

The Friends of Duchess Wood and community

The Scottish Government has accepted that the word “community” cannot be defined adequately. We agree. Here we take it to mean the public – both local people and visitors.

FODW serves and represents both categories of people. One way is through its membership, but its community role is wider, especially with regard to the three main Local Nature Reserve functions defined by Scottish Natural Heritage :

- biodiversity
- research and education (“education” being more than just schooling)
- access by the public for “informal recreation and enjoyment of nature”

FODW undertakes considerable work regarding biodiversity and wildlife, but that aspect is not covered in this paper. Although the primary designation of the Wood is as a **Local Nature Reserve**, its Management Plan makes clear that the Wood will be a multi-purpose community woodland, and that the Wood can accommodate a wide range of activities, as long as the LNR objectives are respected. Larger events, such as the “Zombie” run two years ago, major cross-country, orienteering and other large-scale events are managed through the A&BC events policy, but a significant number of smaller group activities, such as school visits, walking groups, nature tours, athletics training, children’s events, and Duke of Edinburgh award, take place on an informal basis, often assisted by FODW.

For almost a decade, FODW has worked with and for the community in a range of ways.

- Having a body of community members which elect its trustees.
- Carrying out / commissioning practical maintenance work in the Wood for public benefit (planting trees, control overgrowth, drainage maintenance, etc.)
- Carrying out / commissioning research and informing the public about results.
- Providing information / education for the public (newsletter, website, research summaries, information hub in the Wood, signposting, exhibitions, guided tours, outside talks, etc.).
- Encouraging athletics, walking for health, wildlife-watching and other outdoor pursuits.
- Events for children (e.g. Easter trail, Walking Theatre, wildlife learning events).
- Liaison with (and sometimes joint work with) a range of other organisations both local, regional and national. *See appendix 1 below.*
- Routine liaison with police, fire, environmental and other services and reporting problems to relevant bodies.
- Representing the community on the DWLNRC.
- Work on creating each five-year Management Plan.
- Raising and expending additional funding to supplement main grants obtained by A&BC.
- Rendering account to DWLNRC meetings, to the Friends’ AGM and to OSCR.