



Friends of Duchess Wood

(Charity number SC039527)

ANNUAL REPORT and ACCOUNTS

for the period

1st July 2020 to 30th June 2021

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Section A: Details

1. Current Trustees

Matt Offord (Chair) to 25 Sept 20
David Lewin (Acting Chair 26 Sept to 25 Jan 21, Chair from 26 Jan 21)
Rachel Bailey (to 25 Jan 21)
Laura Baird (from 26 Jan 21)
Paul Blackburn
Stewart Campbell (Acting Treasurer from 28 Oct 20)
Martin Grafton (Secretary)
William Hassall (Treasurer to 27 Oct 20))
Richard Horrell
Pete Minting
Miriam Walker (from 26 Jan 21)
Morag Young

2. Trustee changes during the year

There were a number of Trustee changes during the reporting period. The Chair, Matt Offord, resigned at short notice due to work commitments. He was replaced by David Lewin, an experienced Trustee who has been involved in FODW for many years. The Treasurer, William Hassall, resigned due to ill health and was replaced by Stewart Campbell (an ex Chair) on a temporary basis until a permanent replacement could be found¹. Lastly Rachel Bailey resigned. Two new Trustees, Laura Baird and Miriam Walker, were appointed at the AGM held on 26 Jan 21.

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

¹ Eilean Yendall took over as Acting Treasurer on 1 July 2021 and will be nominated as Treasurer at the next AGM (dtbc).

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 2019/20 was 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).

Until it was disbanded following the ending of Argyll and Bute Council’s involvement in the Wood on 1 August 2020 we were represented on the Duchess Wood Local Nature Reserve Committee (DWLNRC) of Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) which met for the last time on 4 August 2020. Responsibility for the management of Duchess Wood then passed back to the Landowner, Luss Estates Company (LEC). The Friends have retained an informal arrangement with LEC to assist in the Wood’s management and have had regular and productive meetings with the LEC Assistant Chief Executive Officer. It should be noted that, as yet, there has been no successor to the DWLNRC as discussed at its final meeting but LEC attend the first part of FODW Committee meeting where areas of mutual interest are reported on and discussed.

During checks of the finances it was identified that £66 appeared to have been withdrawn in fraudulently set up direct debits. This was returned by the bank and measures put in place to prevent a reoccurrence.

2.2 Membership

Following a number of initiatives, particularly leafleting homes adjacent or close to the Wood membership numbers have increased to 146 households (102 in Jun 20). Two newsletters were issued to members during the year along with a number of special communiques covering the ending of Argyll and Bute council’s involvement in the management of the wood.

2.3 Liaison

Contacts were maintained with the NatureScot, Community Payback, The Conservation Volunteers, Scotland Forestry, 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 (Roger Ferdinand agreed to be our point of contact), local primary schools, Lomond School, Luss Estates Company, Strathclyde Court Residents’ Committee, 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, John Williamson and Stuart McDonald) 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 Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns. Much of the Trustees efforts have been in continuing the debate with senior council officials and NatureScot about how to retain the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation for the wood. We have lobbied local councillors and MSPs, the Woodland Trust, the Community Woodland Group and also the Conservation Volunteers, but (other than support from Jackie Baillie MSP) have gained little support. We continue to be frustrated at the apparent lack of willingness for this to be maintained but note that, as yet, no formal application has been made by the council to de-designate the wood as a LNR. Whilst the end of the council's involvement in the management of the wood occurred at the end of July, due to Covid-19 restrictions and personnel availability, the formal handover to Luss Estates Company did not occur until 14th October when a joint walk round, attended by FODW, was conducted between LEC and A&BC. We are grateful for the remedial work carried out by A&BC prior to the final handover but also for the considerable work conducted by LEC, especially safety related issues, since their resumption of management of the Wood. This included fence repair work, lopping of dangerous branches, treatment of Japanese Knotweed and conduct of their own informal Tree and Bridge surveys. They have also taken over emptying the waste bins for which we are extremely grateful.

In early December Rhu Primary School donated and helped plant approximate 200+ in a tree nursery created with help from Community Payback by the lower pond.

The nationwide Covid-19 Lockdowns have resulted in some curtailment of activities. Whilst the wood remained open for members of the public to enjoy it did mean that some maintenance activities had to stop until lockdown restrictions were eased. Morag Young handed over management of the monthly woodland maintenance work parties to David Lewin although pandemic meant some work parties were cancelled (although some work by individuals did continue). We remain grateful for the active support given by members who attend these work parties.

