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DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE

12 May 2016

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE** will be held in the **LOMOND SCHOOL, 10 STAFFORD STREET, HELENSBURGH** on **WEDNESDAY, 18 MAY 2016** at **10:00 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

BUSINESS

1. APOLOGIES

2. MINUTE (Pages 1 - 6)

The Minute of the previous Duchess Woods Committee meeting held on 16 February 2016.

3. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

(a) Feature article about Duchess Wood for the Helensburgh Advertiser

4. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS (Pages 7 - 10)

Reports by Friends of Duchess Wood.

5. PROGRESS REPORT ON PONDS

6. DRAFT FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021

7. WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION

8. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

Report by Amenity Performance Manager (to follow).

9. MEETING DATES

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

Contact: Theresa McLetchie - Tel: 01436 657621

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MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in the CLYDE MEETING ROOM, THE HELENSBURGH AND LOMOND CIVIC CENTRE, EAST CLYDE STREET, HELENSBURGH on TUESDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2016

Present:

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)
Charlie Cairns – Lower Clyde Green Space
Ruth Cairns – Community Learning and Development Youth Worker
Stewart Campbell – Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood
Alastair Macbeth – Secretary, Friends of Duchess Wood
David Lewin – Trustee, Friends of Duchess Wood
Morevain Martin – Third Sector Interface
Johanna Urquhart – Principal Lomond School
Josie Slater – Youth Representative, Lomond School

APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Josie Slater, Youth representative from Lomond School.

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Eileen Kay
Iain Wilkinson
Stuart McCracken

2. MINUTE

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 17 November 2015 was approved as a true record.

Matters Arising

Page 4; Item 7 Terms of Reference and Membership – Communication with the Media

Alastair Macbeth questioned the need for any articles to be submitted to the local press were still to be pre-approved by the Committee. The Chair clarified that notification to the Committee would suffice.

Alastair Macbeth tabled an amended list of contacts and confirmed that these had been forwarded to Theresa McLetchie. She stated that the list had been saved electronically and requested that she be advised of any further amendments/changes.

3. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS

Eileen Kay had submitted her apologies but had provided a short update in regards the 29 children from Rhu Primary P7 who had visited Duchess Wood as part of their John

Muir Award and as a result, Eileen was supporting them to complete the Accredited Dynamic Youth Award.

Johann Urquhart highlighted the success of the recent Lomond School orienteering event in Duchess Wood. She advised that the proposed markers to be put in place would allow the course to be made available for use by other schools and community groups. If approved, the cost would be borne by Lomond School.

Discussion followed and it was pointed out that the Wood had specific quiet areas and that FODW were not keen for these quiet reserves to be utilised. The Committee commended the initiative and felt that this was a different way of using the Wood and opening it for use by other groups. It was noted that other events already take place in the Wood and orienteering events should be scheduled to avoid clashes; the HAAC cross country relay on 16th October was specifically mentioned.

Stewart Campbell enquired on the status of the enhanced island in the car park and the Stickman Walk. In addition, he requested further information on the footfall of participants from Lomond School participating in activities within the Wood. Johanna Urquhart confirmed that the Environment Committee at Lomond School were working on the enhanced island and the Stickman Walk and that she would request an update for the next meeting. Josie Slater would undertake a census and provide the detail of numbers for the May meeting.

The Committee enquired on the progress of the Forest School and Johanna Urquhart outlined the success of the school. The school was full and had a waiting list in place. Currently, the nursery had 1 Forest School session per week, with the Junior School having an afternoon session per week.

Stewart Campbell highlighted the forthcoming Buglife Event which was being held on 16 April as part of the John Muir week and requested that local schools be advised of this.

Decision:

The Committee agreed:-

1. To approve in principle the permanent orienteering course in Duchess Wood; and
2. That Lomond School would display a notice of the course in the Duchess Wood and advise other schools of the permanent course.
3. That Johanna Urquhart would provide information on both the enhanced island and Stickman Walk.
4. That a full update on the Forest School would be provided for the August meeting.

(Reference: Report by Caroline Beveridge, Head of Adventure and Service, Lomond School).

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

Ruth Cairns, Community Learning & Development Youth worker provided a short resume of the work she was currently undertaking in the Helensburgh and Lomond area. This included working with the Youth Parliament and the local Youth Forum. The membership of the Youth Forum was currently 4 and she was hoping to build on this. She highlighted the proposed holiday activities for the Summer period, with a smaller

range for Easter.

