



Friends of
Duchess Wood

Friends of Duchess Wood

(Charity number SC039527)

ANNUAL REPORT and ACCOUNTS

for the period

1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023

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Section A: Details

1. Current Trustees

David Lewin (Chair)
Laura Baird
Paul Blackburn
Nicky Brownrigg (Acting Trustee from 16 June 2023)
Stewart Campbell
Martin Grafton (Secretary)
Richard Horrell
Eilean Yendell (Treasurer)
Morag Young

2. Trustee changes during the year

There was one Trustee addition during the reporting period with Nicky Brownrigg joining in June. Nicky is the daughter of the Financial Examiner, Terrence, and any potential conflicts of interest will be managed as they arise although none are foreseen. This leaves one vacancy which we continue to seek to fill.

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 A Details

Current Trustees

David Lavin (Chair)

Laura Baim

Paul Blackburn

Nicky Brownrigg (Acting Trustee from 10 June 2020)

Stewart Campbell

Martin Fenton (Secretary)

Richard Horrell

Eileen Yorrell (Treasurer)

Moray Young

Trustee changes during the year

There was one Trustee shandon during the reporting period with Nicky Brownrigg joining in June. Nicky is the daughter of the Financial Examiner, Tamara, and any potential conflicts of interest will be managed as they arise although none are foreseen. The trustees are a vacancy which we continue to seek to fill.

Governing Document

The Friends of Duchess Wood is a charitable, unincorporated body. Its purposes and administration are set out in the Constitution. Trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

Charitable Purpose

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.

Financial Examiner

Tamara Brownrigg

Banker

Bank of Scotland, Colinton Square, Helensburgh

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 2021/22 was held in Helensburgh on 23 November 2022 where 17 members were present.

We remain an affiliate member of The Conservation Volunteers for Scotland (TCV) group and we have arranged insurance with Zurich through them to cover our membership. We are also members of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA).

2.2 Membership

Over the year membership numbers have continued to increase and now stand at 201 households (up from 180) of which 3 are honorary members and 14 are outstanding debtors. This is a significant increase noting that the membership stood at 102 households in June 2020 and reflects the ongoing recruitment drive. We granted honorary membership to one individual during the year.

We are still keen to get more involvement from members and, as highlighted above, are still looking for one new Trustee. Two newsletters were issued to members during the year.

2.3 Liaison

Contacts were maintained with the Nature Scot, Community Payback, The Conservation Volunteers in Scotland, Scotland Forestry, Community Woodlands Association, Helensburgh and District Access Trust, Helensburgh Tree Conservation Trust, Helensburgh Community Woodlands Group, Helensburgh Cricket and Rugby Club, Helensburgh Community Council, Hermitage Primary School, Lomond School, Luss Estates Company, Rhu Primary School, Strathclyde Court Residents' Committee, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire Service, “we are with you” charity and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

We express special appreciation for the work of the Community Payback Team (led by 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.

Following local council elections, we made contact with the newly elected local councillors. We walked around the Wood with Councillor Fiona Howard who later

wrote an excellent article for the Helensburgh Advertiser about the benefits of the Wood.

We have also met with Stewart Steele who has been nominated as our link to the Helensburgh Community Council.

Responsibility for the management of Duchess Wood belongs to the Landowner, Luss Estates Company (LEC), with whom we have good relations which include their attendance at committee meetings on an ad hoc basis. We work to a three-year activity plan (2022 – 2024) highlighting the direction of the Friends activities for the medium to longer term and this is available on the website. [Activities List – Friends of Duchess Woods](#) .

2.4 Activities

Following the construction of a new path from Duchess Gait, joining in the main path around the Wood in June 2021, and the resurfacing of the “All Abilities Path” in August 2021, Robert Mckendry announced his plan to retire in October 2022. We took the opportunity before his retirement to commission work to extend and upgrade the path across the Pony Field and stone bridge to join to the path leading to the rear of Duchess Gait. This work cost just under £3000, was completed in early August and included some improvements to drainage in this area. The Friends gave Robert a small gift to thank him for his support and work.

During the year we commissioned updates to the Map and Information Boards. Our thanks go out to Babcock at Faslane for their work in updating the map graphics. Four new map boards and six information boards covering various aspects of the Wood’s ecosystem and management were installed over the late winter and spring. However sadly one of the information boards has since been vandalised but has been repaired and reinstalled.

In July we put a large sack at the Information Hub to discourage dog walkers from leaving bags by the path. This has been largely successful and our thanks to Morag Young and Sally Watson who regularly empty and replace these sacks.