The two ponds are developing well although the upper pond fencing is not yet completely dog proof.

Disappointingly there continues to be the odd event of vandalism. Additionally some unauthorised modifications to a tree in the upper wood, to make a fairy grotto, were removed at the request of the Friends as not in keeping with the spirit of a Local Nature Reserve. Lastly there have been a couple of occasions where garden and other waste has been deposited in the Wood (SEPA and Scottish Water were informed about red liquid which was seen in drains). We continue to monitor this.

Following sight of a motorised dirt bike in the Wood it has been confirmed that this is in contravention of the Open Access By-laws and future violations will be reported to Police Scotland.

We continued to debate with Persimmon Homes the nature of the woodland wildlife corridor, link into the wood for pedestrians and reparation for illegal dumping in the wood. We are grateful to Persimmon for their donation of some material (85t of aggregate worth £1,500) and grant of £1,000 towards the creation of a new path linking Duchess Gait to Duchess Wood. In addition we are also grateful for donations received from LEC (£1,000), HADT (£500) and Lomond School (£300) which also supported this work. £420 was also received from the Helensburgh Gardens Open Day held in June. All of this funding, together with a promise of £1,700 from Argyll and Bute Council, enabled the new link path to be built and will enable additional footpath work to be carried out early in the next financial year.

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 transfer back of management to Luss Estates. Our main leaflets continue to be available at the main entrances to the Wood.

The FODW website and Facebook Account continue to be updated regularly and visited regularly. Two newsletters were published for members during the year.

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.

Nicky Brownrigg has conducted some informative Herb Walks in the wood and is looking to continue these into the future.

2.6 Grants and donations

See comments above re donations totalling over £4000 from Persimmon Homes, Luss Estates, HADT and Lomond School.

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 has passed to Luss Estates Company now they have regained responsibility for management of the wood.

3 Outlook

The Management Agreement between Luss Estates Company (LEC) and Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) ended on 31 July 2020. The council position remains that 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 and are struggling to get much support for this (see comments above).

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

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.

Requests to donate two memorial benches have been received and these will be installed in the next financial year. As a result we have also produced agreed guidelines for this so that the positioning and type of bench can be controlled.

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

1. Financial Report

Friends of Duchess Wood		Scottish charity number SC039527		
Financial Statement for Year to 30 June 2021				Year to 30 June 2020
	£	£	£	£
Funds @ 1.7.20		3940	@1.7.19	2877
INCOME:				
Membership	1410		870	
Donations	687		613	
Card sales	88		127	
Paths grants	4571			
Sundry	43			
		+6799		+1610
EXPENDITURE:				
Admin	758		63	
(Insurance)	(138)		138	
(Helensburgh Parish Church)			98	
(Garage rental & repairs)	(100)		100	
Maintenance	219		50	
Groundworks and paths	2150			
(Website)	(54)		53	
Greeting cards	45		45	
Sundry	65			
		-3237		-547
Surplus for year		+3562		+1063
Add opening bank balance		+3940		+2877
Closing Bank balance		+7502		+3940

Notes to the Accounts for the year to 30 June 2021

- 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 HMRC 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 hold funds of £7502 (2020 £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 2021.
- 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

David Lewin, Chair
2 November 2021

Examined by
9, JP Swearingen CA
2/11/21

2. Independent Financial 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	Charity name Friends of Duchess Wood																				
Registered charity number	SC039527																				
On the accounts of the charity for the period	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">Period start date</th> <th colspan="3">Period end date</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Day</th> <th>Month</th> <th>Year</th> <th>to</th> <th>Day</th> <th>Month</th> <th>Year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>July</td> <td>2020</td> <td></td> <td>30</td> <td>June</td> <td>2021</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Period start date			Period end date			Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year	1	July	2020		30	June	2021
Period start date			Period end date																		
Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year															
1	July	2020		30	June	2021															
Set out on pages	1 (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	<p>In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention</p> <p>1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 <p>have not been met, or</p> <p>2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.</p>																				
Signed:																					
Name:	J T P Brownrigg																				
Date:	2-11-21																				
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	Member of ICAS																				
Address:	Ardentigh Glenoran Road Rhu HELENSBURGH, 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.