



**Argyll and Bute Council**  
**Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal Agus Bhòid**

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*22 January 2019*

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

A meeting of the **DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE** will be held in the **LOMOND SCHOOL, HELENSBURGH** on **TUESDAY, 29 JANUARY 2019** at **10:30 AM**, which you are requested to attend.

Douglas Hendry  
Executive Director of Customer Services

**BUSINESS**

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2018** (Pages 3 - 6)
- 3. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE**  
Verbal update by Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer
- 4. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOODS**
  - (a) Introduction of Matt Offord, Chair of Friends of Duchess Woods
  - (b) Update on Recent Activity (Pages 7 - 8)
- 5. UPDATE ON WIAT FUNDING**  
Verbal Update by Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer
- 6. FUTURE OF DUCHESS WOODS**  
Report by Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer (to follow)
- 7. TOP DOG EVENT**  
Verbal update by Chair, Councillor Lorna Douglas
- 8. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE**

Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

Contact: Melissa Stewart, Area Governance Officer - 01546 604331

**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, 13 NOVEMBER 2018**

**Present:** Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

**Attending:** Melissa Stewart, Area Governance Officer, Argyll & Bute Council  
Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer, Argyll & Bute Council  
Sean McCay, Land Agent, Luss Estates  
Stewart Campbell, Chair of Friends of Duchess Woods  
David Lewin, Committee Member, Friends of Duchess Woods  
Johann Urquhart, Principal Teacher of Lomond School

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Martin Grafton, Friends of Duchess Woods  
Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer, Argyll & Bute Council

### **2. MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 AUGUST 2018**

The Minute of the previous meeting held on 21 August 2018 was approved as a correct record subject to the addition of the words "urban woodland" before management plan, at paragraph 2 of item 5 (Duchess Wood WIAT Application).

Arising from Item 2 (Minutes) the Area Governance Officer invited FODW to pass an email to her for onward distribution to Head Teachers regarding the Lost Words book.

Arising from item 5 (Duchess Wood WIAT Application) the Development Officer clarified that the WIAT was approved on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017, it being suggested that this sign off was obtained in 2018.

### **3. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

The Area Governance Officer explained that Amenity Services had indicated that due to other commitments they would provide a written report for this meeting but that this had not yet materialised.

#### **Decision**

The Area Governance Officer would make further contact with the Technical Officer to obtain an update and would circulate this to the Group.

#### **4. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update from Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) on progress since the last meeting took place.

In addition to the report, Stewart Campbell added that they had been gifted with a new seat from the owner of “Kevin”, a former user of the woods who had sadly passed away. An arbour to shelter the seat would be purchased from grant funding received from Action Earth. He provided updated timescales for the work being carried out by Branching Out, recognising that they have provided much appreciated support.

David Lewin provided information on a tree survey carried out on trees within a 5 metre radius of the boundary, to the East side and to the North, adjacent to the railway. Three hundred trees were in this area, some were not in good condition and others were leaning over the railway line.

Stewart Campbell provided further information in regard to his contact with the Planning Officer and the upcoming meetings with the Council’s Biodiversity Officer.

David extended the thanks of the FODW to the community payback team who had recently cleared the drainage at the weekend.

#### **Decision**

1. To endorse the contents of the submitted report.
2. That FODW would send a copy of the survey to the Area Governance Officer for circulation to the Group along with a calling notice from the recent AGM.
3. To note the appointment of the new Chair, Matt Offord, who would participate in future meetings of the DWLNRC.
4. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Stewart for his hard work as a volunteer with FODW, commenting that his time and commitment was to be admired.

(Ref: Report by Friends of Duchess Woods Secretary, Martin Grafton)

#### **5. DUCHESS WOOD WIAT FUNDING**

Mhairi Gardner, Development Officer, spoke about 2 funding streams – The Woodland Improvement Fund and the Sustainable Management of Forest Fund - outlining the work required to progress applications. She advised that an operational plan was required, which David was in the process of drafting for FODW and that further feedback was required from Amenity services to inform this plan.

David commented that he had approached the Forestry for some clarification as to the requirements but they had not responded to his request. He would meet with Mhairi next week to discuss this and would also be looking for some help with mapping.

Mhairi advised that all the funding streams being pursued would issue retrospective payments meaning there would need to be a fund to pay before these costs were claimed back.

The Committee discussed whether, in light of the current discussions about the Management Agreement, there was merit in progressing with an operational plan at this time given the uncertainties as to whether the council would pull out of the Management Agreement when it expires. Mhairi responded that the WIAT could be transferred and it was agreed that on this the work should progress.

### **6. SUB-COMMITTEE - OPTIONS UPDATE**

The Chair advised that the Helensburgh & Lomond Area Committee would receive a report at their December meeting regarding the future of the Management Agreement. The outcome of this would be fed into full Council where the decision regarding the Management Agreement would rest.

The Chair explained the difficult financial situation that the Council was in, commenting that there may need to be a focus on statutory functions when determining budgets.