The Community Payback team have continued to support us and have worked on the Thurgood and chicane bridges; both of which were shut whilst essential work was carried out. During work on to the chicane bridge it was noted the three 6 metre support beams are showing early signs of damage and a long-term solution for the bridge needs to be considered. We are looking at potentially replacing the bridge with a water pipe with hardcore fill and stone facing. The Thurgood Bridge base boards will also be surveyed. Finally, we have put warning notices by the two wooden bridges on the peripheral path warning horse riders not to use them as they were not designed to take the weight of a horse and rider which can be well over half a tonne.

In addition to bridge repairs Community Payback teams have helped with strimming the Pony Field and car park pothole filling. Their support has sometimes been limited in part due to lack of numbers.

There has been only limited engagement with the “we are with you” charity this year due to their lack of numbers. In November last year they donated and planted a memorial apple tree in the orchard.

In May some 40 senior pupils and staff from Lomond School visited the Wood for an afternoon to help with laurel clearance and other maintenance tasks in the Wood. This is the second year a large group of pupils has visited the Wood and we hope this continues to be a regular annual event.

We are engaging with the school to provide opportunities for D of E award activities. Additionally one of the grounds staff occasionally cuts some of the grass at the Pony Field and we are grateful for this.

Routine work by the FODW has included weeding the tree nursery, cutting back invasive species, pruning, mulching and cutting back brambles at the fruit tree orchard, repairing minor damage to footpaths, drainage, fences and benches and other low-level maintenance. In addition, volunteers planted birch saplings over the fence at the car park and birch and hawthorn saplings to the right of the path up from the car park to the Pony Field. All these trees and bushes seem to have survived and are thriving.

Whilst we continue to receive new memberships through the traditional membership leaflet, the Gocardless mobile phone-based membership scheme has continued to attract new members who pay by direct debit. Gocardless has also recently introduced a method of facilitating one-off donations. However the GoCardless scheme has the disadvantage of not allowing new members to sign off for Gift Aid and this has to be done by the Membership Secretary making direct contact with new members.

Finally we are grateful for the good work and support from Luss Estates Company which has included swift action to address unsafe trees, especially after winter storms, treatment of Japanese Knotweed, replacement of fencing at the car park and regularly emptying of bins. This includes the excellent work and advice received from their Contract Tree Surgeon, Archie Wilson. Luss Estates also gave a substantial grant to support the renewing of Map and Information boards.

Disappointingly there continues to be the odd event of vandalism. We always report this to Police Scotland and address it as soon as we can.

Discarded bottles and litter continue to be a problem and our thanks go to everyone who takes a bag with them when walking in the Wood and pick this up.

2.5 Public Relations, Publications and Events.

We have maintained good relations with the local press. Our main leaflets continue to be available at the main entrances to the Wood and elsewhere within Helensburgh. Additionally, we manned stands at the Community Clubs Event (Hermitage Academy in March) and Volunteers Event (Civic Centre in June).

We spent some time this year updating and producing a series of governance documents including the Constitution, Privacy, Safeguarding and Health and Safety. These are available on the web site at [Governance – Friends of Duchess Woods](#).

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.

In January the Chair gave a short presentation to the Helensburgh and Garelochhead Rotary Club about the role of Duchess Wood in offsetting greenhouse gas emissions and as a carbon store.

In February the Top10 leaflet was updated and is now "The Top 10 Things to See and Do" in Duchess Wood.

In May Fiona Baker, a local archaeologist, conducted a walk around the Wood for members looking at the archaeology of the site. This was a follow-on from the talk Fiona gave at last year's AGM. We very much appreciate the time Fiona gave to putting this event together which everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed.

2.6 Grants and donations

We continue to be given a number of donations and grants, many from individuals. More substantial donations include £850 from ACT Argyll for provision of site and facilities for Branching Out, a mental health and wellbeing initiative from NHS Scotland delivered by Green Aspiration, and £210.60 by the Scotland's Gardens Scheme (our thanks to Sue and Stewart Campbell). We have also been reimbursed £308.58 for Gift Aid donations covering tax year 2021-22. The May archaeology walk generated donations of £90.

Lomond School also agreed to re-instate their annual donation and increased it to £150.

