



## **Health and Safety policy statement. January 2023 (version 1)**

This document summarises the Friends of Duchess Wood approach to the health and safety of volunteers carrying out tasks in Duchess Wood.

### **1. Background**

1.1. Duchess Wood is 23ha largely deciduous woodland close to the centre of Helensburgh and receives about 80,000 visits pa.

1.2. The Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) is a community volunteer organisation and registered charity which supports the landowner, Luss Estates Company (LEC) with the management, maintenance and continued improvements to the Wood for the benefit of the local community and visitors. The Wood is managed in such a way as to create a safe, biodiverse environment for recreation, exercise, education and quiet contemplation.

1.3. In order to preserve and enhance the environment, routine maintenance and improvements are regularly carried out. Tasks such as major tree works, knotweed treatment, refuse bin emptying and any routine tasks requiring heavy machinery are carried out by LEC under their safe systems of work protocols and procedures.

1.4. Any third-party organisations carrying out work with their own people, whether employees or volunteers, are expected to manage their risks, carry out any appropriate risk assessments and have their own liability insurance in place. FODW will assist where appropriate in the provision of information about the Wood.

1.5. FODW organises regular volunteer work parties and carry out light activities using tools such as rakes, loppers, saws, spades and mattocks. The type of work is no different to that which volunteers would carry out in their own gardens. Our policy is to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that such work is carried out safely and without risks to health. FODW recognises that volunteer activity such as this is not covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. However the principles of common law and our duty of care, and the terms of our insurance, mean that a structured approach to risk is necessary, which is reflected in this Statement. Volunteers are covered by an insurance policy negotiated through The Conservation Volunteers and currently underwritten by Zurich Insurance.

1.6. Work parties are organised and led by a Trustee. The tasks and location of the work to be carried out by volunteers are identified and discussed at the start of the work party. At this time, if the group is to be split up, subgroups are formed. Any hazards associated with the area where work is to be carried out, which might be anywhere in the Wood, are discussed with volunteers.

The suitability of prevailing weather conditions at the time of scheduled work parties are reviewed by the work party leader. Bad weather (snow, freezing conditions, heavy rain and high winds) will result in the decision taken to postpone and reschedule the work party.

A list of potential hazards associated with volunteer work in the Wood together with risks and mitigations associated with these hazards are listed below.

1.7. When new volunteers attend work parties an assessment of their knowledge handling the tools above is made. New volunteers always work with an experienced volunteer initially and receive on the job training in the use of tools and jobs to be done.

## **2. Responsibilities**

2.1 This statement and associated hazards identification, risk assessments and mitigations are the responsibility of the Trustees of the FODW. The statement is included on the Duchess Wood web site under the Governance section.

A hard copy of this statement is kept in the Duchess Wood storage facility and discussed with new volunteers before any work is done by them. The Secretary of the FODW retains an electronic master copy of the document.

The statement should be reviewed annually when any adjustments needed will be discussed by the Trustees and a new version issued. Any changes made should be advised to the members of the FODW and any non-member volunteers.

## **3. Hazards associated with carrying out volunteer work in Duchess Wood**

3.1 There are a number of identifiable hazards associated with volunteer activities in Duchess Wood.

- 1 Prevailing weather conditions and impact on ground conditions.
- 2 Working in areas where visitors are walking or there may be cyclists or dogs.
- 3 Use of hand tools.
- 4 Risk of musculo-skeletal injuries when using tools, carrying timber or moving a wheelbarrow full of material.
- 5 Volunteers monitoring and volunteers working alone.
- 6 Application of wood treatments.
- 7 Use of contractors.
- 8 Events.

## **4. Risk assessments and mitigations associated with the above hazards.**

### **4.1 Weather conditions.**

The work party leader should assess the prevailing weather and advise volunteers of the possible impact of these e.g. causing surfaces to be slippery or muddy, especially on burn banks, or high winds causing small branches to come off trees. High winds, heavy rain, cold / frost conditions require the work party leader to assess if it is appropriate to hold a work party or re-schedule until conditions improve.

#### **4.2 Working in proximity to walkers, cyclists, horses and dogs.**

During work party activities volunteers may be working close to paths where there are walkers, cyclists, horses and dogs (referred to as visitors).

Volunteers should wear high visibility vests provided, keep a look out for approaching visitors and if appropriate pause what they are doing until visitors have passed. If necessary and in any constricted areas, sections of paths should be closed to visitors to allow work to be carried out.

#### **4.3 Use of hand tools**

Volunteers use rakes, loppers, mattocks, saws, spades, litter pickers and a wheelbarrow provided by Duchess Wood to carry out tasks.

Tools are routinely checked as being in working order when handed out to volunteers. Any damaged tools are discarded and replaced or repaired.

All volunteers must wear strong shoes or boots and gardening gloves to prevent hand abrasions when using hand tools or removing branches, weeds etc. Any volunteer who declines to wear appropriate clothing will not be accepted for this work. When the work party is finished tools will be checked for any damage and returned to the storage facility. When using any of the tools volunteers should ensure they are standing securely on firm ground and working a safe distance from other volunteers to avoid accidental contact with the tool they are using. Excessive force should not be used when handling tools.

#### **4.4 musculo-skeletal risks.**

Musculo-skeletal risks (sprains and strains) can arise if volunteers attempt to carry out tasks beyond their strengths, or in awkward or unstable positions. The work party leader will monitor activities for potential problems. Volunteers should not carry loads which they would not do at home, and the wheelbarrow should be loaded to a level or weight compatible with the volunteer's strength. Such work should also take into account the ground conditions and should avoid the risk of spillage.

#### **4.5 Volunteer monitoring and volunteers working alone.**

At the end of a work party, the leader will check all participants are accounted for and ask if any issues of concern had arisen during the work carried out. Any issues will be communicated to other Trustees and taken into consideration when planning future work.

On occasions a volunteer taking part in a work party will work alone. When this happens the work party leader must ensure the whereabouts of the unaccompanied volunteer is known and that he meets up with other volunteers at the end of the work party.

Also from time-to-time volunteers may decide, at their own risk, to visit the Wood to carry out work. When this happens it is the responsibility of the volunteer to let a friend or family member know what they are going to do, the area they will be working in and what time they can be expected back. Volunteers should also carry a mobile phone. If they do not return the family member or friend should contact the Police.

#### **4.6 Use of wood treatment materials.**

These proprietary liquid materials are sometimes applied to timbers to extend their life. Products come with a safety data sheet which volunteers familiarise themselves with prior to using the material. Any safety and clothing requirements stated by the manufacture are implemented and rubber neoprene gloves, safety glasses and one-piece disposable overalls are provided. Brushes and containers for the preservative are also provided. Any materials to be disposed of at the end of the work party are collected, bagged and safely disposed of in line with manufacturer's guidelines.

#### **4.7 Working with contractors.**

For large items of work such as footpath construction or repair the FODW will ask a contractor to carry out this work. In this case the Health & Safety Executive guidance related to Domestic Clients is followed.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm/2015/domestic-clients.htm> .

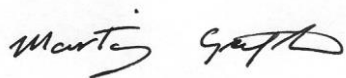
#### **4.8 Events**

From time to time FODW will organise and hold an event to which FODW members and the public are invited. Prior to the event potential hazards will be identified and associated risk assessments carried out.

If an event is organised and held by a third party, they will be informed they are solely responsible for all aspects of Health & Safety associated with the event.

Policy drafted by

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Authorised by



David Lewin Chair FODW

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