



# Friends of Duchess Wood

(Charity number SC039527)

## **ANNUAL REPORT and ACCOUNTS**

**for the period**

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

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## **Section A: Details**

### **1. Current Trustees**

Matt Offord (Chair)  
Rachel Bailey  
Paul Blackburn  
Stewart Campbell  
Martin Grafton (Secretary)  
William Hassall (Treasurer)  
Richard Horrell  
David Lewin  
Pete Minting  
Morag Young

### **2. Trustee changes during the year**

None.

### **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 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019. (Note: The AGM for the financial year 2019/20 will be held by zoom on 26 January 2021 at 7.30pm.)

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 three times during the period (the June 2020 meeting was postponed until August due to Covid-19 restrictions). Responsibility for the management of Duchess Wood during the reporting period rested 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 are reasonably stable at 102 households (96 in June 2019), which equates to around 200 people. There has been a relatively small turnover of new members to replace some that have left. Two newsletters were issued to members during the year along with a number of special communiques covering the closure of the wood.

#### 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, Police Scotland, 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, where possible, 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 strange year with limited physical activity in the woods due to firstly the closure of the wood on safety grounds followed by a Lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Much of the Trustees efforts have been in discussing with the council why the wood was closed and how best to reopen it following a tree survey by TD Tree & Land Services Limited (commissioned by Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC)) along with debating the future management arrangements for the wood following A&BC's decision at the Local Area Committee meeting in December 2018 not to renew their Management Agreement with Luss Estates Company (LEC). What has been particularly disappointing is the council's view, not supported by us, that the wood needs to be de-designated by SNH as a Local Nature Reserve. Meanwhile we have had fruitful discussions with Luss Estates who will take over the management of the wood whilst we continue to provide local liaison and volunteer-level maintenance tasks. Members visited and liaised with the Doune Ponds Reserve who have provided a useful management model that could be adapted for use in Duchess Woods. (Doune Ponds is managed by Moray Estates, working in partnership with a friends' group.) We have had many meetings with Luss Estates and helped them compile a list of issues to be discussed with the Council before handover at the end of July.

Following the tree survey commissioned by A&BC the council closed access to the wood on 17<sup>th</sup> 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), LEC 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). Despite several attempts to persuade the council to review the report pragmatically it was not until early 2020 that Council estates staff visited the wood and determined what work (much slimmed down from the original report) was required. This was limited mainly to unsafe trees near footpaths and the car park and was completed fairly quickly with the wood reopening to the public. We remain frustrated at the lack of communication from Council Officials and this included the way the wood was reopened to the public. It is also of note that they did not take us up on our offer to highlight risk areas we were concerned about in the wood. It should be noted that despite articles in the local press and council notices, which were frequently removed by person or persons unknown, the wood continued to be used by a number of individuals throughout the closed period; this reinforcing the poor way in which A&BC managed and communicated the closure.

Shortly after the reopening of the wood after remedial works the nationwide Covid-19 Lockdown was put in force. Whilst the wood remained open for members of the public to enjoy it did mean that all maintenance activities had to stop until lockdown restrictions were eased. Morag Young continued to manage the monthly woodland maintenance work parties although the closure of the wood followed by pandemic meant all work parties were cancelled.

There continues to be the odd event of vandalism and graffiti painted on the garages near the wood (Scottish Police were involved in the latter). Additionally, there was some unauthorised construction of BMX bike jumps which have been removed.

During the period there have been many occasions where the dog bins were not emptied (due to wood closure / lockdown) with dog walkers continuing to leave poo bags at the site and overfilling the bins. This is a health hazard. The future of the bins post management change is still unclear.

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. It is intended to fence in the upper pond in a similar manner and funds have been allocated for this work.

The bat detection equipment continues to be 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, the recent closure and transfer back of management to Luss Estates. Our main leaflets continue to be available at the main entrances 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.

Daisy Harris submitted a 3-minute film, based on Duchess Woods, to the SNH "Why Invest in Nature" competition and was praised for her work. A link to the film is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xedW4gQGDi8>

## **2.6 Grants and donations**

A £350 pound grant from Waitrose will be used to fund the fence around the upper pond.

As reported in 2018 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. Responsibility for progressing exploitation of this grant will pass to Luss Estates once they regain responsibility for management of the wood.

## **3 Outlook**

The Management Agreement between Luss Estates Company (LEC) and Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) comes to an end on 31 July 2020 and the council have confirmed that they will 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. We have proposed a Memorandum of Understanding to Luss Estates which defines their, and the FODW,

responsibilities for the wood in future and it is likely LEC will resume management of the wood with FODW playing a similar role to their current activities. Additionally, the council position is that after return of the wood to LEC they will seek to de-designate the wood as a Local Nature Reserve. We continue to oppose this unnecessary move although are finding A&BC resistant to any debate on the topic.

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, where possible, 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

- Financial Statement

Friends of Duchess Wood				
Financial Statement for Year to 30 June 2020			Year to 30 June 2019	
	£	£	£	£
Funds @ 1.7.19		2877	@1.7.18	4300
<b>INCOME:</b>				
Membership	870		1025	
Donations	613		68	
Volunteering Matters			500	
Card sales: direct	32		224	
shop	95			
		+1610		+1817
		=4487		=6117
<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>				
Admin./Stationery	63		237	
Insurance	138		138	
Helensburgh Parish Church	98			
Garage rental & repairs	100		100	
Expenses				
Paths & fencing	50		1691	
Ponds, seeds, etc			288	
Benches, tables			330	
Bridges			67	
Sundry			92	
Tools & equipment			140	
Subscriptions			48	
Website	53		21	
Greeting cards	45		88	
		-547		-3240
<b>Funds @ 30.06.20</b>		=3940	@ 30.6.19	=2877
<b>Bank balance @ 30.06.20</b>		3940	@ 30.6.19	2877

NB

- Donations were £125 from members, £138 from A&BC to cover cost of insurance (see expenditure), and £350 from the Waitrose green token scheme.



## 2. Statement of affairs and Notes to the Accounts

FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD					
Statement of Affairs for the Year to 30 June 2020					
		2019-2020		2018-2019	
		£		£	
Bank balance at start of year		2877		4300	
Surplus + / Deficit - in year		+ 1063		+ 1423	
Bank balance at end of year		3940		2877	
Net Current Assets		3940		2877	
(there are no liabilities)					

### Notes to the Accounts for the Year to 30 June 2020

- 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.
- Investments: No investments are held.
- Taxation: The Friends is recognised by the Inland Revenue as a charity and is not liable to taxation.
- Trustee Remuneration and Expenses: No trustee receives any remuneration.
- Financial Reserves: As a result of the activities in the year under review the Friends now holds funds of £3940 (2019 = £2877).
- 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 30 June 2020.
- 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



David Lewin, Acting Chair

22 December 2020

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

#### APPENDIX 3



#### Independent examiner's report on the accounts

v2

Report to the trustees/members of  
Registered charity number  
On the accounts of the charity for the period

Charity name

FRIENDS OF DUCHESS WOOD

SC

039527

Period start date

Day Month Year to

01 07 2019

Period end date

Day Month Year

30 06 2020

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 (as amended). 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 2006 Accounts Regulations. 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 view given by 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\*~~]

1. 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

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name:

J. T. P. BROWNIE

Date:

29.12.2020

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):

Member ICAS

Address:

Ardentigh, Glenoran Road,  
Rhu, Helensburgh,  
Dunbartonshire G84 8JU  
Tel: Helensburgh 4154

\*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.