



# The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 18 (Spring 2016)

## FODW INFORMATION DAYS

### Saturday 16th & Sunday 17th April

#### Buglife

The Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) will be holding two information days on 16th and 17th April. Please put these in your diaries

FODW's 'gazebo' tent will be near the gate just above the Duchess Wood car park.

There you will find exhibitions of FODW activities and a special display by 'Buglife' on 16th. See details of Buglife tour opposite.

FODW volunteers will also be there to answer questions and to tell you more about the Wood and about FODW.

Leaflets on various topics about the Wood will be available.

**Everyone welcome. No charge. Bring friends and family. FODW will be at the car park gate to greet you.**



One of last year's most successful Duchess Wood events was the set of tours guided by Buglife Scotland.

Buglife are returning for a repeat performance. This time they will be focusing on pollinating insects of all sorts including, of course, bees.

**DATE** :Saturday 16th April 2016 **TIME** : Start 12 noon, lasting over an hour  
**PLACE** : Meet at the Duchess Wood car park  
**CLOTHING** : According to weather, but wear stout shoes, though walking will mostly be on paths. Suggest warm clothing if a cold day.

You can book a place by contacting Suzanne Burgess on 01786 447504 or email [suzanne.burgess@buglife.org.uk](mailto:suzanne.burgess@buglife.org.uk) but you will be welcome to turn up on the day.

### COULD YOU ASSIST ?

**FODW is looking for help** on aspects of its organisation. If you might contribute to any of the following, please contact either Stewart Campbell at [stewart.campbell@zen.co.uk](mailto:stewart.campbell@zen.co.uk) (01436 675923) or Alastair Macbeth at [al.macbeth@btinternet.com](mailto:al.macbeth@btinternet.com) (01436 676792)

**Census of Wood-users.** The number of people using Duchess Wood is important when seeking grants and other reasons. Our current information is

out of date. We are organising a first visitor survey **over the two days 16th and 17th April.**

Could you help us? There will be two counting stations: at the DW car park entrance and at the garages entrance to the Wood. Time slots will be two hours each day at:

**08.00 – 10.00**  
**10.00 – 12.00**  
**12.00 – 14.00**  
**14.00 – 16.00**  
**16.00 – 18.00**

Would you assist on one 2-hour slot?

#### Website assistance

Could you help us redesign our website in a form that is easier to maintain and update?

#### Tree health survey

Assist in assessing tree health.

#### Animal camera traps

Photographic expertise sought.

#### Assistant to Secretary

To help the FODW Secretary.

### We did the right thing

Walkers at the north-west corner of Duchess Wood may have noticed a slab of concrete lying in the stream – see photo below, right. This had been the foundation of the old wooden bridge. (See below left.). We had noted that the flow of water from the stream was undercutting this bank and threatening the bridge's foundation. So FODW took action before nature forced us to.

With the help of the Employability Team, FODW replaced the wooden bridge with a large culvert-bridge which is more robust, steers the water and is easier to maintain. Our aim is to replace some other wooden bridges in the same way .

The old wooden bridge



The new culvert-bridge.

Foundation of old bridge now collapsed into stream.





## Amphibians and reptiles



Pete Minting, Scottish Project Officer of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC) spoke at our last AGM about both amphibians and reptiles in Scotland and in our area.

This is a brief summary of his talk and steps that FODW is taking.

In and around Helensburgh you may encounter our four amphibians : the common frog, the common toad, the palmate newt and the smooth newt – and one reptile, the common lizard. This lizard is also referred to as the viviparous lizard, which means it gives birth to live young, as distinct from laying eggs.

It is also possible that slow-worms and great crested newts are present but there have been no records. There may be adders on the moors to the north of the town and leatherback turtles may follow jellyfish into the Clyde. Further afield in Scotland, natterjack toads may be encountered, and grass snakes occasionally turn up in the Borders. There are also small local populations of alpine newts in Edinburgh and sand lizards on Coll. FODW members who want to see what can be achieved in encouraging amphibians and reptiles can visit Gartcosh LNR in North Lanarkshire which has a thriving population of great crested newts and an interesting array of ponds and pond life.

This spring, FODW hopes to do some systematic surveying of amphibians and reptiles in the Wood. With permission of the Council, we are creating two ponds as a trial to see if they can be managed. One pond is in the area between the burn behind Kathleen Park and the Lomond Rugby Pitch. The other is in a wet area between the west boundary and the west path. We hope these will encourage a population of frogs, toads and newts; other pond life such as dragonflies, damselflies and small fish; and benefit the birds and bats in the Wood. We'll also try to clear growth from some of the drystone dykes in sunnier locations to see if this will encourage the lizard population. ***If anyone is interested in helping in this work, please get in touch.***

### Dog control

This may be a good time to remind people that, although dogs (and horses) are permitted in the Wood, the conditions are laid down by law and by the Scottish Countryside Access Code. Basically these mean that dog owners (or walkers of dogs) must ensure that the dogs are under control. The three main purposes of a Local Nature Reserve are biodiversity, research/education and recreation for ***people***. Dog owners and dog walkers must respect those. We have prepared a poster reminding dog owners of their duties.

### FODW represents the community

The Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) was set up as a voluntary charity to safeguard the benefits of the Wood for the community and to work with other organisations to do so. It has places on the Council's Duchess Wood LNR Committee to represent the community. This year, FODW provided a report for the Helensburgh Community Council, at the invitation of its convener, about the community role of FODW. Our report may be seen on the FODW website. [www.duchesswood.org.uk](http://www.duchesswood.org.uk)

### Ardencaple site proposed new housing development

There is a proposal to build 85 houses at the Ardencaple site – the old Dobbies Garden Centre land plus the field to the north of it. This is beside Duchess Wood.

FODW will focus on a wildlife corridor to the north of the site to link Duchess Wood to Glenoran Wood and access from the site to the Wood. FODW will not be involved in the housing controversies.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 5-year Management Plan

The Friends of Duchess Wood (assisted by Lower Clyde Greenspace) have been drafting the next five-year Management Plan for Duchess Wood. It will cover the period 2016-21. It will go to the next meeting of the Council's Duchess Wood Committee before being finalised by the Council. Main points will be reported in the FODW autumn newsletter.

### External grants

FODW and Lower Clyde Greenspace have prepared an application for funding under the Woodlands In and Around Towns scheme. It is hoped to report the outcome in the autumn newsletter.

### Summer controlled fires

Fires are not allowed in Duchess Wood unless authorised. This summer FODW will carry out controlled burning of brash following its winter undergrowth cutting.



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## YOUR VIEWS

As a result of updates to the website, the FODW email address is now [fodwg84@gmail.com](mailto:fodwg84@gmail.com). The website shows the contact email as [enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk), and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website. [www.duchesswood.org.uk](http://www.duchesswood.org.uk)

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies, especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the management of the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Margaret Paul, Rachel Bailey, Kevin Johnson, David Lewin, Richard Horrell.