

**DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE**

13 May 2015

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

A meeting of the **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE** will be held in the **BRAEHOLM, 31E MONTROSE STREET, HELENSBURGH** on **TUESDAY, 19 MAY 2015** at **10:00 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

**BUSINESS**

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. MINUTE**  
The Minute of the previous Duchess Woods Committee meeting held on 17 February 2015. (Pages 1 - 6)
- 3. FAIRY TALE WOODS PROPOSAL - UPDATE**  
Update on the Fairy Tale Woods proposal by Robert Bell, West Highland Photography.
- 4. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS/COMMUNITY** (Pages 7 - 10)
- 5. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS** (Pages 11 - 14)
- 6. OTHER ISSUES/OPPORTUNITIES**
  - (a) CWA Event**
  - (b) Faslane Base Events**
  - (c) Hermitage Park Links**
- 7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOOD** (Pages 15 - 20)
- 8. NETWORK RAIL - FENCING**
- 9. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE**

- (a) **Update from Amenity Services**  
Report by Amenity Performance Manager  
(Pages 21 - 22)

**10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for- Tuesday, 18 August 2015 – 10.00a.m.  
Braeholm, 31 E Montrose Street, Helensburgh.

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

Contact: Theresa McLetchie - Tel: 01436 657621

**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.



Education Sub Group of Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve  
 Minutes of Meeting  
 28<sup>th</sup> April 2015

**Present:** Alastair Macbeth Friends of Duchess Wood  
 Veronique Cassels Lomond School  
 Charlie Cairns Lower Clyde Greenspace  
 Eileen Kay Argyll and Bute Council

**Apologies:** Stewart Campbell Friends of Duchess Wood

**Minutes of previous meeting:**

- AMacb- asked that the minutes be sent out as a word document and a PDF document as he had experienced difficulty in opening the minutes of the meeting 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015.
- AMacb- highlighted that the group should be referred to as the Education Sub Group of Duchess Wood Local Reserve to ensure that there was no confusion regarding different sub groups.
- CC- updated the group on the meeting he had with the HALCO in February. There were 8/10 Head Teachers at the meeting. The HALCO saw the value of the Duchess Wood but issues regarding the time it took some schools to get groups to the wood and the cost of travel to the wood proved to be obstacles which were hard for some schools to overcome. Also that the Duchess Wood was competing with local spaces where outdoor learning is achieved just as well and with no travel or real time constraints. There was then a discussion regarding a generic education pack which could be used by schools and the wider community.

As a result of this feedback, EK suggested that the following might be considered:

- If the education pack is not specifically for schools who should be responsible for producing the education pack?
- Is there a need to develop an educational resource at all?
- Do we need to continue to meet if there is no focus for this education sub group?
- If the generic pack was produced which site would be the source of such a resource? The FODW would have to discuss this and give their permission. Both Richard Horrell and Stewart Campbell are involved in the development and maintenance of the FODW website.
- CC – suggested Argyll & Bute Council could perhaps be the host of a web based generic Educational Resource

Further discussion took place regarding the original remit of the Education sub group and AMacb asked if there is a written remit for the sub-group and if this might be discussed at the Duchess Wood Local Reserve Meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

VC- gave feedback to the group that she had been in the Duchess Wood with her class and that some of the children had told her that they had then gone back into the Duchess Wood with their parents.

**Proposal for further discussion at Duchess Wood meeting May 2015:**

Please see separate sheet

## **A.O.C.B**

### **Wild Flower Walk Leaflet**

- AMcb- Issued the members of the group with the Spring Wild Flower Walk leaflet
- There are now leaflet holders with roofs in the woods. They are located at the carpark, the new information hub and Millig Street entrance
- The date for the Wild Flower Walk has not yet been decided

### **Duchess Wood Information Boards**

- Amacb- had photographs of the new Information Boards and printed information regarding what was on the boards and shared these with the sub group members
- The Information Boards were constructed by Babcock
- The FODW were supported by voluntary groups and Babcock to make it possible to have the new Information Boards which have on them educational information in a broader sense
- There was an opening event for the Information Boards recently and this was reported in the Helensburgh Advertiser

### **School Contact with FODW**

- Rhu Primary continue to use the Duchess Wood on a regular basis
- Lomond School are now using the Duchess Wood for Outdoor Learning Opportunities
- John Logie Baird P2 class contacted the FODW and would like an accompanied visit to assist their topic the Great Outdoors and would like to take part in pond dipping and tree rubbing. Stewart Campbell has contacted the school and will assist with the arranging of the visit.
- Rangers from the National Park have been in the woods, to monitor and record birds and bat boxes.