Discussion followed and the Committee enquired on the ways in which Ruth would target young people and the best way to engage with community groups. Stewart Campbell highlighted the Citizen Science initiative and suggested further discussion with Ruth to determine the most beneficial way for young people to become involved in Duchess Wood.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the update
2. That Ruth Cairns contact details would be circulated with the Minute.

5. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT

The Committee considered a report which outlined the work undertaken by Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) and the draft report that would be going to Helensburgh Community Council (HCC) for information.

Decision

The Committee agreed to note the report, the draft report for HCC and that the new membership leaflet would be circulated when completed.

6. DRAFT FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021

Stewart Campbell advised that progress on the draft 5-year Management Plan had been delayed and would now come to the May Committee meeting for approval.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the update.
2. That the finalised version of the draft 5-year Management Plan would come to the May Duchess Wood Committee meeting.

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

7. WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION

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

Discussion followed in regards the financial mechanism of engaging a consultant to take forward the work of adapting the existing Management Plan to fit the template required

by the Forestry Commission. The Chair agreed to speak to the Economic Development section on how best to progress this matter.

It was advised that the Wood Fuel Trial sub-group had recently met and was progressing effectively. However, due to inclement weather the felling programme had been delayed and it was proposed to defer the contract until the Autumn. However the consensus of feeling in the sub-group was to get the contract signed as soon as possible and proceed with a Summer 'felling trial'.

A communication pack was being compiled which would advise local residents and users of the Wood on the forthcoming tree felling. The removal of the timber was raised and the Committee was advised that further discussion was due to take place with Stuart McCracken in regards traffic management issues.

Alastair Macbeth questioned the implication of any damage sustained after the tree felling operation and asked for clarification that the same maintenance, currently in place, would be sustained. Furthermore, he requested that a clause be included to the effect that following the tree felling, the FODW would not be consequentially responsible for any damage sustained thereafter. The Chair pointed out that all trees which were marked for felling will be approved by Stuart McCracken on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. To 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. To remit to the sub-committee responsibility to apply for full WIAT funding on the completion of the Management Plan exercise.
3. To 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. The felling work has been delayed to Autumn 2016 but in the interim, FODW will pursue the fuel contractor to sign the draft contract.
4. To 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. To approve the digging of 2 small ponds and accompanying paths to encourage amphibian populations to become established in the LNR. With funding from the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and additional work and support provided by the Community Payback Team.

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

8. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Committee gave consideration to a report from the Amenity Performance Manager.

Decision

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the report.
2. That clarification would be confirmed on when the Financial update would be received.

(Reference: Report by the Amenity Performance Manager dated 2016, submitted).

9. DOG ISSUES AND TRAINING

The Committee gave discussion to various issues concerning dogs within the Wood which included commercial dog walkers, 'out of control' dogs and an increased incidence of dog fouling. Johanna Urquhart commented that, to her knowledge, there had not been any cases of 'out of control' dogs near the Forest School. However, she would advise on this issue at the May meeting. The Committee requested information on the procedure and point of contact at Argyll and Bute Council in dealing with 'out of control' dogs.

Decision

The Committee agreed:-

1. That the Chair would liaise with the Environmental Warden Team to determine the policy on this issue.
2. That Morevain Martin would make contact with the Dog Trainer in Cardross to investigate the possibility of providing training/an awareness-raising event in the Wood.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

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

Alastair Macbeth drew attention to a planning application proposal to build 95 houses on the original Dobbies Garden centre site. He highlighted possible implications to the Wood and advised that there would be a public consultation at the Ardencaple Houtel on 16 March between 1-7p.m. Stewart Campbell reported that there was now a lizard in residence in the Wood.

David Lewin enquired on the status of the Fairytale Wood project and was advised that this was 'on hold' as the organisation was applying for Charitable status.



11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Due to the Helensburgh and Lomond Community Planning Group meeting being held on the same date, the Committee agreed that the next Duchess Wood Committee meeting would be scheduled for – Wednesday, 18 May at 10.00a.m. in Lomond School.



