



Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) – Activity Plan 2022-2024

This document sets out list of tasks which FODW proposes to carry out over the next 2 to 3 years with the agreement of Luss Estates Company (LEC). Some of these tasks are already take place while others are new.

Some of the proposed work will require external funding. This will come from grant application, FODW funds and, where possible, a contribution in the form of professional expertise, labour or materials. Some activities will require specialist advice. We would propose to consult LEC and seek additional advice where required from other sources. For completeness a number of tasks currently being progressed by LEC such as the tree, and burn crossing, safety surveys are included in the list.

The planned actions are grouped under a series of headings:

- Woodland Management
- Public Access
- Maintenance& Amenity
- Education and Citizen Science
- Recreation and Events.

The proposed actions and timelines are set out in the table below. At this stage no financial cost has been allocated to the activities proposed. This will be done on an activity-by-activity basis.

Area of activity	Task	Comments
Woodland management.		
Planting	Progressively transplant oak, maple, birch and hawthorn saplings as they mature in the tree nursery to areas where tree cover is spare and conditions suitable.	Suitable areas of ground will need to be cleared and prepared before planting can take place and saplings suitably protected until established. We propose starting with birch saplings in Q1 planting in the area below the lower pond. Birch and hawthorn planting Carried out in Q1 2023 at car park and bank alongside path from car park to Pony \Field. Remaining Hawthorn to be planted Q4 or Q1 2024.
	Restock the nursery to provide a succession of saplings for planting out in the Wood.	A few sweet chestnut saplings planted in Q1 2023
Invasive species	Cut back and keep under control outcrops of species such as rhododendron ponticum, laurel, and Japanese Knotweed. Eradicate where possible.	Japanese knotweed is treated by LEC. If FODW had to pay for herbicide treatment cost could be in the order of £1000 to £2000 for an area <50meters square. Car park knot weed successfully treated in 2021 and area replanted in 2023 with birch saplings. Knotweed at the rugby pitch to be treated in 2024 but bracken growth must be restricted to allow stem injection . Knotweed at Duchess Park treated in summer 2023.
Sapling regeneration	Where clusters of saplings	Part of ongoing work party activity

	regenerate naturally, thin to remove the weaker plants and select and protect stronger plants.	
Sycamore	Cut back sycamore regeneration on old stumps and cut down smaller sycamore particularly in compartments 2 and 3 and where sycamore is the dominant species	Compartment map attached Part of ongoing work party activities.
Juvenile tree plantations	Manage the 100 oak plantation (compartment 3) to select a few trees for development to maturity. Manage the small plantation of maple and cherry (compartment 4) to select one max two trees for development to maturity	Specialist advice needed. Seek to get this advice from LEC. A chainsaw team of 2 people for a day would cost c£200 to £400. Note tree guards removed from Millennium oaks at the May 2023 work party.
Felled and fallen trees	Where manageable, collect timber with a view to offering for supply for donations.	Support from tree surgeons needed to manage collection of timber from large trees. Estimated cost of £200 to £400/day
Tree safety survey	LEC to follow up on the recent tree safety survey.	FODW to provide assistance where practical and safe for volunteers.
Visitor Access Amenity		
All-Abilities Paths	Extend the All-Abilities path network to cross the Pony Field to join up with the new path to Duchess Gait and from the car park to the lower wildlife pond.	Funding required (Note: The link path behind Duchess Gait is fast becoming non-all-abilities) Completed 2022. Cost £2800(aggregate plus labour/machinery)/ 4.5days work
Signage	Review and update the welcome boards at the main entrances to the Wood. Install additional fingerpost direction signage as appropriate including application to A&BC for a brown tourism sign off Rhu Road Higher to the car park. Maintain colour coded way markers to indicate routes around the Wood.	Discuss map board and welcome boards with LEC. LEC have undertaken to supply a new welcome board but not yet in place. Planning permission and cost of a finger post directing to the car park off Rhu Road High would be +/-£300 in oak.
Information Boards and information leaflets	Update and replace visitor information boards and include QR codes to direct visitors to additional	Funding required. Review leaflets periodically and update if necessary. Refresh and reprint 250 Top 10 leaflet cost £134 completed March 2023 for Community volunteer event. Print run of additional 150 membership