Education Sub Group of Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve

Proposal regarding Educational resource pack

28/04/2015

1. The Educational Sub Group acknowledge that the Friends of Duchess Wood Educational resource is available on the website and could be maintained and updated. However after consultation with the Head Teachers in the local Helenburgh area it was agreed that although the resource has some excellent examples of worksheets, it does not meet the needs of the schools at this time.
2. The decision of whether or not to remove the educational resource from the website lies with the FODW committee. This in no way takes away from the Education and Research work that the FODW carry out in the wood.
3. A potential solution for promoting the Duchess Wood and further generic resources to local schools would be that EK and CC would on a termly basis e-mail the schools with web associated links promoting outdoor learning opportunities and included in this would be the link to the Duchess Wood.
4. CC will contact Melissa Simpson from Hermitage Park to enquire if she has developed any educational resources which could be share. CC has been approached by Melissa and is in contact with her, and the wider Hermitage Park Steering Group. It was agreed that AMacb would be included in the email from CC to Melissa Simpson and the content of the email from CC would be a proposal to hold a meeting between CC, FODW and Melissa to take the matter forward. AMacb also wished it reported that Hermitage Park and Duchess Wood personnel are already in communication about working together, based on a proposal by Melissa in late 2014.

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# Friends of Duchess Wood

Registered Scottish Charity No. SC039527



## **Report from the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) to the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee 19.5.15 (DWLNRC)**

**The FODW April Newsletter** is submitted in conjunction with this note as an integral part of the FODW report. This newsletter was circulated to FODW members at the end of April.

**Additional points** are as follows.

1. *School visits to Duchess Wood*

- Rhu Primary School has done work in the Wood, assisted by FODW committee members.
- John Logie Baird Primary School P2 level pupils will shortly be visiting DW as part of its Great Outdoors adventure programme.

2. FODW has installed waterproof leaflet holders at the information hub for both its basic information leaflet and its membership application form.

3. Two members of the FODW committee attended a Scottish Natural Heritage training day on Citizen Science. FODW will be looking to introduce some national Citizen Science projects into the Friends' work in the Wood. Some of the Rhu PS work is linked to one of these projects.

4. Contact has been made with Forestry Commission Scotland to discuss funding and a meeting with FCS staff is being arranged for early June.

5. The fence between the Wood and the railway is complete and FODW is grateful to those who arranged it. FODW representatives will be able to report to the DWLNRC the outcome of follow-up discussions concerning damage done elsewhere in the Wood in the process.

6. At the last meeting FODW agreed to provide a detailed proposal for the all-abilities path (Item 5 (B) 3 of the minutes). This is summarised in the attached quote from Robert McKendry of almost exactly a year ago, in which the costs of resurfacing and repairing drainage are set out in sections around the path. The quote is attached below for information. Note that the costs would be higher if the work was not all completed as one exercise.

## **Quotation from Robert McKendry for the all-abilities path in Duchess Wood**

Date 12 May 2014

For refurbishment and reinstatement of the All Abilities Path in Duchess Wood.  
Total length of path to be treated is 850 meters.

Section 1. From Rhu Rd Higher to Millig St garages. Per-roll and re-coat with whin dust.  
For area adjacent to Rhu Road Higher raise level of path with Type1 and overlay with whin dust.  
Cost £1350.

Section 2. From Millig St garages to the bridge over the burn. Pre roll and re-coat with whin dust. Remove log markers on lower side of path to improve drainage.  
Cost £1250.

Section 3. Wide path running from field gate adjacent to Duchess Wood car park through to footbridge on the east side of the Pony Field. Any low spots to be raised with type 1 and compacted and surface finished with whin dust. Area at corner of Pony field to be hard cored and compacted suitable for placement of Information Boards.  
Cost £1350.

Section 4. From field gate to tarmac at top of Kathleen Park. Make good dips with type 1, compact and coat with whin dust.  
Cost £550.

Total cost £4500. No vat applicable.

Costs based on all work carried out at the same time.



# The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 16 (April 2015)

This newsletter describes the work of FODW. Please read our item on page 2 about the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the management of the Wood.

## NEW INFORMATION CENTRE

### Sandy Kerr unveils the new information boards



On 1st April Sandy Kerr, the former chairman of the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW), unveiled the new information boards erected in the Pony Field.

