



Friends of Duchess Wood



Statement regarding the sale of Duchess Wood by Luss Estates - October 2024

The agreement between Argyll and Bute Council (A&BC) and Luss Estates Company (LEC) for the management of Duchess Wood expired at the end of July 2020 and stewardship of the Wood reverted to LEC as landowners. Since then, the Friends of Duchess Wood (FODW) committee has worked constructively with LEC to support the management, maintenance and improvements to the Wood for the benefit of the community.

LEC has now informed us that it has reviewed its continued ownership of the Wood, which LEC believes to be an unproductive asset with little, or no, development or cash generation potential. LEC has therefore taken the decision to seek a buyer for Duchess Wood.

The FODW have worked hard to build a good working relationship with LEC. We understand LEC has taken this decision purely on commercial grounds as the Wood is a financially non-productive asset. LEC has confirmed that this decision is unrelated to what it considers to be a positive working relationship with the FODW.

In the event the Wood is sold, the FODW will seek to work with the new owners on the same basis as we have worked with the Council and LEC for the last 25 years, namely, to support the provision of this natural amenity for exercise, relaxation, contemplation and education in a safe biodiverse environment.

The local community will no doubt be concerned that any new owner may seek to develop all or part of the Wood. Duchess Wood is a Local Nature Reserve, a Green Belt area, a Local Nature Conservation Site, an Open Space Protection Area and is on the NatureScot inventory of woodland of Long Established Plantation Origin which means that it is subject to a high degree of protection from development.

Luss Estates informed the FODW in 2021 and in strictest confidence, that they were reviewing their continued ownership of the Wood. As a result of this information the FODW has researched the option of a community purchase including benchmarking comparisons of Duchess Wood with several other woods where community purchases have been carried out or considered. However several factors led us to conclude this would not be a realistic course of action for the Friends of Duchess Wood. We are a small volunteer charity, with no professional woodland management expertise, made up of a largely elderly group of individuals. Also, like Luss Estates, we have not identified any significant cash generating opportunities. These would be essential to fund the considerable cost of the day to day management and maintenance of the Wood. Following a question related to a community buyout at the 2022 AGM, a discussion was held which concluded there was no appetite for the FODW to be involved in such an initiative.

You may recall Argyll and Bute Council held a public meeting in early 2020 about their decision to cease involvement in the Wood and asked if there were any parties interested in an alternative lease or ownership arrangement for the Wood. None were forthcoming at that time.

If there are any groups or individuals in the Town who may be in a position to consider taking over ownership of the Wood they should contact LEC and/or Goldcrest Land and Forestry Agents who are selling the Wood on behalf of Luss Estates.

In the meantime, the FODW continue our work in the Wood as usual and we thank you for your continued support.

The Trustees of the FODW

