

**MINUTES of MEETING of DUCHESS WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE COMMITTEE held in  
the BRAEHOLM, 31 E MONTROSE STREET, HELENSBURGH  
on FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2013**

**Present:** Councillor Aileen Morton (Chair)

**Attending:** Arlene Cullum, Social Enterprise Officer  
Catriona Scriven, Scottish Natural Heritage  
Niall Urquhart, Stramash  
Morag Head, Stramash  
Stewart Campbell, Friends of Duchess Woods  
Alastair Macbeth, Friends of Duchess Woods  
Morag Bain, Cornerstone Jigsaw  
Morevain Martin, Argyll Voluntary Action

**1. APOLOGIES**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated from:-

Stuart McCracken  
Alison MacKenzie  
Iain Wilkinson  
Dominic Swann  
Charles Reppke  
Robert Cowper  
Charlie Cairns  
Simon Mills  
David Chandler

The Chair noted that Mr Chandler was ill in hospital. The Committee wished Mr Chandler a speedy recovery.

**2. MINUTE**

The minute of the previous meeting which was held on 12 August 2013, was approved as a true record subject to the following amendments:-

Item 2 and Item 4

Removal of Strathclyde Court.

**3. JOHN MUIR EVENT**

The Committee heard a short presentation by Catriona Scriven of Scottish Natural Heritage outlining the objectives of the John Muir Festival and the events proposed in the programme. Ms Scriven sought feedback from the committee in terms of what the organisation could do to support the initiative and assist in the encouragement of community participation and engagement with the new route. She outlined the differences between

the John Muir Festival and John Muir Events.

Discussion ensued around the possibility of hosting events around the themes of Bug Life; Butterfly Conservation Trust and the Walking Theatre Company, with Morevainn Martin agreeing to discuss the possibility of a play surrounding the environment at Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve and/or the life of John Muir with the Walking Theatre Company.

The Chair asked whether funding would be available from Scottish Natural Heritage to support the events being discussed. Catriona Scriven confirmed that funding would be available. She explained the process for obtaining both a Community Action Grant, between £1,000 and £20,000, which could be applied for at any time and the in house "John Muir Fund" for projects under £1,000. Ms Scriven undertook to forward the advice note on both funding options.

The Chair agreed to circulate a list of all committee members email addresses to all members.

#### **Decision:**

The group identified three possible events; Bug Life, which may run during the week to incorporate the local schools, the Duchess Wood Flower Walk, which had already been in process but would be adapted to correspond with the John Muir Way Event and a Walking Theatre production. It was agreed that more exploratory discussion would take place at the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **4. OUTDOOR NURSERY PROPOSAL**

The Committee heard a short update from Niall Urquhart, Stramash which provided an update in regards to the current position of the outdoor nursery. He explained that Luss Estates were happy in principal to grant a ten year lease. He explained that it was necessary to have a ten year update due to funding issues. He further advised that the Care Inspectorate had agreed the proposal in principal but that a formal application required to be lodged, and that there was a requirement to tread carefully in terms of Planning due to the car parking designations. He advised that Planning would welcome an application for Change of Use. Discussion relating to the use of containers which could be buried to tie in with the surroundings was had with it being established that for each child who attended the nursery, 2.35 square metres of indoor space was required.

Alastair Macbeth advised the group of his visit to Pollock Park. He explained that he visited on a wet day and that the children were covered in mud but very happy. He spoke of how they had overcome the issues faced with this proposal, by meeting parents at the local church hall and taking the children in a minibus to the nursery rather than having a designated car park and how each day they moved site which was made easier by the use of awnings and "pop-up potties". He advised that his initial reservations had been removed by his visit.

## **Decision:**

The Committee agreed:-

1. That the proposal be progressed without the requirement, for the Committee to decide on issues, but that a paper be provided to the February meeting of the group providing an update;
2. that the Chair would speak with the Council's Planning Department regarding the car park issues and Neil Urquhart would contact the Rugby Club regarding the use of their carpark; and
3. that notices be put up explaining the thought process and explaining that the proposal was supported by both the Local Nature Reserve and the Friends of Duchess Woods.

## **5. MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

### **(a) UPDATE ON GENERAL MAINTENANCE**

The Committee considered a report by Argyll and Bute Council's Service Development Officer outlining the works which had been carried out to date. The Chair confirmed that the Japanese Knotweed treatment had stopped for the winter and would resume in May or June 2014. She advised that this was an on-going issue. Stewart Campbell advised that in his experience the treatment that had taken place was not wide spread enough in at least 2 of the 5 sites.

Alastair Macbeth gave an update with regards to the works which Friends of Duchess Woods had agreed to do. He advised of the plan to carry out the tree work specifically at the back of Duchess Park over the winter and fix the fencing at various points, he confirmed that this would be completed by the year end. Mr Macbeth addressed the issue that the trees overhanging the garages at Strathclyde Court had not yet been dealt with.