The Friends of Duchess Wood

Community engagement report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 18th May 2016

1. **Community liaison and representation.** FODW has continued with its foundation tasks of engaging with and representing the local community regarding Duchess Wood. Most of the issues reported below are examples, but FODW has also liaised with local press and with the Helensburgh Community Council, the Rhu and Shandon CC and other local organisations.
2. **New FODW leaflets.** FODW has created two new leaflets, the first introducing FODW and inviting membership and the second suggesting ten top things to see in the Wood. Copies of these will be made available at the DWLNRC meeting on 18th May. The Flower Walk leaflet has been slightly altered and reprinted.
3. **FODW Information Weekend.** This was held on Saturday/Sunday 16/17 April and was a success. Information desks were set up at two of the four entry points to the Wood (car park and garages areas) – see photo right. Almost 500 people (of whom about 100 were children) were recorded between 08.00 and 17.00 and if those arriving earlier or later or by other entry points are estimated, the figures must have been greater. There were cyclists, dog walkers, joggers and horse riders in addition to walkers and family outings.
 
4. **Buglife event.** Buglife is the conservation charity for invertebrates. Following its successful insect tours in Duchess Wood last year, Buglife returned in April this year as a contribution to the John Muir week. Its Scottish officer, Suzanne Burgess, put emphasis on pollinating insects this time and showed a range of these, including bees. The photo, right, shows her holding a burrowing bee in the Wood to the west of the upper Rugby pitch and she showed her audience the holes where these bees burrow. She later emailed FODW that this was the first recorded instance of such bees in this area.
 
5. **Ponds.** Following the presentation by Pete Minting of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARCT) at our AGM, the Friends have followed up the DWLNRC agreement that there should be two small ponds, mainly funded by the ARCT with support from FODW, and these have now been created. FODW is also grateful for support from Community Payback and the local Fire Service in constructing the ponds. Work has still to be done in planting appropriate pond-side vegetation and to monitor amphibian and other aspects of the ponds, but tadpoles have already been released into them.

6. **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.
7. **Grants.** FODW has received a Third Sector grant of £318 and has matched it with the same amount from its own funds. It has received £500 from the SNH *Action Earth* initiative. It has also 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.
8. **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. There will be controlled fires to remove the piles of brash already cut and due to be cut in the future.
9. **The FODW spring newsletter** has been issued and is being sent to the DWLNRC members separately.
10. **Helensburgh Advertiser feature article.** Discussions are being held with a reporter from the Helensburgh Advertiser to prepare jointly a feature article about Duchess Wood. This could involve both the FODW and the DWLNRC and we have asked that it be included on the agenda for the DWLNRC meeting of 18th May 2016



The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 18 (Spring 2016)

FODW INFORMATION DAYS

Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th April

Buglife

The Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) will be holding two information days on 16th and 17th April. Please put these in your diaries

FODW's 'gazebo' tent will be near the gate just above the Duchess Wood car park.

There you will find exhibitions of FODW activities and a special display by 'Buglife' on 16th. See details of Buglife tour opposite.

FODW volunteers will also be there to answer questions and to tell you more about the Wood and about FODW.

Leaflets on various topics about the Wood will be available.

Everyone welcome. No charge. Bring friends and family. FODW will be at the car park gate to greet you.



One of last year's most successful Duchess Wood events was the set of tours guided by Buglife Scotland.

Buglife are returning for a repeat performance. This time they will be focusing on pollinating insects of all sorts including, of course, bees.

DATE : Saturday 16th April 2016 **TIME** : Start 12 noon, lasting over an hour
PLACE : Meet at the Duchess Wood car park
CLOTHING : According to weather, but wear stout shoes, though walking will mostly be on paths. Suggest warm clothing if a cold day.

You can book a place by contacting Suzanne Burgess on 01786 447504 or email suzanne.burgess@buglife.org.uk but you will be welcome to turn up on the day.

COULD YOU ASSIST ?

FODW is looking for help on aspects of its organisation. If you might contribute to any of the following, please contact either Stewart Campbell at stewart.campbell@zen.co.uk (01436 675923) or Alastair Macbeth at al.macbeth@btinternet.com (01436 676792)

Census of Wood-users. The number of people using Duchess Wood is important when seeking grants and other reasons. Our current information is out of date. We are organising a first visitor survey **over the two days 16th and 17th April.**

Could you help us? There will be two counting stations: at the DW car park entrance and at the garages entrance to the Wood. Time slots will be two hours each day at:

08.00 – 10.00
10.00 – 12.00
12.00 – 14.00
14.00 – 16.00
16.00 – 18.00

Would you assist on one 2-hour slot?

