

Friends of Duchess Wood

Friends of Duchess Wood report to Duchess Wood LNR Committee 29th 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 strim 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, 21st January 2019