Sandy outlined the history of the Wood, going back several million years, but fast-forwarding to the 19th century and Ann, Duchess of Argyll, after whom the Wood is named. Then to 1998 when Magnus Magnusson declared Duchess Wood to be a Local Nature Reserve and to 2007 when the Friends of Duchess Wood was established.

He drew attention to the exceptional value of the Wood to the community and praised the volunteers who help to maintain it.

As current chairman, Stewart thanked Sandy and all who had helped to create the information centre, especially Babcock International, constructor of the display panels. Joyce MacGinley, its PR Manager, was there along with Babcock graphic designer Kenny Steele and joiners Davie Thomson and Michael McCann. Stewart also thanked the Community Payback team for physical help and Helensburgh Round Table for funding.



*Top : Sandy Kerr declares the boards open by unveiling them. Centre left : Stewart makes a point while thanking all who assisted in the construction and installation of the information site. Centre right, Babcock International staff at the opening ceremony. Left : The western side of the boards showing some of the features to be seen in Duchess Wood.*

It rained on the day, of course, but like an April Fool's trick in reverse, sunshine suddenly appeared at the crucial moment. So everyone repaired in good humour to the Rugby Club where there were coffee and cakes.

Visitors will also see soon new map information boards at the four main entrances to the Wood and additional waymarkers for the main red route around the Wood.

FODW is improving drainage in damp areas. We have provided a narrow drain around the new information boards and work has been done repairing other ditches. The photo right shows work near the car park.



### Courses for horses – and other stream crossings

A programme of improvements to stream crossings has started. The picture below shows the first horse ford (beside the bridge east of the pony field). FODW has made gradients on both banks more gradual. FODW is in discussions with Community Payback to replace the temporary SW wooden bridge.





## FODW Spring Flower Walk leaflet

FODW has published a leaflet to accompany its Spring Flower Walk which is marked out by numbered posts in the lower part of the Wood.



The walk was devised by Alison Rutherford for the FODW. The blooms mentioned are mostly seen in May and June.

Leaflet holders have been placed in the car park and the Millig Street entrance to the Wood.

It is intended to hold a further guided flower walk at some point in the summer.

**Tree planting** has continued to be a priority for FODW with a significant number of native fruiting trees planted around the Pony Field. If any Member would like to donate £17.50 for a native fruiting tree to be planted, FODW

will arrange purchase and planting. Please contact us at [fodwg84@gmail.com](mailto:fodwg84@gmail.com)



Stewart Campbell and Morag Young with a grant certificate.

## Grants

FODW seeks lesser grants to assist its work, and to supplement the council's task of obtaining larger-scale grants to meet the Management Plan objectives. Tree planting has been a key reason for FODW grants. David Lewin is FODW's grant-hunter-in-chief.

**IT COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE** Storms this winter were not as bad as the winter before and the number of trees fallen fewer.

The picture shows a tree which fell east of the bridge by the Pony Field. Robert McKendry sliced up the trunk, and FODW removed debris.



## Logs for next winter.

FODW now has a stock of dried timber suitable for logging. If any Member would like a trailer load for a donation to FODW please contact us on [fodwg84@gmail.com](mailto:fodwg84@gmail.com)



the contractors who gave assurances that any damage would be repaired. We understand that the work was contracted by the rail authorities and the fence itself is very welcome

## “WHAT'S THIS MESS?” YOU ASKED

FODW has received queries and grumbles in April about damage by tracked vehicles and disruption. **It was in a good cause** : a long-requested fence between the Wood and the railway for the safety of the public was being erected. But access actions were a bit crude so FODW held a meeting with



## YOUR VIEWS

As a result of updates to the website, the FODW email address is now [fodwg84@gmail.com](mailto:fodwg84@gmail.com). The website shows the contact email as [enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk), and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website. [www.duchesswood.org.uk](http://www.duchesswood.org.uk)

## THANKS TO ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

This newsletter is about the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) and it is written for its members.

But it is important to remember that Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) manages the Wood by agreement with the landowners, Luss Estates. Management is vested in the Council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee (DWLNRC) chaired by Cllr. Aileen Morton.

