

Duchess Wood Management Agreement Update

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Duchess Wood is owned by Luss Estates Company, and is managed via a Management Agreement with Argyll and Bute Council. This Management Agreement will expire in August 2020.
- 1.2 A paper was submitted to Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 20th December 2018 requesting consideration of options relating to the future management arrangements of the site, subsequent to the expiry of the existing management agreement and to agree next steps.
- 1.3 Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee agreed the following:
1. That the management agreement will not be renewed in 2020 and that officers work with the Friends of Duchess Wood to explore options (b) and (d) as outlined in the report; and
 2. If there is no agreement then the wood will revert back to the landowner and that officers provide clarity on any financial implications to the Council.
- 1.4 Option (b) is: a third party enters into a Management Agreement with Luss Estates Company. Option (d) is: a third party purchases the land from Luss Estates.
- 1.5 Following the decision of the Area Committee it is proposed to provide reasonable levels of officer support to explore the options until 1st July 2019.
- 1.6 It is the purpose of this report to provide an update on the future arrangements for the site.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that members note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 It is recommended that members agree actions to be taken as outlined in paragraph 5.5 – 5.8

- 2.3 It is recommended that Member's agree that the Committee will take an active role in publicising the opportunity, engaging with interested parties and supporting actions outlined in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8

Duchess Wood Management Agreement Update

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Duchess Wood is owned by Luss Estates Company, and is managed via a Management Agreement with Argyll and Bute Council. This Management Agreement will expire in August 2020.
- 3.2 A paper was submitted to Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 20th December 2018 requesting consideration of options relating to the future management arrangements of the site and Argyll and Bute Council's role within this, subsequent to the expiry of the existing management agreement between Luss Estates and Argyll & Bute Council and agree next steps.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that Member's note the contents of this report.
- 4.2 It is recommended that Member's agree actions to be taken as outlined in paragraph 5.5 – 5.8
- 4.3 It is recommended that Member's agree that the Committee will take an active role in publicising the opportunity, engaging with interested parties and supporting actions outlined in paragraphs 5.5 – 5.8

5.0 DETAIL

- 5.1 Duchess Wood is owned by Luss Estates Company and is currently managed via a Management Agreement with Argyll and Bute Council. The Management Agreement is due to expire in August 2020.
- 5.2 A paper was submitted to Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee on 20th December 2018 requesting consideration of options relating to the future management arrangements of the site, subsequent to the expiry of the existing management agreement and to agree next steps.
- 5.3 A number of options were provided to the Committee for consideration, these included:

- a) Renewal and refresh of the Management Agreement as per current arrangements.
- b) A third party enters into a Management Agreement with Luss Estates Company.
- c) The area reverts back to the responsible management of the owner, Luss Estates Company.
- d) A third party purchases the land from Luss Estates.

5.4 Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee agreed the following:

- 1. That the management agreement will not be renewed in 2020 and that Officers work with the Friends of Duchess Wood to explore options (b) and (d) as outlined in the report; and
- 2. If there is no agreement then the wood will revert back to the landowner and that officers provide clarity on any financial implications to the Council.

5.5 On the basis of this decision, it is proposed that the following actions are implemented to explore options (b) and (d):

- 1. A drop-in session is held and facilitated by Argyll and Bute Officers at the Helensburgh and Lomond Civic Centre at a date to be agreed by the Management Committee. This session will allow interested parties to meet with members of the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Management Committee and discuss any issues, concerns or opportunities arising.
- 2. A written point of contact is provided for interested parties wishing to participate.
- 3. The event is publicised as appropriate e.g. through Argyll & Bute Council social media and web presence.
- 4. Follow-up meetings with interested third parties will be supported by Argyll and Bute Officers and the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Management Committee.
- 5. A commitment is made by the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee that its members will take an active role in engaging with interested parties and supporting the steps outlined in para 5.5.

5.6 Reasonable levels of Officer support to explore options (b) and (d) will be available until 1st July 2019. If no suitable third party has been identified by this date, it will be considered that options (b) and (d) are not viable at this time and no further officer support is required in relation to this.

5.7 Part 2 of Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee's decision to clarify any financial implications to the Council of the expiration of the existing Management Agreement will be progressed throughout this period of time.

5.8 Progress will be reported to Elected Member's as appropriate, detailing the

steps taken to discharge the decision of 20th December 2018 and the outcome of this.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Duchess Wood is owned by Luss Estates Company and is currently managed via a Management Agreement with Argyll & Bute Council. This agreement will expire in August 2020. Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee of 20th December 2018 agreed the existing management agreement would not be renewed and Officer support would be provided to explore third party options. This paper seeks to outline the steps that will be taken to implement the decision of the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|
| 7.1 | Policy | Duchess Wood is designated as a Local Nature Reserve in the Local Development Plan. |
| 7.2 | Financial | None arising from the report. |
| 7.3 | Legal | None |
| 7.4 | HR | None |
| 7.5 | Equalities/ Fairer Scotland Duty | No equal opportunities implications. |
| 7.6 | Risk | None at present. |
| 7.7 | Customer Service | Working with local people. |

**Pippa Milne Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure
Policy Lead, Sustainable Economic Growth, Councillor Aileen Morton**

January 2019

For further information contact: Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer,
Transformation Projects & Regeneration Team Tel: 01436 658 817