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# DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE

8 February 2016

### NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE** will be held in the **CLYDE MEETING ROOM, THE HELENSBURGH AND LOMOND CIVIC CENTRE, EAST CLYDE STREET, HELENSBURGH** on **TUESDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2016** at **10:00 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry  
Executive Director of Customer Services

### BUSINESS

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **MINUTE** (Pages 1 - 6)  
The Minute of the previous Duchess Woods Committee meeting held on 17 November 2015.
3. **ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS** (Pages 7 - 8)  
A short update by Caroline Beveridge, Head of Adventure and Service at Lomond School.
4. **ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY**
5. **FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT** (Pages 9 - 10)  
Report by Friends of Duchess Wood.
6. **DRAFT FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021**  
Report by Stewart Campbell, FODW.
7. **WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION** (Pages 11 - 14)
8. **ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATE**  
Report by Amenity Performance Manager (to follow).
9. **DOG ISSUES AND TRAINING**
10. **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**
11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

# **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE**

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

Contact: Theresa McLetchie - Tel: 01436 657621

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

**Present:**

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)  
Alastair Macbeth – Friends of Duchess Wood  
David Lewin – Friends of Duchess Wood  
Charlie Cairns – Lower Clyde Green Space  
Morevain Martin – Third Sector Interface  
Johanna Urquhart – Principal, Lomond School

**1. APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Iain Wilkinson  
Eileen Kay  
Stewart Campbell  
Stuart McCracken

**2. MINUTE**

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 18 August 2015 was approved.  
as a true record.

Matters Arising

Alastair Macbeth drew attention to the wording at Page 1, Item 2, Minute of a previous meeting held on 19 May 2015:

**Development of the Wood**

Discussion followed and as the Minute had been agreed at the previous meeting held on 18 August 2015 it was agreed not to amend. The Chair reiterated that the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee had no role in the provision of instruction in any negotiations relating to land ownership.

Page 3, Item 4 – Funding Update/Development of the Wood.

Charlie Cairns confirmed that he had sourced the arboriculture safety survey reports and passed them to David Lewin (FODW).

Page 5, Item 7 – Any other business

Charlie Cairns advised that that SNH had produced further literature relating to dog management and he would circulate the link to the Committee

Page 3, Item 5 – Engagement with Schools/Community

Alastair Macbeth highlighted that these were 2 separate issues and requested that they remain separate.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed that for future Agendas, this item would appear as:

Engagement with Schools and Community

### **3. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the work undertaken by Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW).

Johanna Urquhart outlined the success of the recent Lomond School public orienteering event and that it was hoped to continue this as an annual event. She put forward the suggestion of having permanent orienteering markers in Duchess Wood, of which Lomond School would be happy to fund. This would encourage more casual use of Duchess Wood.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed:

1. to note the FODW report; and
2. that Johanna Urquhart would provide a short report for the Committee outlining the orienteering proposal; and
3. this would be given consideration at the February 2016 meeting

### 4. DRAFT FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021

The Committee considered the draft 5-year Management Plan.

Discussion followed the Committee commended the hard work and input by Stewart Campbell in compiling the Management Plan.

#### Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. That comments relating to the draft Management Plan would be forwarded to Theresa McLetchie by Tuesday 8 December.
2. That Theresa McLetchie would collate comments and email to Stewart Campbell.
3. That a final reminder would be sent to the Committee on 26 November advising of the final date for receipt of comments.
4. That the finalised version of the Management Plan will be worked on by the sub-group and come back to the full Committee for approval in February.

(Reference: Draft Management Plan by Stewart Campbell, Chair Friends of Duchess Wood dated 4 November 2015, submitted).

### 5. WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION

The Committee considered an update on issues relating to Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) funding.

Discussion followed in regards any commercial action undertaken in the Duchess Wood and it was highlighted that Luss Estates had been supportive of recent negotiations relating to timber sale. The Committee gave further discussion to the preparation of an Urban Woodland Management Plan and the pros and cons of applying for the grant of £1.3k to assist with the application.

The Chair outlined the LEADER funding programme to the Committee and suggested that the Committee give thought to other funding avenues which may be available.

#### Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. That the Sub-Group would arrange to meet before 11 December to formulate the initial WIAT application and make a decision on the grant application.
2. That Charlie Cairns would manage the application and procurement process in consultation with the Sub-Group.
3. That the Duchess Wood Committee would forward funding suggestions to the Sub-Group for consideration.
4. That the Chair would make contact with Arlene Cullum, Senior Development Officer in relation to the potential for FODW to consider their position regarding ownership of the Wood.

(Reference: Draft Management Plan by Stewart Campbell and David Lewin, Friends of Duchess Wood dated November 2015, submitted).

### **6. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Chair explained that the Amenity Performance Manager had been unable to attend the meeting and tabled a short report providing an update on routine maintenance in the Duchess Wood.