The work of the DWLNRC includes :

- Negotiating with external bodies
- Completing the Wood's 5-year plans
- Seeking major grants for the Wood
- Ensuring safety in the Wood
- Removing dangerous trees and branches
- Dealing with invasive species (e.g. Japanese knotweed)
- Insurance (including for FODW)
- Laying down terms for events held in DW
- Approval (or refusal) of requests for events (e.g. cross-country competitions, the Forest School, the 'Enchanted Wood', etc.)
- Regularly clearing of the litter bins
- A wide variety of other functions

**FODW's role** is one of voluntary support to the DWLNRC, not main management.

FODW has two places on the DWLNRC to represent the public and to get approval for its work in support of the DWLNRC.

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, the Employability Team, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Margaret Paul, Rachel Bailey, Kevin Johnson, David Lewin, Richard Horrell.



## **Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve**

### **Opportunities for Management**

This report is intended to address the future management of the LNR in terms of the actions outlined in the current Management Plan. Previously submitted papers by the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) have indicated a perceived lack of clarity in terms of how to move certain objectives forward, and it is hoped to address some of these concerns. Additionally, the current Management Plan has been held somewhat in abeyance awaiting the launch of the new Forestry Commission Grant Scheme, which has only recently become active.

It is written within the context of the current management hierarchy of Duchess Wood LNR, in terms of its document hierarchy (as opposed to its decision making hierarchy)

That Hierarchy is

1. Management Agreement
2. Management Plan
3. Implementation Plan
4. Grant sources

#### **1. The Management Agreement**

The Management Agreement is a legal document between the woodland owners, Luss estates, and Argyll and Bute Council, who have been willing to date to fulfil a management role. No other signatories were involved. It sets out the legal status for management, and also references some specific management outcomes that the Council had been keen to obtain.

The agreement, running until 2019, was written and signed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010, at a time when the LNR Management Plan 2006/11 was still active. With regards to the specific management outcomes detailed, the Management Agreement clearly references this work as being that specified in the Management Plan 2006/11. This Management Plan 2006/11 is explicitly referenced in the Agreement and indeed it is listed as an appendix to the Legal Agreement itself.

This work formed the basis for the programme tackled through a WIAT Grant from the Forestry Commission, which was completed in 2011. Thus the work referenced within the Management Agreement has already been largely achieved, in terms of the car park having been improved (the creation of the parking bays being a significant improvement on the previous casual arrangement), footpaths improved, benches, interpretation and certain woodland management activities undertaken.

Luss Estates have confirmed that they are happy with the current condition of the woodland in terms of the Management Agreement.

Therefore it is important to realise that the Management Agreement, which references past management plans, is not a commitment to implement works suggested in the current Management Plan, which, although perhaps desirable, would be heavily dependent on external funding. This need for external funding to achieve the specified aims is an overarching statement in the current Management Plan.

## **2. The Management Plan**

The Management Plan 2006/11, which formed the basis of the work programme referenced within the Legal Agreement, was replaced in 2012 by the current Management Plan. This sets out the aims and objectives for the LNR over a 5 year period, including woodland management, access provision, interpretation and community involvement.

This Management Plan, approved in 2012, is the main guiding document for the woodland and places the woodland objectives into a series of policies. It has been much discussed before, has been approved by the LNR Committee and hence there is no further need for justification in this paper.

## **3. Funding, implementation and delivery plan**

This plan sought to extract the main policies for the woodland from the Management Plan, and place them into a framework that clearly showed the physical and developmental works necessary to achieve them.

The central purposes of this plan are to identify

- what needs to be implemented
- by whom it should be implemented
- when it needs to be implemented
- where resources might be obtained

This document adopted a themed approach and placed actions required by the Management Plan into those themes. The reasoning behind this was to show a multi-disciplinary approach to the woodland development, which was likely to be attractive to a range of funders who are now increasingly keen to demonstrate additional outcomes from their support. Estimated costs were applied where possible.

There is a need to revisit this document for several reasons;

1. Some elements of the work will either have changed or been achieved already
2. Costs will need to be updated to reflect the passage of time
3. The prioritisation of activities suggested in the document may have changed
4. The document will be an extremely useful tool in accessing the new Forestry Commission Grant Scheme. However, this scheme is heavily prescriptive and we may wish to adapt the document to best fit with the FC guidelines.

## 4.a Sources of Grant funding – Forestry Commission

The major source of funding for the various actions emerging from the Management Plan has always seemed likely to be the Forestry Commission and their Woodland In and Around Towns fund (WIAT). At the time of writing the Management Plan, and in the subsequent 3 years, the old WIAT fund has been closed to applications while a new grant programme was being developed. This pause in the major likely funder for actions in the Duchess Wood LNR has been the major contributor to the lack of progress to date on the implementation of actions.

