



Argyll and Bute Council
Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal Agus Bhòid

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14 August 2018

NOTICE OF MEETING

A meeting of the **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE** will be held in **LOMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL, HELENSBURGH** on **TUESDAY, 21 AUGUST 2018** at **10:00 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry
Executive Director of Customer Services

BUSINESS

- 1. APOLOGIES**
- 2. MINUTE** (Pages 3 - 6)
The Minute of the previous Duchess Wood Committee meeting held on 22nd May 2018.
- 3. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT** (Pages 7 - 10)
Report by Friends of Duchess Wood
- 4. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY**
- 5. DUCHESS WOOD WIAT APPLICATION**
Verbal update by Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer
- 6. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE**
Verbal update by Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer
- 7. THE FUTURE OF DUCHESS WOOD POST MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT**
Report by Lorna Pearce, Senior Development Officer (to follow)
- 8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**
- 9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE

Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)
Melissa Stewart, Area Governance Officer (Clerk)

Contact: Danielle Finlay, Senior Committee Assistant - 01436 656646

**MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held
in the SEABANK ROOM, HELENSBURGH & LOMOND CIVIC CENTRE
on TUESDAY, 22 MAY 2018**

Present: Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

Attending: Shona Barton, Area Committee Manager, Argyll & Bute Council
Melissa Stewart, Area Governance Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Jean Senior, Argyll TSI
Stewart Campbell, Chair of FODW
David Lewin, FODW
Sara McLean, Argyll and the Isles Coast and Countryside Trust

1. APOLOGIES

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

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Stuart McCracken, Amenity Performance Manager, Argyll & Bute Council
Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Johann Urquart, Principal of Lomond School
Sean McCay, Land Agent, Luss Estates
Morevain Martin, Third Sector Interface

2. MINUTE

The Minute of the previous meeting which was held on 20th February 2018 was approved as a correct record.

Arising from item 7 (c) Grass Cutting – Pony Field, it was noted that there was no response as yet from Mr McCay. It was noted that Stewart Campbell would chase this up directly.

3. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT

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

Stewart Campbell spoke to the report advising that it had been a quiet Winter due to laying snow but despite this some maintenance work had been completed and the Community Payback Team had undertaken the refurbishment of park benches, for which FODW recorded their thanks to Colin Ray.

In addition, Stewart spoke about bridge and decking repairs, bat detection with the Explorer Scouts on 25th June 2018, semi guided walks that were being planned and the desire to record footfall into the woods.

Decision

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

(Ref: Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) by Martin Grafton, Secretary - FODW, dated 8th May 2018).

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY

(a) Branching Out Argyll

Following an invitation to attend and discuss the Branching Out Argyll Project at the meeting on 20th February 2018, the Committee were informed about the project by Sara McLean of Argyll and the Isle Coast and Countryside Trust. Sara spoke about the partners and funders, what the aims of project were, the types of activities undertaken, the positive impacts on the mental health of the participants and how the costs of delivering the project compared with clinical treatment for mental health issues.

Decision

The Committee thanked Sara for her informative presentation and it was agreed that an invitation would be extended by FODW to the group in respect of their bat detection session on 25th June 2018.

5. 'TOP DOGS DAY OUT' UPDATE

The Committee considered a report from the Dogs Trust following the "Top Dogs Day Out" event held on 25th March 2018 and received feedback from the Chair who had attended a post event meeting.

The Chair commented that the event was well run and attended but that the marketing of the event could have been improved to have made the day even more successful.

Decision

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that this item be included on the agenda for the meeting on 21st August 2018 to allow for discussions on planning and marketing the 2019 event.

(Ref: Dogs Trust Community Event Summary, undated)

6. DUCHESS WOOD WIAT APPLICATION

Mhairi Gardner updated the Committee on the progress of the Woodlands In Around Town funding application which had been approved on 2nd May 2018 and responded to questions from the Committee about timescale and implications that the sale of timber may have on the funding.

Decision

The Committee noted the success of the application and requested that Mhairi seek to establish a timescale for release of the funding from the Forestry Commission and also raise the matter of timber sales and any impact that might have on the award.

7. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Committee discussed the terms of report by the Amenity Performance Manager in his absence, noting the remaining budget for maintenance.

Decision

It was agreed to record the concerns of FODW regarding Japanese Knotweed encroaching on the car park and ask that this be treated by the Amenity Performance Manager and also to invite the Amenity Performance Manager and contractors to discuss works at Strathclyde Court with FODW prior to any decisions being made.

(Ref: Report by Amenity Performance Manager dated 22nd May 2018, submitted)

8. THE FUTURE OF DUCHESS WOOD POST MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

The Chair spoke about the need to enter into discussions about the options for Management Agreement which would expire in August 2020 as soon as possible.

Decision

It was agreed to establish a Short Term Working Group to progress options and report back to this Committee and that this should consist of the Chair, a representative of FODW and officers from Legal Services, Amenity Services and Economic Development. The Area Committee Manager was invited to contact these services, inviting them to nominate an officer to work with the Group and to circulate suggested dates for the first meeting.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Jean Senior asked FODW if it would be possible to organise a painted stone hunt in Duchess Woods. With exception on Mondays it was agreed that this could take place and that Stewart would advertise this if Jean provided him with a poster.

