCracken, Argyll and Bute on the following:-

- Japanese Knotweed had been discovered in 5 areas of the Duchess Wood. Two areas had been treated and the remaining 3 by the end of the week. .
- Tree Work will be undertaken in the winter months, including work by a local contractor at Strathclyde Court.

The Committee gave further discussion to recent incidences of dogs managing to infiltrate fencing and stray onto the railway line. It was also highlighted about fencing in the car park which needed attention.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:-

1. That the Chair would raise the fencing issue with Network Rail to determine ownership and responsibility.
2. That Stuart McCracken would review the fencing in the Duchess Wood car park and report back to the next meeting.

#### **5. EDUCATION UPDATE**

There was no Education update.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed that Simon Mills would liaise with David Chandler to agree on a suitable date for the proposed event.

#### **6. IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING**

Charlie Cairns updated that Committee that there was little progress to date Stewart Campbell suggested that other options could perhaps be reviewed and drafts be forwarded onto Charlie Cairns. He advised that, to date, there had been no response received from Babcock and there was a possibility that the Friends of Duchess Wood may utilise their own funds for the notice board.

## **7. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT**

A verbal update of recent activity in the Wood was provided. The table and bench in the Pony Field were repaired by the Friends of Duchess Wood working with the Employability team. The bat detector has now been used successfully and both pipistrel and soprano pipistrel bats identified as being in the Wood. The walking theatre may run again with Treasure Island possibly the play that would be performed.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the contents of the report.
2. That Stuart McCracken would review the bridge at Duchess Wood to determine the remedial work needed and contact Finance to identify what funding may be available.

## **8. REQUESTS FOR EVENT ACCESS**

The Committee discussed a draft paper providing detail and history of previous events held in Duchess Wood.

Discussion continued in regards deciding upon general policy, guidance and procedures to review future event applications.

In addition consideration was given to 3 event applications:-

- Tri Events Run
- Blairvadach Outdoor Centre
- Kids Triathlon – Cystic Fibrosis Trust

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:-

1. That permission would be granted for the Tri Events run. This would be conditional upon the Company complying with any requirements of the Council, such as having Public Liability insurance. In addition, the Friends of Duchess Wood will monitor the impact this event has on Thurgood Bridge, as there are concerns this could be a bottleneck area. The Chair will invite the Company to attend a future meeting of the Committee to review how the event went.
2. That permission would be granted for the Kids Triathlon – Cystic Fibrosis Trust.
3. That the Chair would write to Blairvadach Outdoor Centre advising that permission would be granted for conservation projects, however, cycling is not something the Committee would want to encourage at this moment in time.
4. That a paper would be brought to the next meeting proposing policies and procedures for dealing with future event requests.

**9. EQUIPMENT STORE AND NOTICE BOARD PROPOSALS**

This item was dealt with at Items 6 and 7.

**10. WINTER FESTIVAL**

The Friends of Duchess Wood will consider whether they wish to take a stall at the Winter Festival.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee agreed that the date of next meeting would be:-

**Friday, 8 November – 10.00a.m.**

**Braeholm, 31 E Montrose Street, Helensburgh**

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and input and the meeting closed at 5.15p.m.

