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MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOODS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in BRAEHOLM RSR, on MONDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2012

Present: Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)
Stewart Campbell – Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood
Alastair MacBeth – Secretary, Friends of Duchess Wood
Charlie Cairns – Area Manager, Lower Clyde Greenspace
Simon Mills – Head Teacher, Lomond School
David Chandler – Quality Improvement Officer, Argyll and Bute Council
Stuart McCracken – Service Development Officer Argyll and Bute Council
Iain Wilkinson – Rural Business Manager, Luss Estates
Audrey Martin – Development Projects & Renewables Manager, Argyll and Bute Council
Belinda Ruthven – Area Governance Assistant, Argyll and Bute Council

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were intimated.

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Aileen Morton welcomed everyone to the meeting and general introductions were made. Councillor Morton acknowledged the great contribution made to the Committee by the former Convener, Councillor Al Reay

3. MINUTE OF MEETING 6 AUGUST 2012

Minute:

The Minute of Meeting 6 August was agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising not on Agenda:

Item 4b) The meeting between Friends of Duchess Wood, Charlie Cairns and Audrey Martin has not taken place yet but dates have now been proposed and this meeting should take place shortly.

4. MANAGEMENT PLAN

Charlie Cairns provided a brief update on the presentation of the Management Plan to the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee. There had been some minor concerns over the level of financial commitment required on the part of the Council, however assurances were provided that no additional financial commitment was expected as a result of the new Plan. The Local Area Committee unanimously approved the Management Plan, and noted their appreciation of the work carried out by the late Councillor Al Reay. Thanks were also given to Stewart Campbell as main author of the Management Plan.

Copies of the Plan were distributed.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Audrey Martin provided the Group with a brief history of the DWLNRC and how it may move forward. She advised that the Terms of Reference for the Committee has been agreed in April 2008 but was now in need of updating.

There followed a brief discussion of what this should now incorporate and feedback from the Group was requested in advance of the next meeting. Councillor Morton will provide a first draft of the Terms of Reference to go out with the minute to all Committee members.

Action: Belinda Ruthven/Aileen Morton/All Committee members

It was agreed that the current membership of the Committee is as follows:
Argyll & Bute Officers and Admin Support, plus an elected member as Convener
Lower Clyde Greenspace
Luss Estates
Friends of Duchess Woods – 2 members
Lomond School

It was agreed that further representation from Health should be sought for core membership of the Committee, and possibly another member to represent Youth.

The Group was in agreement that a circulation list will be created with the following represented in order that they might attend where relevant.

These included:-

Scottish Natural Heritage
Helensburgh Community Council
Forestry Commission
Paths For All Partnership
Relevant Council Officers such as Environmental Warden
Helensburgh Police Office
Helensburgh Cricket and Rugby Football Club
Helensburgh And District Access Trust

Any other suggested additions the core membership of the Committee or the circulation list to be brought to the next meeting or notified to Councillor Morton in the meantime.

Action: All Committee members

6. EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL

David Chandler gave a brief summary of his current remit, which covers all schools in Argyll and Bute who incorporate forest and rural skills within their curriculum. David advised that the sharing of information within the Argyll and Bute area was unsatisfactory at present as there are some excellent examples of outdoor education work done by schools within Argyll & Bute, but this not currently being shared with schools in the

Helensburgh & Lomond area. David stated that there was much potential here to raise awareness. The suggestion was made that an Awareness Sharing Day could be held and David agreed to take this to the next Head Teachers' meeting to highlight.

Simon Mills offered his assistance with a venue for this potential event and he will liaise with David on this and other matters such as potential funding, dates etc. Simon informed that such an event was relative to the Curriculum for Excellence and that it would build good links within the local community. It was agreed that as an initial event, invitations would be sent to schools at all levels – pre-school, primary and secondary. Audrey Martin also suggested that Neil Urquhart from Stramash may be able to provide an overview of the potential of this event and David agreed to take this forward.

March was agreed as probably the most suitable date for the event to be held, and Charlie Cairns confirmed that £1,500 could potentially be available to allow for the updating of educational resources relating to the Wood. Alastair MacBeth offered his assistance in the provision of materials available from FODW.