	information on the web site. Maintain leaflet holders and keep supplied (membership, spring flower walk and top 10 things to see and do leaflets).	leaflets cost £88. Cost of artwork, production and repairs/new posts for installation of 6 new Information Boards £450. Completed Q2 2023
Map Boards	Update to include new path to Duchess Gait, wildlife ponds and remove reference to A&BC.	Funding possibly required. Include LEC in discussions. Redesign/artwork courtesy of Babcock and production of 6 new boards plus 2 new display boards cost ££243 for production and £20 for 2x display boards. Completed in Q1 2023
Social Media	Make use of social media (Facebook and Website) to encourage membership and raise awareness of activities in the Wood.	
Outdoor Access Code	Provide information to visitors on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.	Include latest version on map board update and Information Boards. Done
Maintenance		
Footpaths	Initiate repairs to paths and associated drainage, particularly the All-Abilities Path, as required.	Some funding may be necessary depending on the extent and cost of repairs. Robert Mckendry has retired. Cost of contractor David McKenzie based in Gartocharn. (Phone 07769505123.) £350/day using a digger and £200/day using a tracked dumper plus VAT.
Bridges. Wooden Bridges (east of the Pony Field and mid-way along the top path)	Regularly check for wear and damage and initiate repairs as necessary. Investigate options for replacing these wooden bridges with a more permanent structures e.g.pipe and fill.	Bridges may need to be temporarily closed to allow work to be done safely. Significant funding required. May require SEPA approval. Most of the base boards on the bridge east of the Pony field were replace in early 2023. Material cost for replacing all the base boards on the chicane bridge (May 2023) £195 plus £45 for new rails , total £240. In addition various screws and washers. The above excludes replacing the fiber glass grid which is currently laid on the chicane and Thurgood Bridge. This product costs around £140 for a 2meter x 1 meter length. Cost of fiber glass grid replacement for the 6meter span is c. £420. Costs being obtained for a culvert bridge. NOTE (1) Total spend with Gilmour & Aitken for bridge repair timber 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 £444. Note (2) Total spend with M&T lJuly 2022 to 31 May 2023 for various materials (screws, washers, postcrete, wood preservatives etc) £146. June /September 2023. Indicative costs to replace chicane bridge with pipe bridge including removal of old bridge £15k Cost of pipe crossing BUT leaving the old bridge in place or replacing the 3x 6m long support beams with a composite very long life material to be investigated and costed.

Thurgood Bridge	Regularly check steps for wear and replace risers and repack with type 1 as necessary. Check rails and supports are secure and repair as necessary.	<p>Over recent years step risers and side supports have been regularly replaced but not the base boards for this c 9meter span bridge.</p> <p>Estimated material cost of replacing all the base boards (decking) £400.</p> <p>Estimated current cost of replacing all the step rises is c£200.</p> <p>In addition hand rails and support posts may have to be replaced from time to time.</p> <p>We should assume an annual cost of £100/150/pa for ongoing repairs to this bridge.</p> <p>The above excludes replacing the fiber glass grid which is currently laid on the chicane and Thurgood Bridge. This product costs around £140 for a 2meter x 1 meter length. 3x 2meter lengths need cost £420.</p>
Bridge survey	LEC to carry out a bridge and burn crossing safety survey.	<p>Request LEC share this information with FODW.</p> <p>As at May 2023 this has not been carried out as far as is known.</p>
Seating	Check for condition and repair as necessary. Inform LEC of any new memorial benches installed.	Some cost for wood preservative may be incurred from time to time.
Grass strimming and brush cutting.	In season regularly trim the Pony Field grass, between the trees in the orchard, around the lower pond and east of the tree nursery including the banks of the raised rugby pitch. Brush cut brambles in the fruit tree orchard also to the east of the Pony Field and along the path to the upper pond.	<p>Community Payback and if possible Lomond School (cut may 2023 and hopefully every 2/3 weeks)</p> <p>Volunteers have cut down and removed significant numbers of brambles here at the upper pond. It will be a recurring activity.</p>
Bracken bashing	Routinely in season on the Pony Field and south of the rugby pitch.	Part of work party and other volunteer activity.
Education and Citizen Science		
Schools and Nurseries	Build on established links and create new links with local schools and nurseries and encourage them to use the Wood for science and art etc.	<p>Nicky Brownrigg has agreed to contact the teacher responsible for environmental activities and promote use of the Wood for projects, outdoor lessons and play.</p> <p>Lomond School work part in May/June each year with about 40 senior pupils</p> <p>Lomond School ECO-club to visit the Wood for volunteering activities monthly from March 2024</p>
Scouts, Cubs and Beavers	Maintain contact with existing groups and see what other activities might be carried out.	
Citizen Science	Promote Citizen Science projects e.g. bat monitoring	Projects suitable for adults as well as children.

	<p>and species identification using the bat monitor and mammal identification using the wildlife camera. Also species counts (e.g. butterflies and moths in season) and pond life surveys.</p> <p>Update Oct 2023. Using the Woodland Trust website, Veteran tree survey/mapping and logging date of appearance of key climate indicators on Woo eg frog spawn,</p>	
Recreation and events		
	<p>Adopt positive approach to any third party wishing to hold an event but ensure the organisers seek permission from LEC.</p>	<p>Ensure adequate advance notice is given to the public about any planned event. Liaise with event organizers as required.</p> <p>All event organisers to ensure the Wood is left in the same condition as before the event takes place.</p>
Miscellaneous		
<p>FODW Membership</p> <p>Maintain links with other local and national environmental groups.</p>	<p>Encourage and increase membership numbers and active support to Trustees.</p> <p>Community Woodland Association, the Conservation Volunteers, the Woodland Trust, Bug Life, the Access Trust and the Castle Woods group.</p>	<p>GoCardless mobile phone based membership facility introduced in Spring 2022 since when 36 new members have joined this way and by direct debit. Membership leaflets to be discontinued from Jan 2024 but forms to be kept on the website.</p> <p>Membership numbers at end June 2023 approaching 201 compared to 180 end June 2022.</p>