As reported in 2018 A&BC, supported by FODW, submitted an application for a Forests and Land Scotland, Woodlands in and around Towns (WIAT) grant. The first stage of this application was successful and would have enabled active management of the increasingly dominant sycamore and other trees. Responsibility for progressing exploitation of this grant was passed to Luss Estates Company now they have regained responsibility for management of the wood. Following discussion with LEC it was agreed that it was not worth pursuing the application given the management effort required, the retrospective nature of any grants and the massive challenge extracting low value sycamore timber from the Wood.

3 Outlook

Whilst we do not have a formal Management Agreement with Luss Estates Company (LEC) our relationship is good, and we receive positive support from their senior management. We continue to monitor the Council's intentions in the local Development Plan and any moves to impinge on the Helensburgh Green Belt. We are also aware of moves to request permission to install an Electricity Battery Storage Facility on land owned by Ardencaple Farm, adjacent to the Wood on greenbelt land, and will engage fully in the consultation and any planning application process.

Meanwhile we will continue to encourage use of the Wood by local schools and others and in maintaining it as a valuable natural resource for the local community.

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.

Financial Statement for Year to 30 June 2023		Year to 30	
	2023	2022	2021
Closing Bank Balance	8,043	4,981	
Add Opening Bank Balance	7,702	6,043	
Deficit/Surplus for Year	1,650	(1,851)	
Total Expenditure	(2,490)	(2,902)	
Surplus	871		
Benches			
Away			
Laptop			
Community Woodlands Association			
Insurance			
Gas, Rental and Repairs			
Gas/Repairs			
Rental			
Holmshurst Parish Church / Room			
Admin			
Greening Cards			
Website			
Groundwork and other			
Maintenance			
EXPENDITURE			
Total Income	4,010	4,157	
Surplus			
Direct Grant Refund			
Conference Expenses (Kiln House)			
Card Sales			
HMRC Gift Aid			
Archaeological Walk			
Amazon Europe Care			
Leamond School			
Argyll and Islands ACT			
Donation Scotland Garden Scheme			
Pathe Grants / Donations			
Parish Donations			
Donations General			
Membership			
INCOME			
Funds @ 1.7.21			

SECTION C: FINANCIAL

1. Financial Report

Friends of Duchess Wood		Scottish charity number: SC039527		
Financial Statement for Year to 30 June 2023		Year to 30 June 2022		
	£	£	£	£
Funds @ 1.7.21		6 042		7 502
INCOME:				
Membership	1840		1 610	
Donations General	315		655	
Bench Donations			840	
Paths grants / Donations			300	
Donation Scotland Garden Scheme	211		400	
Argyll and Islands ACT	850			
Lomond School	150			
Amazon Europe Core	25			
Archaeological Walk	90			
HMRC Gift Aid	309			
Card Sales	157		129	
Conference Expenses reimbursement			65	
Direct Debit Refund			21	
Sundry				
Total Income		4151		4 020
EXPENDITURE				
Maintenance	1471		358	
Groundworks and paths	2823		3 109	
Website	96		95	
Greeting Cards	23		116	
Admin	723		439	
Helensburgh Parish Church / Room Rental	93		92	
GoCardless	8			
Garage Rental and Repairs	150		200	
Insurance	150		150	
Community Woodlands Association	30			
Laptop	235			
Award			50	
Benches			871	
Sundry				
Total Expenditure		-5802		-5 480
Deficit/Surplus for Year		-1651		-1 460
Add Opening Bank Balance		6042		7 502
Closing Bank Balance		4391		6 042

Notes to the Accounts for the year to 30 June 2023

1. 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.
2. Investments: No investments are held.
3. Taxation: The Friends is recognised by HMRC as a charity and is not liable to taxation.
4. Trustee remuneration and expenses: No Trustee receives any remuneration.
5. Reserves: As a result of activities in the year under review The Friends now hold funds of £4391 (2022 £6042).
6. 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 2023.
7. Risk Management Policy: The trustees have assessed the major risks to the operations and finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to major risks.
8. Expenditure: Admin costs include £204 for new Information Boards. Maintenance Costs include £534 for new Information and Map Boards and £475 for Bridge Repairs.

Approved by the trustees and signed on their behalf:



David Lewin, Chair

28 SEP 23

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 Woods

Registered charity number

SC039527

On the accounts of the charity for the period

Period start date				Period end date		
Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year
1	July	2022	to	30	June	2023

Set out on pages

10-11

(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

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:

J. J. P. Brownrigg

Date:

28) 09/2023

Name:

J T P Brownrigg

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

ICAS

Address:

Ardentigh House

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.

APPENDIX 3

Disclosure section

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight material problems.

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose

N/A.