

**MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held
in the LOMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL, HELENSBURGH
on TUESDAY, 21 AUGUST 2018**

Present: Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

Attending: Melissa Stewart, Area Governance Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Johann Urquhart, Principal Teacher of Lomond School
Sean McCay, Land Agent, Luss Estates
Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Martin Grafton, Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW)
Morag Young, Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW)
Jean Senior, Argyll TSI

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Wendy Brownlie, Education Manager
Lorna Pearce, Senior Development Officer
Morevain Martin, Argyll TSI
Sara MacLeod, Branching Out
Stewart Campbell, Friends of Duchess Wood
Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer

2. MINUTE

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 22nd May 2018 was approved as a correct record.

Arising from item 5 "Top Dogs Day Out Update" it was noted that a separate meeting had been arranged to take forward arrangements for the planning and marketing of the 2019 event and that the item had not therefore been included on the agenda.

Arising from item 7 "Any Other Competent Business" the Area Governance Officer advised that Louise Connor, Head of Education, had responded to the previous offer from Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) regarding opportunities to work with local schools in relation to the crowdfunding effort to provide a copy the book "The Lost Words" to all schools in Scotland. Louise had offered to forward information in an email from FODW to individual Head Teachers for their consideration.

3. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT

The Committee considered a report which provided an update from Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW).

Martin Grafton spoke to the report advising that the maintenance teams have been back in action after a very quiet winter.

Decision

The Committee endorsed the contents of the report and agreed that David Lewin, FODW would liaise with Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer, regarding the immediate issues regarding the diseased trees and that this would be an item for discussion at a future meeting in light of concerns that a survey may be required to assess the extent of the problem.

(Ref: Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) by Martin Grafton, Secretary - FODW, dated 21st August 2018).

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

Johann Urquhart, Principal Teacher of Lomond School, updated the Group on the Community Orienteering Event planned for 2nd September 2018 which would be open to the whole community to attend between the hours of 10am-1pm. She confirmed this has been advertised in schools and an advert would also be placed in the local paper.

5. DUCHESS WOOD WIAT APPLICATION (Pages 5 - 8)

Mhairi Gardner, Development Officer took the Group through a report which updates members on the status of the initial application to the Forestry Commission (FC), for a Woods in and around town (WIAT) grant relating to the production of an urban woodland management plan.

She advised an application was submitted to the Forestry Commission on 31st May 2017 in request of retrospective funding towards the time and resources required to develop a management plan for the Local Nature Reserve. She advised the application was approved on 6th July 2017 and further to contract agreement, the plan preparation grant of £1,299.75 had now been received.

Decision

The Group noted the contents of the report, thanked everyone involved in the bid, and agreed that the plan be included on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss what other funding options may be available.

(Ref: Report by Development Officer dated 21st August 2018, submitted).

6. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE

There was no officer present from Roads and Amenity Services. In their absence the Chair commented that she was unaware of any recent maintenance works conducted although had concerns about more erosion and the number and depth of potholes which she would raise directly with Roads and Amenity Services.

The Group agreed that to facilitate future attendance of an officer they would move this item to the start of the agenda, with the option to depart the meeting after the update had been provided. They also commented that where no officer was able to attend in future a written update would be much appreciated.

7. THE FUTURE OF DUCHESS WOOD POST MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

The Chair spoke about the need to enter into discussions about the options for the management of the Wood after the current Management Agreement expires in August 2020. She suggested this be progressed as soon as possible as this could take a significant period of time to move through the various committees of the Council before a decision can be made.

The Council outlined 4 options for progressing the matter which were:

1. To renew the Management Arrangement per the current arrangement;
2. To have a new Management Arrangement with a third party taking responsibility for maintenance etc;
3. To decline to renew the Management Arrangement, the consequence being that the land would revert to the owner to maintain; and
4. Alternative ownership arrangements, such as a community buyout be taken forward.

Decision

It was agreed that the previously established Short Term Working Group would meet at Lomond School on 18th September at 10am to explore the options outlined and report back to the DWLNRC at their next meeting.

8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Martin Grafton updated the Group on an email David had received from the Helensburgh Advertiser regarding the issue of professional dog walkers in the Wood. The Chair agreed to look at the potential for a code of conduct to be put in place and that she would report back on this to the Committee at a future meeting.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 13th November 2018, at 10am, in the Seabank Room, Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre.