

The Friends of Duchess Wood

Members' Newsletter No. 17 (September 2015)

AGM of the FODW

Wednesday 28th. October 2015, 7.30 p.m.

The FODW Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30 pm on **Wednesday 28th October** in the **Sports Centre of Lomond School**, located in Rhu Road Higher. There is ample parking space there. Papers for the formal part of the session will be sent to members in advance.

That part of the AGM will be followed by a talk by **Pete Minting, Scottish Project Officer of the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust.**

Pete will cover the amphibians and reptiles found in Scotland and in our area in particular, and will give advice on how to make ponds to encourage these interesting creatures.

Refreshments. Everyone welcome. Please bring friends and family.

Reminder : Any motions from paid-up members for the AGM should be sent to the Secretary, FODW, 40 West Montrose Street, Helensburgh, G84 9PF, proposed and seconded by registered members, by 1st. October 2015.



Pete Minting, our AGM speaker, is a zoologist who has worked on many conservation projects in the UK and abroad. He recently finished his PhD on the natterjack toad, Scotland's rarest amphibian. He now works for the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) Trust and lives in Helensburgh, with his wife Elsie and sons Archie and Oliver.



New information maps

Walkers in the Wood will have seen the new information maps, one at each entrance to the Wood. They are based on the design by Babcock for the new Information Hub, but were paid for by FODW funds. The posts were erected by Community Payback and the smart wooden frames were made as a gift by Sandy Abel, shown in the photo above, receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from FODW convener, Stewart Campbell.

FORESTRY COMMISSION FORUM AT DUCHESS WOOD A SUCCESS

On 1st. September the Forestry Commission Scotland chose Duchess Wood as the location for a Forum "A Wood of Our Own", drawing representatives from different parts of Scotland. FODW joined the Community Woodlands Association in arranging the practicalities and provided two of the eight speakers in the morning session. In addition to presentations by national and regional bodies and FODW, there were local contributions from the Helensburgh Community Woodlands Group, Hermitage Park and the St. Peters Kilmahew Project.

In the afternoon, delegates were divided into two groups and given guided tours to Duchess Wood, led by FODW members. The photo below shows some of them having issues explained by Sandy Kerr.



FOREST SCHOOL LAUNCHED IN DUCHESS WOOD

Schooling outdoors? At any time of year? In (almost) all weathers? Without access to the normal classroom equipment? That's what Lomond School has started in Duchess Wood.

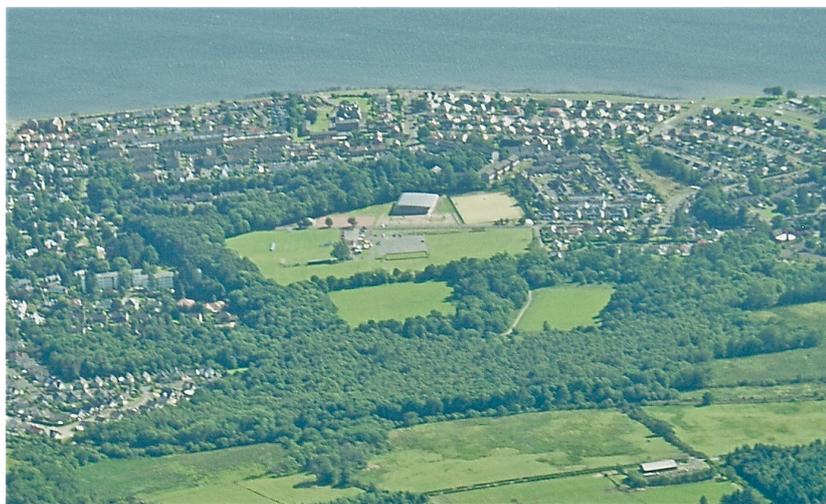
The Forest School movement is growing in popularity in several countries, especially at the nursery level.

Argyll and Bute Council has allowed Duchess Wood to be used for this and Lomond School now holds nursery classes three mornings a week, open to all children from the age of 3 years. It is an Argyll and Bute Partnership Nursery.

Nature study is at its heart, and the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence recognises the positive features of learning outdoors which encourages familiarity with and confidence in the countryside, and a sense of independence. It also increases levels of physical activity and promotes healthy lifestyles. FODW has given active support to this initiative.



Lomond Nursery has a favourable 1:5 staffing ratio. Sessions are only moved to an alternative site in exceptionally harsh weather and the school provides a full kit list for those who take part. The Friends of Duchess Wood will keep in touch with it. For further information, contact Lomond School.



Duchess Wood as part of the Green Network

Green network consultation

Argyll and Bute Council has consulted about a green network map for Helensburgh. Duchess Wood is an important part of it.

Green networks apply to towns over a certain size. The aim is to have green linkages between urban green spaces, both in and around towns. So Duchess Wood is a key green space, linked by tree-lined streets in Helensburgh and a countryside network of paths around the town.

The aims are many, from better health through walking and cycling to wildlife corridors. In a sense, Helensburgh has been based on a green network since Victorian times". Its green town plan and countryside setting are one reason that people want to live here. The town's economic future depends on attracting residents and visitors.

The work FODW has done on paths, bridges and culverts ties in with the round-Helensburgh network of paths started by the Green Belt Group and expanded by the Helensburgh and District Access Trust. Indeed, both those organisations have helped Duchess Wood over the years.

So what's happening now? A&B Council officials created a draft green network map for Helensburgh. Ten local groups (including FODW) met with a senior planning official. He listened. He responded. If all goes well, an improved green network should emerge. However, there are several official steps yet to be taken. Meanwhile, FODW will fly the flag for Duchess Wood.

CITIZEN SCIENCE. Stewart Campbell and Morag Young attended an interesting Scottish Natural Heritage workshop on behalf of FODW. Citizen Science is defined as "scientific work undertaken by members of the general public, often in collaboration with or under the direction of professional scientists and scientific institutions" and SNH leads much of the activity in Scotland. Amongst the topics which could usefully be pursued in Duchess Wood are (a) Use of "camera traps" to help identify mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles and other wildlife present in the wood (b) Air quality surveys by monitoring of lichen and tar spot on sycamore (c) Tree health (d) Soil and earthworm surveys (e) Pond and flowing water surveys. The development of Citizen Science in the Wood could involve schools and families in a coordinated way and contribute not only to research specific to the Wood, but also to help build the national picture in those areas of interest. If anyone is interested in helping to develop this work, please get in touch.

Rooks' nest count

This year about 80 - 85 nests. Same as last year but up by ten over the past five years.

Now none to north of the large fallen pine tree. So something has caused movement to the closer-packed south section.

YOUR VIEWS

As a result of updates to the website, the FODW email address is now fodwg84@gmail.com. The website shows the contact email as enquiry@duchesswood.org.uk, and this forwards emails to the fodwg84 address.

Website. 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), Bill Hassall (Treasurer), Morag Young, Margaret Paul, Rachel Bailey, Kevin Johnson, David Lewin, Richard Horrell.