Other maintenance issues were identified with the small bridge on the West side of the pony field still a significant maintenance priority.

## **Decision:**

The Committee agreed:-

1. That the Chair, Councillor Morton would email Stuart McCracken and suggest partnership working as a starting point to addressing some of the issues; and
2. that a walk round of the wood to be scheduled between Stuart McCracken and Friends of Duchess Woods.

### **(b) MAINTENANCE FUNDING**

The Committee considered a report by Argyll and Bute Council's

Service Development Officer outlining a fund which had been created to allow for maintenance required on an exceptional basis. It outlined works carried out over the last year together with planned future works.

The report advised that a recording system had been put in place for this fund which would enable both the Council and the Committee to see what is available and what had been spent. This system would generate an annual printed report which would be provided to the Committee at the meeting closest to the end of the financial year, with verbal updates provided on a quarterly basis if required.

Discussion ensued surrounding the culvert and the all-abilities path with it being agreed that the maintenance of both should be paid for by the Council.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed:-

1. To note the report; and
2. that a quarterly funding update would be sufficient.

**(c) RESPONSE FROM NETWORK RAIL REGARDING FENCING**

The Chair, Councillor Morton advised the group in regards to numerous emails which had been sent to Network Rail in relation to concerns over fencing within the local area. Councillor Morton confirmed that she had received a response from the Chief Executive of Network Rail in regards to the concerns. The Committee considered the response and the pictures provided to illustrate that the only repair required was where a panel of Rylock fencing appeared to have been trampled into the vegetation and as such had left a gap of 1.92m. Ms Brown confirmed that this would be rectified within the week.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed:

1. to note the response; and
2. to seek clarification on the best person to contact at Network Rail in case of problems on the line.

**6. SUB-GROUP UPDATES**

**(a) FUNDING**

The Committee considered a report regarding funding proposals. A bid was submitted to the Community Seedcorn Fund 2013/14, specifically for the delivery of 8 Green Gym days in Duchess Wood between January and March 2014. It was established that the bid is

for support towards the cost of the supervision, which is to be provided by TCV at a daily rate of £300, as well as the purchase of some trees, tree guards, stakes and help with the cost of advertising. Further discussion over whose responsibility it would be to pay bills and whose responsibility with regards to who would lift the grants ensued. The Chair, suggested that the Council or Friends of Duchess Woods may be suitable in this regard. Stewart Campbell confirmed that at this point in time the Friends of Duchess Woods could not afford to be in this position. Councillor Morton confirmed that she would ask Charlie Cairns to speak with the Council's Development Projects and Renewables Manager regarding this.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

**(b) EDUCATION**

As there was no-one in attendance to provide an update on this matter, it was agreed that the Chair would re-start this matter with the Council at the start of 2014 with a view to it being represented at the February meeting of the Committee.

**7. FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD REPORT**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the work undertaken by Friends of Duchess Wood such as routine actions since the last meeting of the Committee. It outlined the Tri-Events Zombies, which took place on 19 October and the Walking Theatre event which took place on 20 October. Both events were considered a success.

It further outlined the grant application which had been awarded by the Argyll and Bute Third Sector scheme, the publicity through the local press and the AGM which was held on 21 October.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

**8. EVENTS**

**(a) UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS**

Morevainn Martin provided the Committee with an update regarding events which had recently been run with the Walking Theatre Company. She advised that all feedback received had been excellent. Further discussion regarding how the Walking Theatre Company could assist with the John Muir Events was had with Morevainn agreeing to speak with the company regarding hosting 40 to 50 minute events 3 times a day rather than a one-off 2 hour play.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed to note the update.

(b) **EVENTS POLICY**

The Committee were provided with a brief update from the Chair on behalf of Charlie Cairns, with donations and bonds being addressed. Stewart Campbell and Alastair Macbeth advised that they were reluctant to discuss the matter of bonds without having discussed the issue with the Treasurer of Friends of Duchess Woods.

**Decision:**

The Committee agreed that they would provide feedback to Charlie Cairns by email and copy to the Chair within the next 4 weeks with a view to an updated version of the Policy being issued at the start of the year.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Stewart Campbell advised that the costing for the all-abilities path was available, as it had recently been renewed by the same contract . Morag Bain advised that this may link into a project that Cornerstone Jigsaw were in the process of organising and that it would be useful to exchange contact details to assist in this matter. The Chair agreed to circulate a note of all members contact details.

**10. DATES OF MEETINGS 2014**

The dates of the future meetings of Duchess Woods Local Nature Reserve for 2014 were agreed, but could be subject to change, as follows:

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 10.00am

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at 10.00am

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2014 at 10.00am

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014 at 10.00am

