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MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in the BRAEHOLM RSR, 31 EAST MONTROSE STREET HELENSBURGH,G84 7HR on MONDAY, 13 MAY 2013

Present: Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

Stuart McCracken – Argyll and Bute Council
Charlie Cairns – Lower Clyde Green Space
Stewart Campbell – Chair, Friends of Duchess Wood
Alastair MacBeth – Secretary, Friends of Duchess Wood
Morevain Martin – Argyll Voluntary Action
David Chandler – Argyll and Bute Council
Simon Mills – Head Teacher, Lomond School
Morag Bain – Youth Representative
David Graham – The Conservation Volunteers
Belinda Ruthven – Argyll and Bute Council

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were intimated from Iain Wilkinson - Luss Estates

2. MINUTE

The minute of meeting 25 January was approved as a correct record.

3. THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

The Committee was provided with an informative presentation by David Graham, Healthy Communities Manager, The Conservation Volunteers, on the Green Gym programme. The various types of models and benefits of the scheme were outlined. These included improved mental and physical health, social inclusion and collaboration between health and environment. The Committee were in general agreement that Duchess Wood would provide an ideal location for the establishment of this kind of programme and that it offered the potential to progress some of the agreed actions in the management plan.

David advised that recent surveys had indicated that approximately 66% of their volunteers were first timers and that the retention rate was also high. There was also potential for them to attain awards.

Various options for financing the scheme were discussed and these will be further explored. David Chandler agreed to ensure that the matter was discussed at the forthcoming education meeting with a view to taking this forward

Action: David Chandler/David Graham/Funding Sub Group

4. MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Committee was updated by Stuart McCracken, Argyll and Bute, that the spraying of Knotweed is due to commence in the next three or four weeks in the four previously identified areas and he advised that training sessions have been carried out over the winter.

Tree work adjacent to the Strathclyde Court garage area has now been contracted out due to the presence of asbestos.

Stuart advised that no final budget figures were currently available due to outstanding works on the culverts but gave assurances that once these were received, they would come to the next meeting. In the event that they are available prior to this, they will be emailed out to the Committee.

The Committee noted the efforts of the Employability team with thanks.

5. EDUCATION UPDATE

Councillor Morton advised that she had contacted Niall Urquhart, Stramash regarding the outdoor nursery and had received a favourable response. Mr Urquhart welcomed the opportunity to meet with the Committee, initially on site in the wood and subsequently to a meeting. Councillor Morton informed that no infrastructure would be required for this and little in the way of materials.

Several members indicated that they would be happy to meet with Niall on site in the first instance and a mutually convenient date for this will be arranged.

Action – Belinda Ruthven

David Chandler advised that Hermitage Academy was currently exploring involvement in Rural Qualifications and enquired as to the feasibility of the placement of poly tunnels in the wood, however, concerns were raised due to issues around security and vandalism.

There had not been much progress on the proposed event for local schools and it is anticipated that this will now be more likely to start at the commencement of the next term. Simon Mills advised the Committee that all facilities are available and that the focus will now be on the format of the event. David and Simon agreed to email suggested dates to Belinda Ruthven, in order that a planning meeting can be arranged.

Action – David Chandler/Simon Mills

6. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - REVISED

The Committee discussed and noted the Implementation Plan and any amendments will be discussed further at the meeting of the sub group on May 21st.

Stuart McCracken agreed to investigate signage options for Rhu Road Higher to Duchess Wood Car Park and report back with his findings.

Action; Stuart McCracken/Funding Sub Group

7. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT

The Committee noted the contents of the submitted report. Discussion was had around the proposed storage facility and the requirement if any, for planning permission. Stuart McCracken will liaise with the Planning Officers for clarification on this.

Action: Stuart McCracken.

8. WINTER FESTIVAL

The Committee was advised that the Helensburgh Winter Festival would take place from Friday 22nd November until Sunday 1st December and that this would be a good opportunity to raise the profile of the Duchess Wood. Various suggestions were forthcoming as to how the Committee might support this event and Councillor Morton suggested that it might be beneficial for some volunteers to attend the next meeting of the Winter Festival committee. Details of the meeting will be emailed once dates are confirmed,

Action: Councillor A Morton

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE - ROUTINE MAINTENANCE APPENDIX

The Committee discussed and noted the Terms of Reference .

10. COUNCIL WEBSITE

A link from the Argyll and Bute Council website has now been provided and any suggestions for incorporation into this were welcomed. It was also agreed that roles rather than individual names should appear on the website

Action: Councillor A Morton

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 12 August 2013 at 2.30pm Braeholm RSR.

