



Friends of Duchess Wood

(Charity number SC039527)

ANNUAL REPORT and ACCOUNTS

for the period

1st July 2018 to 30th June 2019

CONTENTS

Section A: Details

- 1. Current Trustees**
- 2. Trustee changes during the year**
- 3. Governing document**
- 4. Charitable Purposes**
- 5. Financial Examiner**
- 6. Bankers**
- 7. Contact address**

Section B: Report on Activities

- 1. Objectives**
- 2. Review of progress**
- 3. Outlook**
- 4. Thanks**

Section C: Finances

- 1. Financial Statement**
- 2. Statement of affairs and Notes to the Accounts**
- 3. Independent Financial Examiner's Report to The Friends of
Duchess Wood**

Section A: Details

1. Current Trustees

Stewart Campbell (Chair to 17th October 2018)

Matt Offord (Chair from 18th October 2018)

Rachel Bailey

Paul Blackburn

Martin Grafton (Secretary)

William Hassall (Treasurer)

Richard Horrell

David Lewin

Pete Minting

Morag Young

2. Trustee changes during the year

Matt Offord joined as a Trustee, and Chair from 18th October 2018.

3. Governing Document

The Friends of Duchess Wood is a charitable, unincorporated body. Its purposes and administration arrangements are set out in the constitution. Trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

4. Charitable Purposes

The objectives of the Friends, as set out in the constitution, are “to assist in the management of Duchess Wood and safeguard its benefits to the community in terms of biodiversity and quiet enjoyment by the public – including recreational and educational use”.

5. Financial Examiner

Terence Brownrigg

6. Bankers

Bank of Scotland, Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh

7. Contact Address

c/o The Secretary

17 Queens Point

Shandon

Helensburgh

G84 8QZ

Section B: Report on Activities

1. Objectives

The objectives of the charity are “to assist in the management of Duchess Wood and safeguard its benefits to the community in terms of biodiversity and quiet enjoyment by the public – including recreational and educational use”.

2. Review of progress

2.1 Administration

The Executive committee met on four occasions. The Annual General Meeting for 2017-18 was held on 17th October 2018. The Annual General Meeting for the current year (2018-19) will be held on 18th November 2019.

We remain an affiliate member of The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) and we have arranged insurance through them to cover our membership. We are also members of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA).

We are represented on the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee (DWLNRC) of Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) which met four times during the period. Responsibility for the management of Duchess Wood currently rests with A&BC and its DWLNRC, but the Friends have a formal arrangement to assist in the Wood's management.

2.2 Membership

Membership numbers have increased slightly to 96 households (from 86), which equates to around 190 people. There has been a relatively small turnover of new members to replace some that have left. A membership campaign has been conducted with letters delivered to all those living in houses adjacent to the wood. Two newsletters were issued to members during the year.

2.3 Liaison

Strong contacts were maintained with the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee, Scottish Natural Heritage, Community Payback, The Conservation Volunteers, Scotland Forestry (formerly Forestry Commission Scotland), Community Woodlands Association, Helensburgh and District Access Trust, Helensburgh Green Belt Group, Helensburgh Tree Conservation Trust, Helensburgh Community Woodlands Group, Helensburgh Cricket and Rugby Club, Helensburgh Community Council, Rhu and Shandon Community Council, local primary schools, Lomond School, Luss Estates, Strathclyde Court Residents' Committee, local councillors, the A&BC Environmental Officer, the A&BC Biodiversity Officer, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Scottish Police, Scottish Fire Service, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and various departments of Argyll and Bute Council.

We express special appreciation for the work of the Community Payback Team, led by Colin Rae, and their continued assistance during the year. Also special thanks go to Laura Baird for the preferential use of a garage near Strathclyde Court in which to store our tools and equipment.

2.4 Activities

It has been a busy year and much of our efforts have been in discussing the future management arrangements for the wood following A&BC's decision at the Local Area Committee meeting in December not to renew their Management Agreement with Luss Estates Company (LEC). The council held a "drop in" event to gauge local appetite for taking on running the wood, perhaps by a Community Buyout. Interest was sparse to say the least. So whilst the future continues to be uncertain, we believe the likely outcome is that LEC will take over the management and we will continue to provide local liaison and volunteer-level maintenance tasks. Discussions continue to see how we can retain the Local Nature Reserve designation. Members visited the Doune Ponds Reserve in the spring, along with Councillor Douglas and LEC representatives. Doune Ponds is managed by Moray Estates, working in partnership with a friends group, and may prove a model for the future management of Duchess Wood. A further meeting is planned in the autumn.

