



Friends of Duchess Wood

Autumn Newsletter 2023



We Continue To Need More New Trustees!

Current membership stands at 205 households, an increase of 12 since April 2023.

We are pleased to welcome Nicky Brownrigg as a new trustee. However, following the resignation of Paul Blackburn, due to work commitments, we are still struggling to recruit two new trustees to fill vacancies on the Executive Committee. If you are interested in helping, please contact either the Chair (David Lewin), Secretary (Martin Grafton) or leave a message on the contact page of our web site – www.duchesswood.org.uk

Recent Committee Meetings

Since the last newsletter two committee meetings have been held. Topics of discussion included the YLEM Energy Storage proposal, Membership and Visitor communication, Events, Trustee recruitment, GoCardless for fund collection (see below), and general maintenance activities. The bank account balance on 4th September was £4607.87.

CoCardless

We are glad to say that the GoCardless system for collecting subscriptions is now up and running and proving successful. It is our intention that, from 1st January 2024, this will be the sole method of paying subscriptions for new members. Current members will be able to continue paying by current means, mainly Standing Order. Meanwhile we continue to look at potential methods for electronic donation giving.

Educational Use of Wood

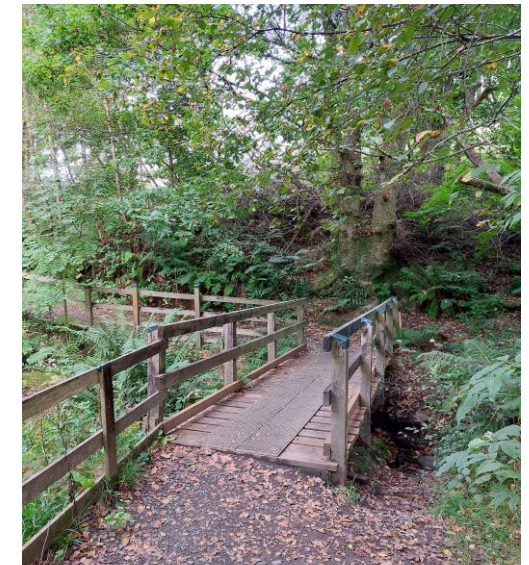
Lomond School continue to make good use of the Wood for their outdoor activities with a successful afternoon of work helping with various maintenance tasks being held in mid-May. We hope this will become a regular annual event. The school are looking to incorporate Wood activities in their Duke of Edinburgh Award curriculum and the committee is in discussion with the school on how to facilitate this.

Annual General Meeting

The 2022/23 AGM will be held on Tuesday 24th October 2023 at 7:30pm in the Helensburgh Parish Church Hall. After the normal agenda of the Executive Committee presenting the annual report and accounts, and a short break, there will be a short talk by Iona Hyde on the work of the Woodlands Trust in the west of Scotland.

Chicane Footbridge

During recent repair work by Community Payback it was noticed the three large wooden beams which support the bridge base are deteriorating. The beams are very substantial and there are no immediate safety concerns. However we would like to find a long term solution preferably installing a pipe with a stone and hardcore fill and positioned so as to create a crossing. The construction would be similar to the other three pipe burn crossings in the Wood. However this will be a costly project and once more costing information is available we will explore possible funding sources.



Archaeological Walk

In May Fiona Baker, a local professional Archaeologist, hosted a fascinating walk round Duchess Wood for FODW members. She talked about the various Victorian structures including the stone arch bridges, stone dykes and the pond, sluice and weir in the southwest corner of the Wood which supplied water to the Ardencaple Castle in the mid-19th century. Some 20 people attended, and we hope to repeat this fundraising event at some point in the future opening it up to the wider community.



Work Parties

Our thanks to Community Payback who have carried out various repairs and maintenance work including bridge repairs, strimming, mulching saplings and filling potholes at the car park.

The Friend's regular work parties have continued (usually the last Sunday of the month 2pm to 4pm) and we would welcome more volunteers to help with the task we do.

Greeting Cards

We will shortly be offering a new card for sale featuring photographs taken by one of our members. We hope to have these and other cards available for sale at the AGM.



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 (Treasurer) e.m.yendell@googlemail.com

Morag Young (Membership Secretary) moragyoung@ymail.com

Laura Baird, Nicky Brownrigg, Stewart Campbell, and Richard Horrell.

YOUR VIEWS

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

Website – www.duchesswood.org.uk

Facebook – www.facebook.com/FODW1/

Charity number SC039527

Proposed Energy Storage Scheme

As many of you may well know YELM, a Manchester based renewable energy company, plan to install a 50MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on a 0.5ha of greenbelt land owned by Ardencaple Farm. The proposed site is adjacent to the West Highland Railway Line and very close to Duchess Wood.

In principle the FODW are not against BESS as a means of storing power generated during low demand periods and releasing it back to the grid when demand is high to help ensure we all have electricity when we need it.

However we do have concerns about the potential impact of this facility on Duchess Wood; primarily the risk that intermittent noise from the battery cooling fans will disturb wildlife and impact adversely on the peaceful enjoyment of the Wood by visitors. In addition, we believe visitors entering the Wood at Patterson Drive will be at increased risk from higher traffic flows during the construction phase of the project were it to go ahead.

It is our understanding that a planning application is due to be submitted at the end of October after which we will review it and forward all of our concerns to the Council Planning Committee.

