

Friends of Duchess Wood



Autumn Newsletter 2021



News in brief

Maintenance

We continue to hold monthly maintenance working parties (2pm on last Sunday of each month). This is a good way to help with low level maintenance work and meet other Friends of The Wood. Contact David Lewin if you are interested in getting involved. Meanwhile we remain grateful for the work that the Community Payback team carry out, mainly in strimming grass in the Pony Field and adjacent to paths and repairs to the Thurgood Bridge.

LNR Status

Whilst we continue to campaign for the Wood to retain its Local Nature Reserve status to date there has been no movement by Argyll and Bute Council to "de-designate" the wood as a LNR.

Committee vacancy

Following Miriam Walker's move away from the area we now have one vacancy for a Trustee. If you are interested in getting involved in the running of The Wood please contact either the chairman or secretary for a chat.

New Treasurer

Following the resignation of Bill Hassall, Stewart Campbell stepped in temporarily as Acting Treasurer. We are pleased to announce that Eilean Yendell has volunteered to take on the role and is now Acting Treasurer until her election (hopefully) at the forthcoming AGM.

Luss Estates

We continue to forge a good working relationship with Luss Estates following the termination of the management agreement between them and Argyll and Bute Council. As highlighted in this newsletter they have done some considerable work in repairing / replacing fences and gave a substantial donation towards the path work. Additionally they have been carrying out tree and bridge surveys. We have regular meetings with Patrick Colquhoun, the Assistant Chief Executive Officer of Luss Estates Company.

Scotland's Gardens Scheme Open Day

Short guided walks through the wood were led by Morag Young and Jane Grafton during the Scottish Gardens Open Day. These well received walks were aimed at highlighting the wild flowers that grow in The Wood.

New Fencing and Bench

LUSS Estates have replaced all the fencing at the car park entrance which has improved significantly the first impression visitors get when visiting The Wood. In addition the large growth of Japanese knotweed the other side of the fence has been treated and stem injected so hopefully this will prevent regrowth in future years. We are very grateful to Luss Estates for carrying out this work.



A memorial bench has been installed in the Wood on the left side of the east path above the Millig Street entrance.

If anyone would like to consider donating a similar bench please contact the Chairman at david.lewin26@gmail.com

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, Branching Out and a range of other bodies especially Luss Estates Company 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:

David Lewin (Chairman) david.lewin26@gmail.com

Martin Grafton (Secretary) martin.grafton@outlook.com

Eilean Yendell (Acting Treasurer) e.m.yendell@gmail.com

Morag Young (Membership Secretary) moragyong@gmail.com

Laura Baird, Paul Blackburn, Stewart Campbell, Richard Horrell and Pete Minting.

YOUR VIEWS

The FODW email address is admin@duchesswood.org.uk.

Website - www.duchesswood.org.uk

Facebook - www.facebook.com/FODW1/

Charity number SC039527

Information Day

On Sunday 29th August FODW manned two visitor number recording stations at the car park and Millig Street entrances. Compared to the last time this was done (in 2016) adult and child visits between 8am and 6pm were up 45% and dog numbers were up 69% confirming The Wood is being used by more people and dogs. We estimate from these figures there are somewhere between 80,000 and 90,000 visits a year to The Wood. We handed out about 150 membership forms and have had 7 new members as a result. Total FODW membership is now 161.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who gave up their time to help gather this vital information which will be used to support future grant applications.

Award to Daisy

In July the FODW was delighted to make an award of £50 to local student Daisy Harris who posted a video on the website about the pleasure her family gets from walking in the Wood. The video has been viewed many times and the award was made to recognise her work promoting Duchess Wood. The FODW hope to make this an annual award to a young person making a contribution to The Wood.



Footpath Work

Over the past few months you will have noticed quite a lot of work starting in June with the construction of a new footpath from Duchess Gait to the main path round The Wood. Although only about 140 metres it involved putting in two ducts and clearing a significant number of branches. The path is already being well used and provides a safe all weather final link in the chain of paths from the sea front via Glenarn Road to Duchess Wood and the wider footpath network around the area.

In August the “All Abilities Path” was resurfaced from the car park round to the Rhu Road Higher entrance. This path now has a safe smooth surface for those with walking difficulties and people using wheelchairs and mobility scooters. We want everyone irrespective of age or mobility to enjoy time spent in Duchess Wood.



We are grateful to the following for their generosity which funded this work carried out by Robert McKendry from Milton; Luss Estates, Persimmon Homes, Argyll and Bute Council, Helensburgh and District Access Trust, Lomond School and the Scottish Garden Scheme.

Annual General Meeting

The 2021 AGM will be held on Wednesday 24th November 2021 at 7:30pm. Venue is the Helensburgh Community Hub, 116 East Princes Street, Helensburgh (the old Red Cross Hall). The Annual Report will be presented and it is hoped to have a short talk by a representative of the Helensburgh Community Woodland Group (Castle Wood) on their plans for the future.

Please forward any items for the agenda to the Secretary by 1st November 2021.

Community Woodlands Association Annual Conference

The Chairman and Secretary attended the Community Woodlands Association Annual Conference which was held in Carrbridge, Highlands. This included site visits to Strathnairn Community Woodland and Anagach Woods Trust in Granton-on-Spey. It was interesting to network with similar organisations and see how they are tackling the challenges that face us all.



The second day included sessions discussing Community Engagement, Managing Tree Safety and how local groups can help in Tackling the Climate Emergency.