Following a tree survey commissioned by A&BC the council closed access to the wood on 17th June 2019. This was in response to a significant number of hazardous trees identified close to access points and paths. The council officials did not consult either the DWLNRC, responsible councillor (Lorna Douglas) or FODW. It proved difficult to obtain much information from council officials and it was only after a Freedom of Information (FOI) request that the report was made available (September 2019). We have discussed the council's actions with the DWLNRC members and continue to press for early reopening of the wood. Meanwhile the council are seeking funding to allow them to progress remedial work. At present the wood remains closed to access and, in our view, unless the Council's approach changes, is unlikely to open until sometime in 2020.

During the autumn of 2018 Persimmon, who are developing a site adjacent to the wood, dumped a considerable amount of waste illegally on the wood site (over 1000 m³). This was reported to both the Council Enforcement Department and to SEPA (who issued a Final Warning letter). Persimmon have since removed the waste and we will monitor the site to ensure that there is no long-lasting damage. Later large amounts of polystyrene waste blew off the Persimmon site into the woods. We continue discussions to see what goodwill gesture Persimmon might make to atone for their actions.

A number of incidents of vandalism and damage occurred during the second week of April and thereafter. Damage to fences, gates, map boards and young trees around the Wood and presence of broken bottles took place with most of the damage on and around the Pony Field. The police were informed, crime reports raised and the Police committed to making more frequent visits to the Wood. Lastly many thanks to the individuals who picked up and removed broken glass from around the picnic tables.

We have continued with our routine safeguarding task of being the eyes and ears of the local community and removing damaged or dangerous branches, clearing litter, unblocking culverts and reporting anti-social behaviour to the relevant authorities. We continue to receive excellent support from Colin Rae and Community Payback team who have carried out a number of valuable activities including maintaining the Thurgood Bridge, restoring and replacing picnic benches, strimming the Pony Field area, clearing and digging new drainage ditches, building new fences and clearing brash.

Morag Young continued to manage the monthly woodland maintenance work parties although the inclement weather during the winter resulted in several working parties being cancelled.

Supported by members of FODW, activities have included repairing fences, bridges and benches, improving drainage and working at controlling invasive species including rhododendron and sycamore. One of our members, David Reid, has continued to attack these species around the Wood, with increasing success.

The bridge by the car park also continues to deteriorate and a new fence was erected protecting the part of the bridge that had subsided. Responsibility for the bridge is still being discussed by A&BC and LEC.

A&BC have treated areas of Japanese Knotweed but this continues to be a problem in two or three areas.

The wood continues to be used by local groups for organised activities. During the year the Royal Navy (Scotland) held a cross country relay event in Duchess Wood. The Lomond School Community Orienteering event was also very successful. A second dog training event, organised by DWLNRC, was held and was well attended and well presented. The Wood was also used by Branching Out; an innovative development for adults who use mental health services in Scotland. They visit the woods most Mondays and we are planning to visit their site in Drymen. Helensburgh Scouts have also held a "brash burning" evening in the wood.

The two ponds continue to mature. Newts, toads and frogs have been seen in the upper pond and some of the aquatic plants are surviving well. The fence around the lower pond has proved successful in deterring dogs from swimming in the pond and causing some damage to the plant life. A new path was created to the upper pond with fencing along the path, but this has not proved effective in keeping dogs out of the pond and we are considering fencing in the upper pond to provide similar protection. The willow saplings planted at the lower pond have not flourished and have been replaced with more mature saplings, which have also been planted along the upper pond fence. A viewing area was also created at the upper pond, and a seat (with willow arbour) installed in memory of Kevin "a doggy friend of Duchess Wood"

The bat detection equipment has been used and has also been loaned out to Lomond School and other groups.

2.5 Public Relations and Publications

We have maintained good relations with the local press and they have published several articles about the future management of the wood and the recent closure. Our main leaflets continue to be available at the main entrances to the Wood. We also delivered a letter and membership leaflet to all houses adjacent to the Wood.

The FODW website has been migrated to a more easily updated website. The Facebook Account is also available and updated regularly.

One of our members, Mary-Jane Selwood, produced a series of four seasonal cards depicting Duchess Wood and offered these to FODW to sell through local craft outlets. These continue to generate a steady income.

2.6 Grants and donations

A £500 pound grant from SNH Action Earth was used to (partly) fund the path to the upper pond and in replacing the willow hedge around the lower pond..

As reported last year A&BC, supported by FODW, submitted an application for a Forestry Commission Scotland, Woodlands in and around Towns (WIAT) grant. This application was successful and should enable active management of the increasingly dominant sycamore and other trees. However at the time of writing, this application had been “parked” to enable a new application to be made to deal with the trees identified in the Council’s survey. The grant for preparation of the initial plan was used by A&BC to fund the tree survey which resulted in the closure of the wood.