It was highlighted that there were still tress overhanging the railway and it was pointed out that there were several other trees within the Wood which required attention. David Lewin agreed to carry out an inspection and provide an update.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the report.
2. That David Lewin would carry out an inspection and provide an update

(Reference: Report by the Amenity Performance Manager dated 2015, submitted).

### **7. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee gave consideration to the existing Terms of Reference and current Membership.

Discussion followed in regards finding another Youth representative for the Committee and Johanna Urquhart, Lomond School agreed to try and identify a pupil with an interest in the environment to attend future meetings.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:

1. That the distribution list would be reviewed and updated.
2. That Johanna Urquhart would try and source a Youth representative from Lomond School.
3. That the Terms of Reference and Membership would be reviewed again in Spring 2017.

### **8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

The Chair opened the meeting for Any Other Business and the following issues were raised:-

Alastair Macbeth tabled the contact details for the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee and asked that any change in contact details be forwarded to him. He advised that he had a new email address:-

[al.macbeth@btinternet.com](mailto:al.macbeth@btinternet.com)

An update was provided regarding ongoing discussions about the ownership of Duchess Wood. It was indicated that Stewart Campbell would email an update to Committee members.

### **9. MEETING DATES FOR 2016**

The Committee agreed:

1. That the meeting dates for 2016 would be as follows - Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 2016, Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May , 2016, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 and Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2016.
2. That the February 2016 meeting would be held in The Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre.

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

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## LOMOND SCHOOL

### ORIENTEERING IN DUCHESS WOODS

After the success of the Community Orienteering Event in September and the schools new Philosophy and Values which places Adventure at the heart of the school ethos, we would like to develop a permanent course in the woods for use by our Junior School, Geography and PE Departments. This would use the markers shown below and would be discreet so as to avoid attention of those not already aware of their presence. The markers would of course be available for use by any other school,

community group or individual who would like to use these.



As shown in the photograph (left), these markers are small (100mm x 75mm) and are made of plastic, resulting in a discreet and durable marker which is also very versatile due to the 3 codes present. Allowing the markers to be used by the same individuals a high number of times without simply learning the relevant codes.

Lomond School would fund and position these based on the following information. These markers can be purchased in sets of 26 markers, predrilled in each corner for £58. For Duchess Woods, it would be preferable to have two sets of markers (52) to allow for course flexibility although these might not all be used in the first instance. Postage and Packaging costs £4.95. These are available from [http://www.celticamapping.co.uk/marker\\_page.html](http://www.celticamapping.co.uk/marker_page.html)

Markers will be attached by screws or cable ties to current structures (fence posts, the reverse of signs) but may also require small stakes (3" x 3" x 16") to

be used in locations where there is nothing suitable to attach them to. These are available from <http://www.amtimber.com/> in Balloch who will make them up to order at around £1.10 + VAT.

If given approval for this permanent course then Caroline Beveridge, Head of Adventure and Service at Lomond School, [c.beveridge@lomondschool.com](mailto:c.beveridge@lomondschool.com) will be coordinating it.

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## The Friends of Duchess Wood

### Report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 16th February 2016

1. **Maintenance.** FODW has continued with its regular maintenance work, clearing litter, cutting back unwanted growth, making repairs, etc. Work on ditches and culverts has featured and progress has been made in getting holly over-growth under control in the southern part of the Wood.
2. **Storms.** To date the Wood has weathered the storms well. The work done over the past five months by FODW (assisted by Navy volunteers and Community Payback) on ditches and culverts has proved its value since these have coped with heavy rain. (The one area which may need some attention regarding improved drainage is to the west of where Lomond School holds its Forest Nursery, as well as the path to it.) No trees fallen on or beside paths to date, and FODW has cleared small branches fallen onto the paths.
3. **The draft draft 5-year Management Plan for the Wood** for the period 1st October 2016 – 30 September 2021, drawn up by FODW, was considered by the DWLNRC at its November meeting and a further revision is being prepared to take into account suggested changes.
4. **Buglife event.** Buglife is the conservation charity for invertebrates. Its Scottish officer held four very successful 'bug-hunts' two years ago. A follow-up is planned for 16th April this year as part of the John Muir week. FODW hopes to mount a visitor count and recruitment event over the same weekend.
5. **FODW has revised its membership leaflet** and has incorporated descriptive material from its general leaflet which is being discontinued. A further leaflet highlighting the **top ten things to see in the Wood** is being prepared and the **flower walk leaflet** will be reprinted in time for the spring flowers coming into bloom.
6. FODW has been heavily involved in the sub-committee taking forward the **WIAT grant application**, and the possibility of a trial thinning exercise in the lower part of the Wood.
7. **Liaison with Lomond School** on a number of initiatives has been taken forward.
8. Our entire stock of **firewood** has now been sold.
9. The FODW **spring newsletter** is being prepared and should be circulated in March.

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## Report to Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee

### WIAT funding sub-group

#### BACKGROUND

The November meeting of the LNR Committee agreed to the establishment of a sub-group tasked with exploring the way forward with regards to an application for WIAT funding in respect of achieving the aims and objectives of the agreed Management Plan.

