

AGM

The AGM will be held in the Helensburgh Parish Church Hall at 7:30pm on Wednesday 17th October 2018 – **Please note that this is a change from the previously promulgated date.** Papers for the session will be sent to members in advance.

Any motions for the AGM from paid-up members should be sent to The Secretary, FODW, 17 Queens Point, Shandon G84 8QZ proposed and seconded by registered members by 21st September (or by email to martin.grafton@outlook.com).

On this occasion the AGM will split into two parts – first the annual report and election of office bearers followed by a general debate on the future of the wood as the current Management Agreement between Luss Estates and Argyll and Bute Council comes to an end (see item below).

New look newsletter

You will notice that this newsletter has been produced in a flyer format. This will make it easier to leave copies in the holders in the wood and for distribution to residents adjacent to the woods. Your opinions on this format are welcome – send to the secretary at martin.grafton@outlook.com or raise at the AGM.

Future of Wood under consideration

The current Management Agreement (MA) between Argyll and Bute Council (ABC) and Luss Estates (LE) expires in August 2020 and the Council are considering their options for the future. These range between

- Maintaining the status quo
- MA between LE and a third party
- Woods revert back to LE
- Alternative ownership (community buyout?)

FODW will be involved in further discussions with ABC to secure a long-term and viable future for the wood that allows it to continue to be enjoyed by all.

Chairman standing down

After a period of eight years as Chairman Stewart Campbell has decided to stand down. He would like to remain a trustee and, perhaps, take the lead on Citizen Science. We thank him for his excellent work as Chairman.

News in brief

Benches

The community payback team have done some good work in replacing benches and strimming the pony field.

Ponds

We have put up signs asking dog owners to try and keep their dogs out of the ponds to reduce damage. We have also been liaising with several groups over putting in a footpath to the upper pond and to provide a viewing area. We will also put some fencing around the ponds to keep dogs out. It is hoped that work on this will start in the near future.

Boundary Issues

Strathclyde Court residents have raised concerns over some dead or diseased trees near their boundary and there has been another incident of a tree threatening a neighbouring garden. These concerns have been passed on to ABC who are dealing with the issues.

Responsible Dog Ownership

FODW and ABC continue to consider ways to encourage responsible dog ownership. There is a concern over “professional” dog walkers walking 5 or more dogs. The council will be exploring how other councils approach this issue and it may be that a voluntary code of conduct is introduced.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance has been carried out and we have recently done some repairs to fencing and to the Thurgood Bridge.

Community Use

The community continues to make good use of the woods with the Community Orienteering event, organized by Lomond School, being held recently. The Venture Scouts will be helping to collect and burn brush in the autumn (the planned event on 27 June was postponed due to the dry weather). The “Branching Out” team has continued to offer its support programme in the Wood.

Woodlands in and around Towns (WIAT) Grant

Having accepted our Management Plan for the woods the WIAT grant has been approved by the Forestry Commission and £1300 passed to the Council. This allows access to other FCS funding and action now is to start implementing the Management Plan.

Bat Detector

On a midge ridden evening in June a small group braved the woods at sunset in order to commission the bat detector purchased with a grant from Scottish Natural Heritage. This amazing technology (www.echometertouch.com) simply plugs into the bottom of your phone or iPad and allows you to listen in to the secret world of bats. Not only does the sensitive microphone pick up the ultra high frequencies produced, but the software then identifies the species and tags the location. Another interesting feature is that you can also hear the bat noises in real time (frequencies are changed) – very useful if you happen to speak bat!

Within minutes we found several common bats, identified immediately as *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* busy using sonar to find their insect supper. Being able to see and hear them in the perfect backdrop of the woods was fantastic.

We would like to offer use of this tool to all members of FODW – please let us know if you would like to borrow the equipment (detector and iPad available – everything you need!). We will also be arranging some more twilight bat tours and hope you can join us.



FODW is a voluntary, non-political local community group and a registered charity. It works co-operatively with other groups such as Community Payback, The Access Trust, the Helensburgh Green Belt Group, and a range of other bodies especially Argyll and Bute Council's Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee which is responsible for the wood. We are grateful to them for the contributions they make to the successful running of the wood.

Membership of FODW costs £10 per household per year and requires no obligations although volunteers to help with simple maintenance tasks are always welcome.

Current FODW Trustees are:

Stewart Campbell (Chairman)

Martin Grafton (Secretary)

Bill Hassall (Treasurer)

Morag Young (Membership Secretary)

Rachel Bailey, David Lewin, Richard Horrell, Paul Blackburn and Pete Minting.

YOUR VIEWS

The FODW email address is fodwg84@gmail.com .

The website shows the contact email as enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk and forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website – www.duchesswood.org.uk

Facebook - @FODW1

Charity number SC039527

Friends of Duchess Wood

Autumn Newsletter 2018

