





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