

Friends of Milngavie Reservoir (FoMR)

Position Paper – Designed Landscape and Biodiversity

Background:

The distinctive beauty of the Milngavie Reservoirs lies in the designed relationship of reservoir architecture and its associated landform, planting, reflective water and vistas - all recognised in the site's inclusion in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscape and HES Grade A listing. Outdoor recreation is recognised as hugely beneficial to physical and mental health so the stewardship of the site including the landscape is crucial for its many visitors.

Deteriorating built landscape features (such as masonry and ironwork) are dealt with in other position papers. This paper addresses *soft* landscape (anything growing, whether designed or self-seeded) and encompasses biodiversity. Vegetation has multiple benefits - for flora and fauna, aesthetics and carbon capture. Milngavie Climate Action promotes tree planting and FOMR supports this aim through management at MR.

Milngavie Reservoir Conservation and Recreation Management Plan produced in 2006, at the time of the Katrine Water Project, included a detailed analysis of the existing landscape and recommendations for future conservation. The principle recommendation was that there should be a *comprehensive management and maintenance plan* for all soft landscape and that this should be produced within a year of completion of the project. This was never produced. Since then the site has been included in the national 'Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes' (the only such one in East Dunbartonshire) but remains with no plan. Routine operations are carried out – grass cutting, tree checks and tree work for health and safety purposes – but there is no management framework.

Conclusions:

FOMR supports the recommendations of Milngavie Reservoir Conservation and Recreation Plan are used as the basis for a management and maintenance plan. The report identified various character zones and how they should be managed. By its very nature vegetation changes over time and the first task would be to revisit all areas to update the descriptions.

Update Baseline

- Areas of recent planting
- Damage by informal bike tracks
- Removal of mature trees which has opened up views
- Blocking of views by self-seeded plants
- Unwanted exotics or pernicious plants
- Changes to revetments – overgrowth and more recently cleared edges

Historic Landscape Management

- The distinctive historic design of the site is fundamental to its unique character. Whilst there will not be a return to the labour-intensive horticulture of past eras, the

spirit of the Victorian design should be respected, with its avenues, tree belts, woodland, and formal areas at the hub. This would include choice of planting. With community involvement some modernised elements of the formal planting around the hub could be reinstated.

- Retention of formal avenues with cyclical replacement of trees as required.
- Ensure retention and enhancement of key vistas and coordinate with seating.
- Built structures to be kept free of damaging vegetation.
- Ensure health of vegetation.
- Ensure safety of visitors.
- Restore areas which have become degraded by over- or inappropriate use or waterlogging.

Biodiversity

The Victorian era was one of exploration and collecting exotic plants which were then nurtured in ordered gardens. Since then a whole ecological movement has evolved and we all recognise the desirability of improving biodiversity for the benefit of our natural environment. The Reservoirs site offers many opportunities for this purpose. Briefly, this means,

- Identifying areas for biodiversity enhancement, including native tree and shrub planting and wildflower mixes.
- Planting native species (as these are required for native fauna)
- Creating 'structure' from open species-rich grass to tall herb layer, scrub, light woodland and high canopy.
- Linking areas with hedges, trees and scrub to create 'corridors'
- Changing the grass cutting regime where feasible.
- Introducing species-rich and wild-flower areas.
- Encouraging natural cycles of fallen timber, decay and regeneration.
- Provision of bird /bat boxes.
- Appropriate maintenance of existing natural habitats including naturally occurring small ponds and wetland.

FOMR would seek to liaise with ecology expertise within SW itself, EDC and Mugdock Country Park to achieve realistic goals.

Community Involvement

FOMR accepts that high maintenance bedding and shrubberies, popular in the past when labour was cheap, are no longer feasible. There are however opportunities for community involvement both in general upkeep and in undertaking specific projects, for example a sensory garden, community orchard or arboretum.

Maintenance

Maintenance regime should be designed to meet the management aims, from varying grass cutting times to cyclical tree and shrub checks, tree and shrub replacement and control of unwanted species.

There are particular issues which affect both management aims and maintenance:

- FOMR recognises Scottish Water operational constraints.
- New planting will require protection from rabbits and deer.
- Informal bicycle access in 'soft' areas, may need to be controlled to allow restoration and further damage to the ground.
- Paths to be kept in a passable condition to prevent further erosion of adjacent areas.
- Coordination of seating with key vistas.

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