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# DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE

15 November 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 **TUESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 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 23 August 2016.
3. **ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY**
4. **FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS** (Pages 7 - 8)  
Reports by Friends of Duchess Wood.
5. **FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021**
6. **WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION**
7. **ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE AND FINANCIAL UPDATE**  
Report by Amenity Performance Manager (to follow).
8. **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**
9. **MEETING DATES FOR 2017** (Pages 9 - 10)

### 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 SEABANK ROOM, HELENSBURGH AND LOMOND CIVIC CENTRE, 38 EAST CLYDE STREET, HELENSBURGH on TUESDAY, 23 AUGUST 2016**

**Present:**

Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)  
Charlie Cairns – Lower Clyde Green Space  
Stewart Campbell – Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood  
David Lewin - Trustee, Friends of Duchess Wood  
Stuart McCracken – Amenity Performance Manager  
Ailsa Cunningham – Technical Officer  
Wendy Brownlie – Education Officer  
Johanna Urquhart – Principal, Lomond School

**APOLOGIES**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Alastair Macbeth  
Morevain Martin  
Iain Wilkinson  
Josie Slater

**2. MINUTE**

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 18 May 2016 was approved as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

**ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY**

The Chair reported that Eileen Kay had resigned from the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee and that Wendy Brownlie, Education Officer for Helensburgh and Lomond would endeavour to attend meetings, depending on her availability.

Charlie Cairns advised that there was no update and that during the school holidays there had been no activity

**Decision:**

The Committee noted the update.

## **FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report which had been tabled at the meeting and provided an update on recent work undertaken by Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW). This work has included the placement of QR codes at the entrance to the Wood which link directly to the FODW website, and ongoing Rhododendron and Sycamore clearance.

Stewart Campbell, Chair of Friends of Duchess Wood advised the Committee of the recent death of Alastair Macbeth's wife. The Committee offered their condolences to Alastair at this sad news.

Discussion followed regarding the issue of 'wild camping' and the Committee agreed there was a need to monitor this in Duchess Wood.

### **Decision**

The Committee noted the report.

Reference: Community Engagement Report and FODW Newsletter by Stewart Campbell, Chair Friends of Duchess Wood dated August 2016, submitted).

## **DRAFT FIVE-YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN - OCTOBER 2016-SEPTEMBER 2021**

The Committee gave consideration to the draft 5-year Management Plan and Stewart Campbell advised that he had reviewed comments he had received and had made several amendments to the document. He tabled several maps for the Committee to consider.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, commended the hard work and effort undertaken by Stewart.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed :

1. The finalised Plan; and
2. That this would be submitted to the October meeting of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee for approval.

(Reference: Draft Management Plan by Stewart Campbell, Chair Friends of Duchess Wood, tabled).

### **WIAT FUNDING APPLICATION**

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

Charlie Cairns highlighted that briefs had been forwarded to 3 companies, but unfortunately there had not been any uptake received. He continued that, under the circumstances, he had instigated a draft application for submission and requested that the Committee endorse this approach to enable the sub-committee to proceed with a formal application.

Discussion continued in regards the potential to work with ACT to deliver some elements of the work, although it was pointed out that there was some uncertainty about their employability funding beyond October.

David Lewin reported on recent difficulties in trying to make contact with Lockwood Forest Services. He had eventually made contact and advised that while it was still planned to undertake the self-funding sycamore project, it was currently on hold. He would provide an update at the November meeting.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:

1. To endorse the draft application devised by Charlie Cairns; and
2. That the sub-committee would proceed with a formal application for WIAT funding; and
3. That David Lewin would provide an update regarding the self-funding sycamore project for the November meeting

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

The Committee gave consideration to reports from the Amenity Performance Manager which provided information on the maintenance regime for the wood and also an update on the financial position.

Several concerns were raised which included:-

- The need to empty bins at Rhu Road Higher
- Planings to be used to fill pot holes with the car park

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:

1. To note the report, and
2. That the Amenity Performance Manager would review the issues highlighted at the meeting.

(Reference: Report by the Amenity Performance Manager dated 23 August 2016,

submitted).

## **POTENTIAL DOG TRAINING EVENT**

The Committee gave consideration to the potential dog event and various suggestions were put forward.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed:-

1. To hold a small event on Sunday, 9 October in the Pony Field, Duchess Wood which would include contributions from the dog trainer, Environmental Wardens and Friends of Duchess Wood, with parking support potentially offered by Lomond School; and
2. That the Chair would instigate contact with the Dogs Trust to ascertain if they could provide support for the event; and
3. That a short Press release would be compiled to raise awareness for the event.

## **ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

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

Ailsa Cunningham advised of a forthcoming orienteering event being held by Lomond School on – Sunday, 11 September between 10.00a.m. and 2.00p.m.

She outlined an application which had been received for a birthday party for 12 children in the Duchess Wood. Ailsa drew attention to the proposed activities which included – rope works, tree climbing and fire lighting. She invited discussion from the Committee in relation to the application and the Committee confirmed, that in their view, the activities were very ambitious for the short duration of the proposed party.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed that a structure of the event should be requested, which would also provide detail of the safety measures in place and the staff ratio.