In March 2015, the Forestry Commission launched its new grant programme which featured a restructured WIAT programme. This fund is now open for applications, and will support a range of woodland enhancement activities.

Support will be provided for applications that can:

- bring neglected woodlands into management
- develop opportunities to use and enjoy existing and newly created woodlands
- enhance woodland sites supported under previous programmes

It is a requirement that any such works are guided by an approved (by the FC) management plan. An online template is provided for this, and grant support is available for the writing of the approved Management Plan. For Duchess Wood this would probably involve simply redrafting the existing Management Plan to fit the FC template. There are advantages in this as the timescale of grant awarded will be governed by the timescale of the management plan submitted. By having a new, redrafted 5 year plan, we can be eligible for 5 years funding.

The new WIAT programme is prescriptive in its approach, offering flat rates of payment for specific activities and specifying defined methods for each activity. So, for example, to fell a large tree to waste on site (i.e. not to extract the timber) attracts a grant of £290. It then offers the further method statement;

*This is for felling an individual tree (greater than 40 centimetres diameter at breast height).*

*Your Woods In and Around Towns Operational Plan map must clearly identify where the tree to be felled is located and a rationale (including safety survey data for the tree if appropriate) for felling must be detailed in the plan. You may require [felling licence](#) approval for this operation prior to starting work.*

*Fell tree to a low stump and chip branch wood. Stems to be sectioned and stacked safely.*

*Cut main stems into sections not greater than three metres in length. Stack timber to a height not exceeding three metres, and away from paths and watercourses*

*This is for felling an individual tree (greater than 40 centimetres diameter at breast height).*

For some activities to be undertaken in the Duchess Wood LNR, it is unlikely that the grant rates shown will meet the full costs of contractor led work. The rates for tree felling above are an indication of this. However, a rough estimate of the grant attracted for the resurfacing of the all-abilities path is up to £8,000, although this figure will be influenced by the current condition of the path which may be viewed as currently good. Thus it can be seen that some activities may have a shortfall in funding while others have not. The key indicator of success will be how the whole programme stacks up as a package.

An additional complication will be that payments from the WIAT fund will be retrospective, thus any works undertaken by the LNR Committee will require the ability to run with a budget deficit for some period of time (as contractors will already have been paid, and paid invoices and bank account transactions are likely to be required before grant payment is made). This would suggest the Argyll and Bute Council are possibly best placed to do this, which will bring any proposed works into their financial and procurement procedures. There may, however, be ways round this should other partners want to lead the contract, perhaps by negotiating phased payments to contractors.

#### **4.b Sources of Grant Funding – other**

Beyond the Forestry Commission, current sources of significant grant funding are sparse.

SNH no longer offer direct project funding to local authorities, but will fund voluntary groups. However, they will not fund alongside WIAT as this would represent double funding from the Scottish Government. It may be possible to cherry pick specific items from the Implementation Plan and target SNH funding directly for these. This is likely to be “softer” targets, for example visitor surveys, species recording, community liaison.

The various Scottish Government grants will all be viewed as double funding should an application be made to WIAT, and are therefore inappropriate.

Heritage Lottery Fund will offer grants to projects which encourage people to explore the heritage of their area. There may be aspects of this which could feed into a programme of research on the history of the woodland.

The ASDA Carrier Bag Community Grants offer up to £2,000 for local charitable causes.

In addition to these, there are likely to be numerous other small grants available which, with care, could amount to a significant amount.

#### **5. Potential for Change**

There are some future decisions that have a potential to affect funding of activities in Duchess Wood LNR. They are changes which have the potential to radically alter any programme of works within the LNR and which would therefore be prudent and responsible to mention in this report.

## Luss Estates and potential community ownership

With a growing national trend towards community ownership of woodlands, Luss Estates have indicated that they would be supportive of such a scenario and keen to work with the local community to explore whether to, and how to, allow Duchess Wood to pass into community stewardship. Community ownership can allow woodlands to benefit from a more local control and are often examples of the more valued type of community resource. They would still be eligible for WIAT funding but are also more likely to be attractive to many of the smaller funding organisations nationwide, for whom community benefit is often a key objective.

Such a change would obviously be very significant for Duchess Wood LNR, offering both potential enhance community involvement but also challenges. This potential for change should be considered when discussing potential funding bids.