Website assistance

Could you help us redesign our website in a form that is easier to maintain and update?

Tree health survey

Assist in assessing tree health.

Animal camera traps

Photographic expertise sought.

Assistant to Secretary

To help the FODW Secretary.

We did the right thing

Walkers at the north-west corner of Duchess Wood may have noticed a slab of concrete lying in the stream – see photo below, right. This had been the foundation of the old wooden bridge. (See below left.). We had noted that the flow of water from the stream was undercutting this bank and threatening the bridge's foundation. So FODW took action before nature forced us to.

With the help of the Employability Team, FODW replaced the wooden bridge with a large culvert-bridge which is more robust, steers the water and is easier to maintain. Our aim is to replace some other wooden bridges in the same way .

The old wooden bridge



The new culvert-bridge.

Foundation of old bridge now collapsed into stream.



Amphibians and reptiles



Pete Minting, Scottish Project Officer of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) spoke at our last AGM about both amphibians and reptiles in Scotland and in our area.

This is a brief summary of his talk and steps that FODW is taking.

In and around Helensburgh you may encounter our four amphibians : the common frog, the common toad, the palmate newt and the smooth newt – and one reptile, the common lizard. This lizard is also referred to as the viviparous lizard, which means it gives birth to live young, as distinct from laying eggs.

It is also possible that slow-worms and great crested newts are present but there have been no records. There may be adders on the moors to the north of the town and leatherback turtles may follow jellyfish into the Clyde. Further afield in Scotland, natterjack toads may be encountered, and grass snakes occasionally turn up in the Borders. There are also small local populations of alpine newts in Edinburgh and sand lizards on Coll. FODW members who want to see what can be achieved in encouraging amphibians and reptiles can visit Gartcosh LNR in North Lanarkshire which has a thriving population of great crested newts and an interesting array of ponds and pond life.

This spring, FODW hopes to do some systematic surveying of amphibians and reptiles in the Wood. With permission of the Council, we are creating two ponds as a trial to see if they can be managed. One pond is in the area between the burn behind Kathleen Park and the Lomond Rugby Pitch. The other is in a wet area between the west boundary and the west path. We hope these will encourage a population of frogs, toads and newts; other pond life such as dragonflies, damselflies and small fish; and benefit the birds and bats in the Wood. We'll also try to clear growth from some of the drystone dykes in sunnier locations to see if this will encourage the lizard population. ***If anyone is interested in helping in this work, please get in touch.***

Dog control

This may be a good time to remind people that, although dogs (and horses) are permitted in the Wood, the conditions are laid down by law and by the Scottish Countryside Access Code. Basically these mean that dog owners (or walkers of dogs) must ensure that the dogs are under control. The three main purposes of a Local Nature Reserve are biodiversity, research/education and recreation for ***people***. Dog owners and dog walkers must respect those. We have prepared a poster reminding dog owners of their duties.

FODW represents the community

The Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) was set up as a voluntary charity to safeguard the benefits of the Wood for the community and to work with other organisations to do so. It has places on the Council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee to represent the community. This year, FODW provided a report for the Helensburgh Community Council, at the invitation of its convener, about the community role of FODW. Our report may be seen on the FODW website. www.duchesswood.org.uk

Ardencaple site proposed new housing development

There is a proposal to build 85 houses at the Ardencaple site – the old Dobbies Garden Centre land plus the field to the north of it. This is beside Duchess Wood.

FODW will focus on a wildlife corridor to the north of the site to link Duchess Wood to Glenoran Wood and access from the site to the Wood. FODW will not be involved in the housing controversies.

NEWS IN BRIEF

5-year Management Plan

The Friends of Duchess Wood (assisted by Lower Clyde Greenspace) have been drafting the next five-year Management Plan for Duchess Wood. It will cover the period 2016-21. It will go to the next meeting of the Council's Duchess Wood Committee before being finalised by the Council. Main points will be reported in the FODW autumn newsletter.

External grants

FODW and Lower Clyde Greenspace have prepared an application for funding under the Woodlands In and Around Towns scheme. It is hoped to report the outcome in the autumn newsletter.

Summer controlled fires

Fires are not allowed in Duchess Wood unless authorised. This summer FODW will carry out controlled burning of brash following its winter undergrowth cutting.



YOUR VIEWS

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

Website. www.duchesswood.org.uk

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, 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 management of 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.