

FRIENDS OF LENZIE MOSS CHAIR REPORT 2013

The past 12 months have seen continued good levels of use of the Moss, with the condition of the Nature Reserve continuing to be something that Lenzie can be proud of. This is due to the work of many people including the conservation volunteer groups, the Ranger Service, other community volunteers and the people who walk the Moss and pick up litter on a regular basis. Our focus as a Friends group has been twofold. Firstly, continuing with a programme of events to attract new visitors and give an opportunity for locals to learn more about the history and biodiversity of the reserve. Secondly, to address the potential housing development of the grassland area beside Lenzie Moss Primary school.

Tonight we have two further presentations on activities. First Jackie Gillespie, Neighbourhood Services Strategy Officer with East Dunbartonshire Council, and then Fiona Burns from the East Dunbartonshire and Mugdock Country Park Ranger Service.

Jackie will explain more about the recent work on the Moss and those planned for 2013/14, and Fiona will review the Rangers' work in the past twelve months. So I hope not to cover too many of their items.

I will talk about the Lenzie Rugby Football Club issue last, and before that I would like to review some of the other highlights of the past twelve months.

On the events front, we have continued with our monthly format, with a regular walk and talk between April and October. From November to March we have organised conservation volunteer work days.

One highlight for me was the peat core day led by Dr Richard Tipping. I'd like to quote from Lenzie Community Council's website "Walkers crossing via the Moss boardwalk on a recent Sunday were probably puzzled to encounter a stationary group of people gathered round one person kneeling on the wet moss ground and pointing out various features of a long sausage of peat. The peat expert was Dr Richard Tipping of Stirling University, who was explaining how peat layers from 1.7 metres down could be analysed to tell us how our ancestors, even from before the Romans, seemed to have started the process of cutting down trees to clear land for crops. Information from a Glasgow University PhD study based on Lenzie Moss was handed out to show how microscopic examination of pollen content and radio-carbon dating was used to do this. This demonstration of peat coring and the talk based on a 'live' sample, had been arranged by Mugdock Park Ranger Service and Friends of Lenzie Moss. The telling point was made that the peat formation provides a treasure trove of historical and environmental information, which continues to yield evidence relating to land use, social history and climate change. Two hours passed very quickly and fortunately the rain held off. For me, the best part was examining a piece of tree that Richard estimated to be two thousand years old and we had just pulled it out from under the surface in a few minutes.

Another event linked to the Community Council was the joint event with Lenzie Fairtrade group. After a couple

of hours doing a cleanup on the Moss, what could be better than a food tasting at Mama Da Vinci's ! It is worth noting that despite the fairly litter-free areas around the main path, there are areas where people obviously still go to drink and leave a mess behind. Another interesting fact is that we always find people who have never been to the Moss attending our events, even in this case when it was attended by Lenzie residents.

In April the Moss was fortunate to host Scottish Natural Heritage's Sharing Good Practice on Wetlands event. This was targeted at professionals working in the environmental sector, who visited the Moss to discuss and share ideas on management of wetland areas involving community groups. This was good publicity for Lenzie Moss, which has certainly been in the news in the past twelve months, highlighting its significance as a rare habitat of international significance.

With respect to publicising future events, we have not been able to print a large volume of leaflets for this year's events. However, we have surveyed those attending and found that the Mugdock and Friends websites have attracted most of our participants. We also put notices in the display boards on the Moss and into the Kirkintilloch Herald.

Our presence on the internet and Facebook continues to grow, with an increasing number of people opting to receive Facebook updates from us. We recognise that not all members have or like to use the internet, and we plan to continue with our bi-annual newsletters. However, to save postage costs, I would urge all members to forward mail addresses to us, either when completing the subscription form or by emailing the Friends email address, which is in the Newsletters and on the website.

As I mentioned, events concerning LRFC have involved much discussion in the past year. At last year's AGM, we agreed the following motion

“We, the members of Friends of Lenzie Moss, support the Committee of Friends of Lenzie Moss in engaging in the local planning process to conserve and protect Lenzie Moss, including any proposal to redraw the existing greenbelt boundary.”

Since the last AGM, Lenzie Rugby Club's plans have become clearer, with their proposal becoming public to develop housing on the existing pitches and move the pitches and clubhouse onto the grassland area behind Lenzie Moss Primary School.

When the opposition group Save Lenzie Moss was formed, we ensured that we were represented at that group's meetings. One of the highlights of their action was the photo call on the Moss in December, when over 100 people met to show their support for SLM. It has to be noted that the potential pitch and clubhouse development is on land belonging to LRFC and outside the LNR, but is on green space many people consider to be part of Lenzie Moss. Following that meeting, articles and photographs appeared in the local and national press. We have also engaged with the planning process, taking part in meetings held by EDC to consult on the development of the local plan. We have met with Lenzie Community Council, councillors and LRFC. It is clear we are a respected voice on this issue.

We now have a good understanding of the rugby club's issues, and sympathise with their reasons for wishing to continue with this development. However, we remain concerned over the impact on the LNR, specifically with respect to the hydrology of the peat bog and loss of green space currently crossed by the circular path. These will remain our focus. As far as houses on the pitches goes, we have remained neutral to this. Members who object to this should visit the SLM website to register for updates on their campaign. For now, the local plan process is on hold, and we wait for this to move forward.

What does next year hold for us ?

We feel the programme of events is a good use of our resources, with most being very well attended. We will also continue to engage in the planning process as it affects the nature reserve.

Our committee will soon lose a member as Kate Robinson is standing down due to work pressures. I would like to thank her for all her work and enthusiasm. So we have Ian, Joan, Anna, Christine, Kate and myself. We really do need new committee members, as most of the committee are long- serving and would like to allow new members to become involved. The committee meets four times a year, and the duties are not extensive. Please consider giving a short period of service, I can vouch that it is very interesting voluntary work and key to the ongoing protection of Lenzie Moss.

I would like to thank Jackie Gillespie for promoting Lenzie Moss and Scottish Natural Heritage for funding the programme of works currently underway on the Moss.

We continue to receive excellent support from the Ranger Service, who run all the events that we manage to support. They do so much of the background work that keeps the Moss in such good condition. I would like to thank them, our committee and all the volunteers for their work through the year.

Paul Dudman

Chair

19 June 2013