The Committee thereafter had a frank discussion regarding some of the hypothetical situations should the Council withdraw from the Management Agreement with FODW confirming that they would continue to work with Luss Estates (and Vice-versa) and while they weren't in a position to take forward a community buyout, they would like to continue to help out where they could.

Members of the Committee expressed a desire to see the Committee report when available and it was agreed that the Area Governance Officer would provide a link to the report once the agenda had been published.

### **7. DOG FOULING**

The Chair advised that she had sought information from the Head of Governance and Law regarding concerns about dog fouling and professional dog walkers, previously raised by the Committee. The advice received indicated that this would be a matter for the Planning, Public Services and Licensing Committee to consider, that it would be costly to introduce and there were questions regarding how this would be policed. It was considered that this would not be worthwhile to pursue.

The Chair commented that her favoured course of action would be to educate on responsible dog ownership with a voluntary code of conduct being put in place, promoted both by FODW and the Council. This would not cost the Council or dog walkers and having spoken with some dog walkers, seemed to be welcomed.

It was suggested that the voluntary code could be launched at the Top Dog event and the Chair agreed to circulate the information she had obtained to the Group.

## **8. DOG EVENT**

The Chair advised that she had had difficulty in getting the trainer booked for the event although other participants were available. She commented that if she could not obtain this confirmation by next month either an alternative trainer would be approached or the event would need to be cancelled

## **9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS**

Stewart Campbell reported that the FODW website was being moved to another web host in the next day or so and asked that if any of the Group had problems accessing the site that they let him know.

Stewart commented that the Council had information on Duchess Woods on their website but that this was now out of date. It was agreed that the Area Governance Officer would pass on Stewart's details to the Website Manager as a simple discussion would resolve the issue.

## **10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DWLNRC would take place on 29<sup>th</sup> January in Lomond School. Due to a clash of day with the Luss Estates staff meeting it was agreed that future meetings of the Committee would now take place from 10.30am.

## Friends of Duchess Wood

### Friends of Duchess Wood report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019

1. Maintenance has continued over the autumn months. With the assistance of “Branching Out” Willow whips have been planted around the upper and lower ponds and “Kevin’s” seat, donated by Alan Lewis, has been installed at the upper pond view point. Additionally a Willow Arbor has been installed around the seat and a willow “wigwam” erected behind the Pony Field.
2. One of the benches donated from the James Street Garden redevelopment has been moved by persons unknown to a corner of the Wood where it seems to have been a focus for drinking round a campfire. There has also been an incident where a walker was injured by a boisterous dog.
3. Community liaison and representation. FODW continued its normal role of engagement with and representation of the local community. FODW spoke at the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee meeting in December on the subject of the future of the Wood and was very disappointed in the attitude taken by most of the councilors present. FODW continues to believe that the Council should be directly involved in the future management of the Wood. FODW has also liaised with local press (in particular wrt the future of the wood and the Persimmon development), community councils and other local organisations including using our bat detector in the Castle Wood area.
4. Grants. The bid for a “Woodlands in and around Towns” (WIAT) grant which was submitted earlier along with our woodland management plan has passed the first stage of approval by the Forestry Commission, and the preparatory grant has been paid to the Council. We are now assisting the Council in preparing an operational plan for the next stage of the grant application. Once mapping is complete the operational plan will be forwarded to FCS for approval.
5. FODW are investigating putting together a Community Event (probably in May or June) funded by a grant from Forestry Commission Scotland. FODW are investigating putting together a Community Event (probably in May or June) funded by a grant from Forestry Commission Scotland. Meanwhile we have received the £500 grant from Action Earth which covers the bulk of the cost of hard core for the new path to the upper pond and all the willow planted alongside the two new fences and the arbor round the bench at the upper pond and wigwam located to the north of the Pony Field.
6. There has been no further discussion with David Rennie of the Social Enterprise department of A&BC, but we will go back to David when we have developed a more detailed plan for Citizen Science events over the spring and summer.
7. Boundary issues and tree safety. We continue to have concerns over trees that overhang the premises of properties adjacent to the wood, and dead or diseased trees near the boundary and within the Wood. In addition a beech tree (close to the tree which shed a large branch over the summer) is badly damaged and a major stem seems to have developed a crack which could place it at risk of falling. It needs to be properly inspected. It is near to one of the childrens’ play spots within the Wood. A discussion on these issues

would be helpful.

8. We are still hoping to be able to trim and clear the pony field of grass and Community Payback may be able to assist. Community Payback are also looking into how best to repair the broken post and rail on the steps to the Thurgood Bridge.

9. Following an onsite meeting with ABC, Persimmon Homes have admitted disposing of waste in the grounds of the wood. Marina Curran-Colthart, A&B Biodiversity Officer has also visited the site. SEPA have been informed. FODW has lodged an enforcement complaint with the Council but, as yet, we are unsighted on the remediation plan (although we are aware Persimmon have started removing some of the dumped soil from the site).

Martin Grafton, Secretary, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019