

**MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in the
LOMOND SCHOOL, HELENSBURGH
on TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 2019**

Present: Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

Attending: Sean McCay, Land Agent, Luss Estates
Martin Grafton, Chair, Friends of Duchess Woods
Stewart Campbell, Friends of Duchess Woods
Andy Galloway, Helensburgh Advertiser
David McGaughey, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Stephanie Thomas, Modern Apprentice, Argyll & Bute Council
Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Mark Haining, Assistant Team Leader, Argyll & Bute Council
Stuart McLean, Area Committee Manager, Argyll & Bute Council

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Ailsa Cunningham, Technical Officer, Argyll & Bute Council
Johann Urquhart, Principal Teacher of Lomond School
Neil Shearer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

2. MINUTE OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2019

The Minute of the previous meeting held on 29 January 2019 was approved as a correct record.

3. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Mark Haining reported that any maintenance work that was required would be added to the winter schedule.

Martin Grafton flagged the boundary concerns previously identified by Friends of Duchess Woods, specifically trees and branches which have the potential to cause damage to properties, specifically at the cricket club. Martin also highlighted growth of Japanese Knotweed and pot holes at the Kathleen Park entrance to the Woods.

Decision

Mark Haining agreed to highlight the concerns raised by Martin Grafton to Ailsa Cunningham.

4. BIG DAY OUT

Stephanie Thomas reported that she was currently organising an event that would celebrate young people. It was anticipated that the event would be held at the end of the summer school holidays and would be based at the Rugby Club and either the Duchess Wood and/or Hermitage Park.

Stephanie hoped that one of the associated events, 'Colour Run', would be held in the Duchess Woods and would last around 30 minutes. The 'Colour Run' would involve participants running through the Woods while being hit with powdered paint. The paint itself was described as non-toxic and easily washed away with water.

Some concerns were raised regarding members of the public being accidentally hit with the powdered paint. Stephanie reassured members that the event would have appropriate stewarding, the participants would be easily identifiable and the area would be clearly signposted and demarcated.

Decision

To agree, in principle, to support the event being held in the Duchess Wood subject to receipt of the approved event application form and reassurances from the Council's Biodiversity Officer that there wouldn't be any environmental damage as a consequence.

(Ref: Verbal Update by Stephanie Thomas, Modern Apprentice: Youth Work (Helensburgh & Lomond))

5. FIRE SAFETY

Councillor Douglas reported that concerns had been raised regarding fires being lit within the Duchess Wood. Stuart Campbell added that there had been instances of disposable BBQs damaging picnic tables.

David McCaughey reported that in an ideal world fires would not be permitted within heavily wooded areas, but to police this would be impossible. David suggested that signs be installed at the entrances to the Wood highlighting that fires are not permitted and that batters, strategically placed within the woods, could help mitigate the risk associated with fires.

Decision

Friends of Duchess Woods to discuss the wording of the signs and the possibly of batters being placed within the Wood at the next formal Committee meeting.

(Ref: Verbal presentation by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service)

6. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOODS ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which provided an update from Friends of Duchess Wood on their activities since the last meeting took place.

Martin Grafton highlighted that ongoing maintenance had been undermined by poor weather and that boundary issues and tree safety remain a major concern. Damage to fences, marker posts and information boards on the evenings of the 7th and 8th of April had been reported to Police Scotland. There was also concerns raised regarding the growing number of commercial dog walkers using the woods and that a code of conduct may help regulate this practise.

Martin advised that the no resolution had been reached with Persimmon Homes other than they had admitted to disposing of waste in the grounds of the Wood and that polystyrene waste continues to be a pollutant.

Decision

1. The Committee agreed to endorse the contents of the submitted report and to invite Police Scotland to the next meeting to discuss the acts of vandalism that had been reported.
2. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, to explore other responsible dog walking initiatives and to report back to a future meeting.

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

7. UPDATE ON WIAT FUNDING

Mhairi Gardiner, Development Officer gave a brief verbal update regarding two funding applications that had been submitted to the Forestry Commission, Sustainable Management of Forestry Grant which would be used for routine maintenance. A further grant application, Woodland Improvement, would be submitted in due course. If awarded The Woodland Improvement Grant would be used for capital items, such as the tree safety survey. Mhairi confirmed that both funding streams would involve retrospective payments.

Decision

1. To establish the term of the Sustainable Management of Forestry Grant.
2. That the outcome from the applications be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

8. GENERAL DISCUSSION: INFORMATION DROP-IN EVENT

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on the Drop in Event that was held on 25 April 2019. The Chair advised the event was well attended, with local residents raising concerns around the future of the Duchess Wood and boundary issues. However, no one person or organisation seemed to be interested in taking on management responsibilities of the Wood.

Martin Grafton, while recognising the worth of the event, reported that it had reinforced the fact that nobody was willing to take on the management responsibilities.

Decision

1. The Committee noted that following the next meeting of the Friends of Duchess Wood Committee that they would meet with Luss Estates to discuss next steps.
2. Luss Estates agreed to explore whether it would be possible to retain the Local Nature Reserves status once the Wood is returned to them.

9. UPDATE ON TOP DOG EVENT

The Chair provided the Committee with an update on the Top Dog Event that was held on 31 March 2019.

Decision

That consideration be given to inviting/encouraging 'working dogs' to attend the next Top Dog Event.

10. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Sean McCay advised that Doune Ponds and Murray Estates had made themselves available should the Friends of Duchess Wood wish to meet to discuss future working arrangements. Stewart Campbell advised that the Friends of Duchess Wood would contact Sean after the next formal Committee meeting to discuss.

Sean McCay advised that a pre-school provider had contacted him to discuss the possibility of using the Woods for educational purposes. Stewart Campbell advised that other groups had been accessing the woods for similar purposes, but this had been irregular. Stewart suggested that if regular access was sought they may wish to consider submitting an application.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the DWLNRC would take place on 20th August 2019 at 10.30am within either the Lomond School or Helensburgh & Lomond Civic Centre.