The Chair highlighted a recent meeting held in the Victoria Halls – Taking Action on Marine and Land-based litter. It had been agreed at the meeting to explore the creation of a local community group with the potential of accessing suitable funding.

She enquired if there was any update in regards the possibility of community ownership of the Wood. Stewart Campbell replied that the Friends of Duchess Wood were hoping to recruit a new committee member who had expertise in the law and could, hopefully, provide support and expertise on this issue.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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

**Tuesday, 22 November 2016 – 10.00a.m.**  
**Lomond School 10 Stafford Street, Helensburgh**

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

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## The Friends of Duchess Wood

### Friends of Duchess Wood report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 22nd. November 2016



1. **Community liaison and representation.** FODW has continued with its tasks of engaging with and representing the local community. Most of the issues reported below are examples, but FODW has also liaised with local press, community councils, police and fire services, and other local organisations.

### 2. FODW Annual General Meeting

FODW held its AGM on 26th October in the Lomond School Sports Hall. The Convener thanked a number of people who had done so much during the year, including Cllr. Aileen Morton and the DWLNRC. Also appreciation to Bill Freeland of Community Payback which may in future come under the Dunoon office. FODW hope that the friendly and constructive relations FODW has experienced with Community Payback can be maintained in any reorganisation.



FODW accounts were approved and the previous office bearers were reappointed. Stewart Campbell thanked Margaret Paul and Kevin Johnson for their years of service as they retired from the FODW committee, and he welcomed Pete Minting and Paul Blackburn as replacement Trustees.

The formal business was followed by a reminder from Anne Urquhart about the new Access Trust paths leaflet, then a fascinating illustrated talk by Paula Baker, Site Manager of the *RSPB Loch Lomond* nature reserve which was started four years ago, and although on a much larger scale, faces challenges not dissimilar to those in Duchess Wood.

3. **Ponds.** The two small ponds created by the Friends, following agreement by the DWLNRC, have continued to develop. The ponds were mainly funded by the Amphibians and Reptiles Conservation Trust, with support from FODW. Both ponds have now filled to a satisfactory level to encourage amphibians and other creatures which benefit from a source of still water. Grass growth around the ponds and dog encroachment, particularly in the lower pond, have been problems, so the grass is being removed this month and the areas nearest the water in both ponds are being sown



with yellow rattle, which should inhibit grass growth. Preparations are in hand to plant a ring of willow saplings around the lower pond early in December.

#### 4. Basic maintenance.

FODW has continued to carry out maintenance such as cutting back rhododendron, sycamore and other invasive species, litter clearance, tree planting, grass control, paths clearance and other basic tasks. Ditch and culvert clearing requires extra attention now that fallen leaves increase. (See photo right). Fencing and bridge repairs have also been undertaken and FODW has drawn the attention of A&BC to the partial collapse of the edge of the bridge/culvert from the car park, where emergency repairs have now been undertaken.



#### 5. Sycamore thinning and Scots Pine replanting.



*Sycamores marked for felling*

There has been long-standing concern (reflected in the MP) that Sycamores are crowding out native species particularly along the eastern and northern sides of the Wood. The Scots Pines area between Rhu Road Higher and the Strathclyde Court garages was identified as the most suitable area to carry out a trial thinning. The DWLNRC approved (February 2016) a trial thinning of Sycamores, utilising a wood fuel contractor. That has now been agreed with Simon Lockwood of Lockwood Forest Services (LFS). It will go ahead on 8 and 9 December with a trial felling of perhaps 50 Sycamores (and perhaps a few Beech and Ash).

Details have been agreed on site with Stuart McCracken (7.11.16), representing A&BC which provides overall management of the Wood and is responsible for safety. Tree felling will necessitate closure of the Millig Street to Rhu Road Higher footpath and LFS will cordon this off and provide explanatory notices. Users of the Wood will still be able to access it the rest of the Wood using the other entry points. On Saturday 10 December there will be a Community Woodland demonstration, open to the public, of firewood preparation / storage and coppicing, and firewood will be for sale. A contract will be signed by FODW with LFS. There will be no charge to FODW (since LFS will cover its costs by selling firewood) and it is hoped that there may be a modest gain for FODW. Scots Pine saplings for planting in the cleared area (£3 each) will be funded by £150 from the A&BC Third Sector grant.

Advance notices will be delivered by FODW to nearby households to inform them of the events.

6. **The draft draft 5-year Management Plan for the Wood** has now been endorsed by the A&BC Area Committee and FODW has informed its members that it is now active.

7. **Subsidiary role of FODW.** FODW recognises that its role is one of support for A&BC which, through the DWLNRC, has overall authority for the management of Duchess Wood, liaison with the A&BC Area Committee and Luss Estates, legal arrangements, health and safety, authorisation of events in the Wood, major fund-raising, etc. FODW therefore regards its quarterly reports (such as this one) as important for ensuring that it is operating with the approval of the DWLNRC. FODW therefore asks if the DWLNRC minutes do not simply "note" the FODW reports, but record approval of them. If there is any aspect that is not approved, FODW would welcome DWLNRC guidance concerning such an aspect.

**PROPOSED MEETING DATES FOR 2017**

**DUCHESS WOOD**

**LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE**

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**Wednesday - February, 2017**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May, 2017**

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> August, 2017**

**Tuesday 21st November, 2017**

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