Action: David Chandler, Simon Mills, Charlie Cairns, Alastair Macbeth

7. REQUEST FOR USE OF THE WOOD

Alastair MacBeth notified of a request he had received from the Royal Navy to hold an Inter-Services Cross Country event in the Duchess Wood and outlined the details of the application. Although the event appeared to be thoroughly thought out and well organised, there were still some concerns around the liability insurance implications and where the responsibility for this would lie.

The Committee agreed in principle that the event could go ahead, however this would be subject to the appropriate checks being made with regards to liability and insurance cover. Alastair agreed to forward the contact details to Belinda who would refer the matter to the relevant officer for advice and information.

Action: Belinda Ruthven/Alastair Macbeth

8. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

Trees requiring action to be taken: Stuart McCracken advised that trees that were identified in the Duchess Park area as requiring attention will be addressed after mid-November .

Japanese knotweed: spraying had been partially successful although more training is required to identify and focus on specific areas and also to look at missed areas. Rhu Road Higher has been sprayed and will be revisited in the spring to ascertain whether this has been successfully treated. The Friends of Duchess Wood have previously provided information highlighting all areas of concern and Stuart will ensure further training is given to staff over the winter.

A brief report on budget, expenditure and approximate time spent on

maintenance of the Wood will come to the April meeting of the Committee. Alastair Macbeth wished to note thanks to Stuart and his team for the work carried out recently at the Thurgood Bridge, and Stuart confirmed that the damaged fence railing would be repaired.

Action: Stuart McCracken

Stewart Campbell spoke about bridge maintenance and highlighted some areas requiring repairs. Charlie had spoken briefly to Danny Harkin around costs and agreed to go back to Danny for costing quotations and options and funding opportunities will be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Charlie Cairns

9. REPORT FROM FODW

Stewart Campbell provided a short briefing on the previously circulated Friends of Duchess Wood report. He advised that the production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' had proved particularly successful despite the inclement weather and it was hoped that a repeat event of this type would be held again in the future.

The promotion of events on the Council website was discussed and the possibility of this will be further explored.

Pony Field: A draft proposal for the development of the Pony Field site, which is included in the LNR and lies to the south of the main woodland, was distributed and discussed. Stewart Campbell advised that the pond idea had now been discounted due to the maintenance costs involved. Following consideration of this proposal, during which some concerns were raised, it was agreed to bring the matter back to the next meeting with the Friends of Duchess Wood agreeing to present the proposal with reference to the Management Plan.

The Committee agreed that the request to plant some 10 – 20 fruiting trees on the periphery of the area should go ahead as these would have negligible impact.

Audrey Martin reminded the Committee that all proposals to substantially alter the Wood would require elements such as funding, liability and maintenance issues to be considered by the Council.

10. FINANCE/DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING PLAN

Charlie Cairns distributed copies of a draft action plan which provided a framework of actions to be incorporated within the Management Plan. He advised that the previous Management Plan had not contained an action plan as it had been compiled as a Woodland Grant application. Charlie emphasised that the action plan is needed to ensure the co-ordination of effort as well as provide access to funding.

Charlie advised the group of the opportunities that could be forthcoming and asked for some feedback on the draft. Charlie was keen to stress that this was a work in progress and not the finished article. Following discussion it became clear that more dialogue would be required in advance of the next meeting and he welcomed any suggestions prior to

this.

It was agreed that Charlie, Stewart Campbell, Alastair Macbeth, Morevain Martin and Councillor Morton would meet prior to the end of November to discuss how best to progress the Action Plan. A progress report on this be brought back to next meeting for further discussion.

Action: Charlie Cairns/Stewart Campbell/Alastair Macbeth/Aileen Morton

11. AOCB

Alastair MacBeth circulated a list of members and contact details which required updating. He will forward an electronic copy of this to Belinda for updating. All Committee members agreed that this information will be used to update council website prior to publishing of minute.

Action: Alastair Macbeth/Belinda Ruthven

12. DATES FOR 2013

A list of possible dates had been previously circulated and the group provisionally agreed the following dates:-

Friday 25 January 2013
Monday 29 April 2013
Monday 12 August 2013
Friday 8 November 2013