3 Outlook

The Management Agreement between Luss Estates Company (LEC) and Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) comes to an end in August 2020 and the council have confirmed that they wish to end their role in managing the wood. Discussions have taken place between A&BC, LEC and the FODW to look at potential options. We have also conducted some benchmarking visits to similar organisations in Scotland to see how they are managed. The future is still not fully clear although it is likely LEC will resume management of the wood with FODW playing a similar role to their current activities.

The five-year Management Plan (MP) for Duchess Wood (2016-21) is available at

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/g7229/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2011-Oct-2016%2009.30%20Helensburgh%20Lomond%20Area%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

The on-line version is referred to as “draft” but it is the final agreed version. The MP has formed the basis for much of the content of the WIAT grant application and gives a clear indication of the management needs of the Wood over the five-year period. Whilst the focus is now on implementing the plan, this has been overtaken to some extent by the recent closure of the wood due to a number of unsafe trees identified in the Tree Survey carried out for A&BC.

4. Thanks

Thanks go to all the Trustees on the Committee, to the members of FODW, and to the public who have backed our work and carried out practical tasks throughout the year. Grateful thanks are also extended to the individuals and other organisations mentioned above whose help has supported the continuing maintenance and enhancement of the Wood.

Section C: Finances

1. Financial Statement

YEAR 2018/19				
Friends of Duchess Wood				
Financial Statement for Year to 30th. June, 2019				
			2018	
	£	£	£	£
Funds @ 1.7.18		4300		4701
INCOME: membership	1025		930	
donations	68		1060	
Volunteering Matters	500		500	
Sundries: Card sales	224		364	
		1817		2854
		6117		7555
EXPENDITURE:				
Admin./Stationery	237		219	
Insurance - £138 less grant	138		-	
Garage rental & repairs	100		161	
Paths & fencing	1691		91	
Ponds, seeds, etc	288		378	
Benches, tables	330		122	
Bridges	67		890	
Waymarkers, finger post			255	
Sundry (see analysis)	92		112	
Tools & equipment	140		556	
Subscriptions	48		-	
Website	21		71	
10th Anniversary recep'n			175	
Greeting cards	88		225	
		3240		3255
Funds at 3/06/19		2877		4300
Bank balance at 3/06/19		2877		4300
Sundry:				
Subscriptions	£24			
AGM	48			
Sundry	20			
	£92			

2. Statement of affairs and Notes to the Accounts

FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD

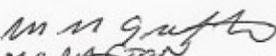
Statement of Affairs for the Year to 30th. June, 2019

	2019	2018
	£	£
Bank balance at start of year	4300	4701
Deficit in year (2018 - loss)	1423	401
Bank balance at end of year	2877	4300
Net Current Assets (there are no liabilities)	2877	4300

Notes to the Accounts for the Year to 30th. June, 2019

1. Accounting Conventions: The accounts are prepared under the historical costs convention and in accordance with the Standard of Recommended Practice (SORP) Accounting for Charities, and applicable accounting standards
2. Investments: no investments are held
3. Taxation: The Friends is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity and is not liable to taxation.
4. Trustee Remuneration and Expenses: No trustee receives any remuneration.
5. Financial Reserves: As a result of the activities in the year under review the Friends now hold funds of £2877 (2018 - £4300)
6. Financial Reserve Policy: There is one bank account which embraces one unrestricted fund. This records our activities and represents the free reserves of the charity as at 30th. June, 2019.
7. Risk Management Policy: The trustees have assessed the major risks relating to the operations and finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to major risks.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf


M. OFFORD
SECRETARY

pp Matt Offord

3. Independent Examiner's Report to The Friends of Duchess Wood



Independent examiner's report on the accounts							v2
Report to the trustees/members of	Charity name						
	FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD						
Registered charity number	SC 039527						
On the accounts of the charity for the period	Period start date				Period end date		
	Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year
	01	07	2018		30	06	2019
Set out on pages							(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner
 The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement
 My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement
 In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention [other than that disclosed on the attached page*]

- which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations
 have not been met, or
- to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: J. T. P. Rowanrigg
Name: J. T. P. ROWANRIGG
Date: 20 September 2019
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): Member ICAE
Address: ARDENTIGH, GLENORAN ROAD
 RHU
 Helensburgh
 Dunbartonshire
 G84 8JU

*Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply. If the words do apply, set out those matters which have come to your attention on the following page.