



The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 9 (September 2011)

THE STORMS



Before the clear-up



After the clear-up



This year's gales caused trees and branches to fall. The winds four months ago were the most damaging. The first action of the FODW was to clear the paths and remove such dangerous hanging branches that we could manage. (See top two photos.) We discussed the larger tasks with Argyll and Bute Council which has started to deal with them. (See middle photos.) Finally a FODW work party of 18 people chopped up the brown dead branches lying beside the paths and dragged them into the undergrowth to rot naturally and to support the ecological function. (See photo below.) Our thanks to all those who contributed to this three-stage exercise.



A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

26th October

FODW's Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Friends of Duchess Wood will be held at **7.30 p.m. on Wednesday 26th. October, 2011**, in Room 4 (the Jubilee Room) of the Victoria Halls.

The **agenda** will be sent to members in advance. Anyone is welcome to attend, so please bring friends and family. (However, only members can vote.)

We're delighted to tell you that our guest speaker will be **Diane Oliver of the Community Woodlands Association**.

There will also be a photographic display about Duchess Wood and refreshments will be served.

Motions for the AGM have to be received by the Secretary by Thursday 29th September.

5-year Management Plan for Duchess Wood

In our last newsletter we explained that the present 5-year Management Plan for Duchess Wood (along with its money) expires this year, so progress on the new Plan is important.

The Council's Duchess wood Local Nature Reserve Committee (DWLNRC) has set up a four person sub-committee to draw up a first draft. This is likely to give emphasis to maintenance, better woodland management, finding out more about the nature, biodiversity and history of the wood, and improvement of information and signposting.

The Chairman of the sub-committee, Councillor Al Reay, is joined by the Chairman and Secretary of FODW, along with Charlie Cairns of Lower Clyde Greenspace. This sub-committee has met three times and will present its first draft to the DWLNRC in early October. It is hoped that an update report may be possible at the AGM.

PROBLEM BRIDGE

As we explained in our last newsletter, the Friends of Duchess Wood reported erosion of a stream bank under the bridge at the north-west corner of the Wood. In time, this could cause the bridge to collapse.

Argyll and Bute Council has decided to replace the bridge with a large culvert like the one to the west of the upper Rugby pitch.

The work has been done by the Employability Team which is seen in action in the photo right. The picture below shows Simon Miller (Chief Executive Officer of Luss Estates which owns the land), Peter McLean (Luss Estates representative on the Duchess Wood LNR Committee), Stewart Campbell (FODW Chairman) and Frank Leonard (Supervisor of the team) observing work in progress.

The photo bottom right shows the almost-finished culvert with a new path. The new management plan will consider the future of other bridges..



FIRE SERVICE VISIT

Two members of FODW went round the Wood with two officers from the Fire Service to assess fire risks. On the whole the conclusions were reassuring. Deliberate fire-raising was more likely to “take hold” than carelessness. However, they did approve the wording of the FODW advisory leaflet which urges the reporting of ANY fire by dialing 999 and they welcomed the “No fires” notices at the entrances to the Wood. They looked at three places where “social” fires had been lit and in particular advised the felling of the small number of trees and undergrowth between the table to the west of the Rugby pitch and the pitch itself. Vandalism and other signs of irresponsible gatherings were there, and visibility of the site might deter such anti-social behaviour. FODW has now taken that precautionary action.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Repair of lower west bridge

We are grateful to the Community Payback Team for its work in repairing the railings of the bridge to the west of the Pony Field which was vandalised. This is an example of where a large culvert may ultimately be preferable to a bridge since a culvert requires less maintenance and is less prone to vandalism.

Sycamores

Sycamores may look attractive but they are also a problem. They reproduce rapidly, they gradually take over from other trees and they reduce sunlight reaching the ground, affecting flowers and other growth. Step-by-step control is expected to be part of the new five-year plan.

Japanese Knotweed

Steps have been started by Argyll and Bute Council to spray the first patch of Japanese Knotweed (beside the car park) but the programme is behind schedule due to weather. It is hoped to catch up with the schedule.

Litter clearance

Thanks to all those who have used the litter bins. Thanks also to the Council bin-men who have emptied them so consistently. No thanks at all to those few visitors who continue to drop litter, but much gratitude to FODW members who clear up after them.

Work party dates. Sunday 25.9.11 (meet at DW car park at 1.30 pm); Sunday 16th October (4.00 pm); Sunday 27th November (car park, 2.30 pm).

Everyone welcome. Please join in !

Website. Due to technical problems, our old website address has been taken over by aliens. Please use our new : www.duchesswood.org.uk

FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as the Lower Clyde Greenspace, the Employability Team, Community Payback, the Access Trust, the Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially, of course, the Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the Wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they have made to make the Wood so special.

Current FODW Trustees are Stewart Campbell (Chairman), Alastair Macbeth (Secretary), Mary Kingshott (Treasurer), Morag Young, Rachel Bailey, Margaret Paul, Lorna Naismith, Kevin Johnson.