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MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in the LOMOND SCHOOL, HELENSBURGH on TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Lorna Douglas (Chair)

Johanna Urquhart, Principal, Lomond School
Keith Robertson, Estate Manager, Lomond School
Sean McCay, Land Agent, Luss Estates
Stewart Campbell, Friends of Duchess Wood
Martin Grafton, Friends of Duchess Wood
Andy Galloway, Helensburgh Advertiser
Larry Malone, Amenity Supervisor, Argyll & Bute Council
Steven Brookfield, Assistant Team Leader, Argyll & Bute Council
Shona Barton, Committee Manager, Argyll & Bute Council

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

2. MINUTES

(a) **Minute of the Previous Meeting of the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee Held on Tuesday, 20 August 2019**

The Minute of the previous meeting of Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee held on Tuesday, 20th August 2019 was approved as a correct record subject to the correction of some typographical errors.

3. DISCUSSION ON CURRENT CLOSURE OF THE WOOD

(a) **Duchess Woods Report - Response from Partners**

The Committee considered correspondence which had been circulated in relation to the current closure of the wood.

The Chair advised that members of the Committee had met to discuss the report which had been produced by the tree consultants and that the concerns raised by partners were communicated to the Executive Director shortly thereafter. The importance of ensuring that the points raised by partners were taken into account when work begins in the wood was highlighted.

The Committee heard from Mr Brookfield and Mr Malone who advised that they had been tasked by senior management to ensure that the necessary works are carried out which would enable the wood to be reopened at the earliest opportunity. They advised that following an

assessment which was undertaken with a Health and Safety officer, there were a number of trees identified which would require urgent attention prior to the wood being declared safe to open. The Committee noted that it was the intention for the initial tree work to be undertaken by the Council with the remaining work identified in the consultant report being carried out by a contractor. Once the initial tree works have been completed, the Council will also work to repair fencing and bridges and carry out repairs to the car park and access road. It is anticipated that this initial work will be completed by the end of January 2020, subject to favourable weather conditions and availability of manpower.

Decision

The Committee noted the positive update from officers and asked that all partners be kept informed as to when work was scheduled to be undertaken.

(Reference: Letter from Chair to Executive Director with responsibility for Development & Infrastructure and response to same)

4. ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered a report which had been tabled and provided detail in relation to the upcoming works to be carried out in the wood.

Decision

The Committee noted the detail of the update and asked for a further update to be provided at the next meeting.

(Reference: Written report by Assistant Team Leader, tabled)

5. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOODS ACTIVITY UPDATE

Martin Grafton advised that there was little to report in terms of activity due to the ongoing closure of the wood. It was noted that the Friends of Duchess Wood had held their AGM on 18th November 2019 and that there had been no change to the Committee and office bearer positions.

It was noted that once the wood had reopened that the Friends would revert back to their monthly maintenance regime. It was also highlighted that a number of houses in the new Persimmon development had been built very close to the wood and there could be future issues with overhanging tree branches.

The Committee also noted that the Friends of Duchess Wood were still in contact with the Branching Out project and would advise them when the wood was open again.

Decision

The Committee noted the update provided.

6. UPDATE ON WIAT FUNDING

The committee gave consideration to a report submitted by the Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on the Woodlands In and Around Town (WIAT) funding.

The Chair advised that Mhairi Gardiner who had led on the application has now left the Council and the Committee noted their thanks to Mhairi for all the work that she carried out in relation to the application. It was also noted that there would be no further involvement by the Council in future applications and these would be taken forward by Luss Estates.

Decision

The Committee agreed to:

- a) the withdrawal of the Woodlands In and Around Town – Sustainable Management of Forests application; and
- b) Note the award of £11,100 if Woodland Improvement Grant funding and the contents of the report.

(Reference: Report submitted by Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Infrastructure)

7. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Stewart Campbell advised that the Friends and Luss Estates were still looking at options for their future working agreement and Sean McCay confirmed that they were looking at models which were in operation with the Doune Estate agreement being mentioned.

Discussion took place around the Local Nature Reserve status of the Duchess Wood and could this continue once the management agreement comes to an end in summer 2020.

Stewart Campbell agreed to investigate the LNR status requirements with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Chair agreed to investigate options via the Council.

Decision

The Committee agreed that a report would come to the next meeting to provide clarification on the LNR status going forward.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee agreed the following dates for future meetings:-

Tuesday 25th February 2019 at 10.30 a.m. in Lomond School

Tuesday 9th June 2019 at 10.30 a.m. in Lomond School.