Stewart asked about feedback from Education on the “Lost Words” book. It was agreed that the Area Committee Manager would raise this with Wendy Brownlie and Louise Connor, having noted that Ann Paterson was not aware of this.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 21st August 2018, at 10am, in the Lomond School, Helensburgh.

Friends of Duchess Wood

Friends of Duchess Wood report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 21st August 2018

1. Following a very quiet winter, maintenance teams have been back in action. Wooden planks have been replaced on the Thurgood Bridge and the Community Payback team has been busy refurbishing tables and benches which are now back in situ. This includes four new benches obtained from the James Street Community Garden. FODW has accepted an offer of an additional bench to be placed in the Wood to commemorate a regular dog visitor. Further trimming and cutting back around paths has continued.
2. A plan by the Venture Scouts to visit the Wood in late June, collect brash and burn it, cooking food in the embers, was cancelled at the last moment due to the very dry conditions in the wood and risk of fire.
3. Community liaison and representation. FODW continued its normal role of engagement with and representation of the local community. FODW has also liaised with local press, community councils and other local organisations.
4. Grants. The bid for a “Woodlands in and around Towns” (WIAT) grant was submitted earlier along with our woodland management plan and is now under consideration by the Forestry Commission. An update on the position at the meeting would be welcome.
5. We have been liaising with several groups over putting in a footpath to the upper pond to provide a viewing area. This includes the Argyll and Clyde Coast and Countryside Trust (ACT) who have approached us to see if there are any projects we would like work experience teams to carry out now they have a management team in place in Helensburgh/ Lomond. We are also talking to our regular contractor who has assisted in numerous projects. FODW believes that to protect both ponds from dogs and to enable the ponds to stabilize that we need to fence both ponds. Limited fencing will be needed along the line of the new upper pond path, a circular fence around the lower pond, where we will try to replant a willow barrier protected within the fence.
6. FODW has met with the Project Manager for Community Links Scotland to discuss how the organisation might be able to support action in the Wood. They have particular experience in supporting studies and funding applications for the transfer of assets to local communities. At the last meeting the question was raised about possible support from David Rennie of the social enterprise department of A&BC, and FODW sent its main documents to Mr Rennie, but no response has been received. Again, an update would be welcome.
7. Branching Out has submitted a positive “end of term” report and we will meet with Branching Out before the meeting to discuss the points they raise.
8. Boundary issues. We are aware that the Strathclyde Court residents remain concerned about trees overhanging their premises, and dead or diseased trees near the boundary. Within the last week, a tree (a Goat Willow) has fallen towards the boundary of the last house in Duchess Park. When reported to A&BC there seemed to be confusion about the role of the Council and FODW in dealing with this tree, but in the end, Council

employees made it safe. However FODW inspection of the tree has shown that it was one of three main stems and the other two are also showing signs of disease; indeed one of the remaining two is only being prevented from falling into the garden of the property by an adjacent ash tree. Separately, in the NW corner of the Wood in the middle of July, a very large branch of one of the old beech trees largely broke off and is now held partly supported on the ground and partly by the thin section of bark still attached to the tree. Although FODW dealt with the immediate path clearance need, the whole branch will need to be taken down at some point as separation of the branch from the tree by any mechanism could lead to the branch falling close to the nearby path. A discussion on boundary issues would be helpful.

9. Professional dog walkers. Visitors have raised issues with FODW over the past few months about professional dog walkers with 5 dogs or more using the Wood on a regular basis and sometimes having only limited control over all the dogs. Mention has been made in the past about a form of licensing scheme, but FODW is unsure of the current position. Experience is mounting that such a move might be necessary.

10. FODW attended an event organised by the "Helensburgh Making Places" initiative on 8 August, having been unaware of the project until receiving a flyer in the Community Advertiser. We will respond to the initiative's survey, but remain a little uncertain how this initiative is to be taken forward. The role of green spaces is a major theme, and we will try to ensure that Duchess Wood is included in this.

11. We are still hoping to be able to strim and clear the pony field of grass by the end of the summer and Community Payback may be able to assist.

12. Earlier in the summer, one of our members cutting back growth in the Wood noticed some ash trees that appeared to be dead or dying. His son who has knowledge of the problem, said that he thought it was suffering from Chalara ash die back. Since then we have noted a number of other young ash trees in different parts of the Wood which have died or are dying. We can't be certain that this is dieback, but it is only noticeable on young ash trees which appear to be the usual site on which the disease appears. We understand that this is reportable to the Forestry Commission – presumably by A&BC?

13. We intend taking a more active role in Citizen Science projects, particularly in the Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Plantlife, and Butterfly and Moths Conservation Trust areas. We have commissioned our new bat-detection equipment and we will also hold another visitor count over the summer.

14. FODW Annual General Meeting. The FODW AGM for the year 2017-18 will be held on Wednesday 17th October 2018. This will be held in the Helensburgh Parish Church Halls. Please note that this is a change from the date given at the last meeting.

Martin Grafton, Secretary, 8th August 2018

Beech tree



willow tree



Base of willow tree



stem of willow supported on ash tree

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