It was also agreed that this group would investigate the possibility of a wood fuel based felling trial in the lower part of the wood. The Friends of Duchess Wood had already had a positive site meeting with one contractor who intimated that the value of the timber selected would outweigh the cost of felling.

It was agreed that membership of this sub-group would be Charlie Cairns, Stewart Campbell, David Lewin and Stuart McCracken.

#### PROGRESS

Due to various conflicting commitments, it has proven difficult to organise a meeting which all members of the sub-group could attend, however several valuable separate meetings have occurred which allowed substantial progress to be made. The outcomes of these meetings can be summarised as;

#### WIAT

- There is a recognised need for the existing Management Plan to be adapted to fit the template required by the Forestry Commission. As a potential grant of £1300 exists for this, it is the recommendation of the sub-group that a consultant be employed to undertake this work, with a budget ceiling of £1300.
- Charlie will draft a brief for this work, circulating it to members of the sub-group for comment and editing before issuing the brief to selected consultants. The sub-group would then select the best value return.
- The management of the actual contract thereafter would be Charlie's responsibility, but in full dialogue with the other sub-group members. The brief itself will specify at least two meetings between the sub-group and the consultant.
- The most appropriate financial mechanism for the contract has yet to be settled. The WIAT grant for the work is paid retrospectively, meaning an initial outlay of funding before grant is received. Charlie had hoped to underwrite this from his own budget, however this is no longer possible. He is currently seeking further advice from A&BC on how best to approach this.

- Despite the possibility of some woodland management works being achieved through a wood fuel contract, it is the opinion of the sub-group that the WIAT application should initially be for WIAT funding for all eligible activities within the woodland. Any impact on Forestry Commission funding from wood fuel sales can be assessed on an individual basis as and when it occurs. However, Charlie will seek further clarification from the FC on this.

### Wood Fuel Trial

- FODW had met on site with Simon Lockwood, a forester and timber merchant. Simon had indicated that one of the aims of the Management Plan, namely some felling and clearing of sycamore and straggly ash in the lower woodland, could be achieved by offsetting the cost of the felling and extraction against the value of the timber as wood fuel. It seemed likely that a modest profit could be made on the exercise.
- The LNR Committee had remitted the investigation of this possibility to the WIAT sub-group. Charlie had some initial concerns about thinning an already narrow woodland strip, and being seen to target ash. However after discussion and some site investigation his concerns have been allayed. Stuart also confirmed at a meeting that he is supportive of the work, as it is a specified aim in the Management Plan. However in reference to his role regarding maintenance and potential risk management, he would like to be present if and when trees were being marked for felling.
- The sub-group therefore was strongly in favour of carrying out this trial. A skype call was held with Simon Lockwood, during which some practicalities were raised and generally sorted out
- It was acknowledged that there would be a need for a communication plan to support the work. This would explain why the work was being done, emphasise the long term benefits of proper woodland management for biodiversity, and help make people aware of the work before it was carried out. It would target users of the wood and adjacent householders. This is a key element given the fact that the works will take 1 week to complete, meaning a closure of that part of the LNR.
- The issue of procurement has been investigated. Were the works to be contracted by the Council, a full procurement process would be necessary, meaning a competitive and timely process. However, Simon was relaxed about being contracted by the FODW for this particular work. To ease any burden caused by cash flow (for example paying for the felling first, before being compensated by the sale value of the timber), he agreed to work on the basis of effectively buying the timber standing. This results in no initial cost to FODW and with any surplus generated by the value of the timber being payable to FODW at the end of the contract.

- Simon therefore undertook to draw up contract documentation for the FODW to consider. In addition, he would apply for a felling licence and forward draft risk assessment frameworks for perusal.
- Timing is becoming critical. It is hoped that this work can begin in early March, before the nesting season in the nearby rookery.

### Other issues

- FODW had made contact with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, who have funding available to construct a small pond within the LNR. The proposal is that this will be immediately south of the rugby pitches, fairly remote from paths and have shallow edges sloping to a maximum 1m depth. It will be rain and groundwater fed, and unlined, therefore requiring little maintenance. It will serve to improve the range of habitats and species within the LNR. Neither Charlie nor Stuart had any objections to this proposal.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the LNR Committee

1. Endorse the approach of hiring a consultant to fit the existing Management Plan into the template provided by the Forestry Commission, to support a further bid for WIAT funding for management of the LNR
2. Remit to the sub-committee responsibility to apply for full WIAT funding on the completion of the Management Plan exercise
3. Approve the trial woodland management exercise as proposed, in particular the concept of utilising a wood fuel contractor to carry out the work. FODW would contract this work, and any profit generated would be paid to FODW for further related activities in the LNR.
4. Request that FODW develop a communication plan to keep the public and nearby residents updated of the need for the work, the timing of the work and the longer term woodland management that we hope will be funded through WIAT.
5. Approve the digging of a small pond to encourage amphibian populations to become established in the LNR.

Charlie Cairns

Lower Clyde Greenspace

February 2016

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