## Argyll and Bute Council – Service Choices

In common with all local authorities, Argyll and Bute Council has experienced very significant budget pressures over the last few years, and indications nationally are that this trend will continue. Looking forward, Argyll and Bute Council are facing making savings across all their budgets of £25M by 2018. All services are likely to be affected by this, and the Service most relevant to Duchess Wood, Amenity Services, is facing budget reductions of between 20 – 25%.

It is important to realise that no decisions have yet been made, however there is obviously potential for change that could affect Duchess Wood. This could have an effect on the woodland in several ways;

- The ability to maintain the woodland over an extended time-frame may be compromised
- The ability to provide officer support for the development of the LNR may be similarly compromised
- Small grants currently available to groups who may wish to support the LNR may be reduced

Given this increasingly competitive market for resources, coupled with the lapsing of the current management agreement in 2019, it is perhaps wise to consider longer term management frameworks for the woodland when discussing funding bids.

## **6. Recommendations**

1. That specific members of the LNR Committee have a meeting to discuss the appropriateness of a WIAT application, and further to consider rewriting of the Management Plan to fit the FC template. The Chair and funding officer of FODW will be key to this, as will Charlie Cairns and Stuart McCracken.

2. That the same group identifies elements of the Management Plan and the associated Implementation Plan that would be appropriate for inclusion in a WIAT bid.
3. Given that the current Management Agreement between Luss Estates and Argyll and Bute Council uses the previous management plan 2006/11 as a context for much of the detail, it is recommended before carrying out any further major works, funded through WIAT, that written approval of the outcomes is obtained from Luss Estates.
4. That the Committee support the concept of Luss Estates further exploring the potential for community ownership of Duchess Wood, bearing this potential change in mind in relation to potential funding bids.
5. That the Committee note the potential for change in regards to the Council's Service Choices programme

Charlie Cairns

May 2015

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**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL****Duchess Wood Committee****DEVELOPMENT AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES****19<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

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**Routine Maintenance**

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**1.0 SUMMARY**

1.1 External works required over the next two month includes trees West Highland Line and trees overhanging Strathclyde Court Garages. It is hoped that costs for these works will be available for the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

1.2 Litter bin will be emptied as per normal collection over next three months.

1.3 Knotweed treatment will be started once there is growth that can be treated this should be within the next three/four weeks. Areas included Car Park area, area off Rhu Road Higher, Duchess Park area and at the top of playing field closed to Strathclyde Court garages.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Tree works on the boundary between Duchess Wood and West Highland Railway will have to be carried out with an external contractor within the next month.

2.2 Strathclyde Court Garages works will also have to be carried over the next month and this should also be carried out by external contactor.

**3.0 DETAILS**

3.1 Litter Bins were empties as normal over the winter period and will continue to be emptied over the next three months.

3.2 British Rail has been in contact with regards two dangerous trees that are right on the boundary between the wood and the West Highland Line. These works include one tree that is hung up on another and the tree that it is hung up is also in poor condition. This will involve closing the West Highland Line for an hour and a half during day time or overnight between 23:00 and 5:30 depending on time require for these works. We are currently looking into getting prices for these works as these works cannot be carried out by council staff at present.

3.3 Two dangerous trees at the entrance to Duchess Woods car park these have been cut down on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015.

3.4 Trees at the rear/side of 22 Duchess Park these have been cut down over a couple of months ago.

3.5 Knotweed treatment will be carried out as per the last few years.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

4.1 An number of the works carried out over last three months have involved tree works. This has resulted in a larger resource requirement than that would normally be associated with regular maintenance therefore a small charge will be put against Duchess Woods. Regular maintenance such as litter bins and Knotweed treatment will be on going over next three months.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Policy – None

5.2 Financial – The works at West Highland Line and Strathclyde Garages will be recharged back to Duchess Wood cost code. There is also an equipment cost back to the woods with regards works carried out at Duchess Park.

5.3 Legal – None

5.4 HR – None

5.5 Equalities – None

5.6 Risk – There is a Health and Safety issue with regards trees at West Highland Line and Strathclyde Court Garages and therefore we will have to get external works fixed out.

5.7 Customer Services –None

#### **Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure**

**Policy Lead** Councillor Ellen Morton

10<sup>th</sup> May 2015

**For further information contact:** Stuart McCracken, Performance Manager, North Argyll  
01631 569184