

North Highland O.W.L.  
Annual General Meeting  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020  
Cornerstone Café, Evanton  
4.45pm – 6.15pm

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Present – Simon Harry, Marcia Gray, Robert Dineen, Julia McGhee, Petria Brooke-Carr, Gregor Comrie, Kenny McCusker, Kerry Dolan and Julie Gordon.

Apologies – Catherine Allison, Sue Coggins, Shirley Anne Stevenson, Jen Smith, Mike Smith, Julie Brewer, Karla Urquhart, Christine Gordon and Sally Cameron.

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1. Simon welcomed everyone to our first A.G.M. after which, we cut our 1<sup>st</sup> birthday cake and enjoyed a slice as the meeting proceeded. Simon extended a big thank you to the committee members for their work over the year.
2. Simon read his Chairperson's report and that of our treasurer Shirley Anne, as she was unable to attend the meeting.

### **CHAIR'S report**

It's been a fantastic first year for North Highland OWL Group. We were extremely fortunate to secure funding from the previous North Highland OWL group and from the **Scottish Forestry Commission** via the National OWL network. This start-up grant has helped us to buy kit and run our first CPD events. We shall also use the funds to support the launch of our group in the spring.

We provided three CPD events over the course of the year covering various aspects of the curriculum including Literacy, Food Technology and Health and Well-being. These events were well attended and enriched by being held in local woodlands. We are looking forward to an Arts and Craft event in February making lanterns with withies and a Science event on The Physics of Rockets! (Date tbc.)

We have set up a bi-annual grant of £300 that can be awarded to a local community group or charity to help support easier access to the 'Great Outdoors'. This may be with transport costs or expertise otherwise out of the groups' skill set.

Our mailing list currently has 48 people signed up and 34 folk are following our Facebook page. We try to meet once every month in term time and hold our meetings in different schools each time. Each meeting ends with a skill share session run by willing, enthusiastic members.

**Facebook** group link: <https://www.facebook.com/NorthOwlGroup/>

## North Highland OWL TREASURERS report, 25th<sup>th</sup> February to

Balance brought forward on

Remaining balance = £10,000.00

Total Income = £16,834-05

From: Grant from Golspie £14,467-05

Grant from Scottish Forestry £2,000

Income from courses £367-00

Total Expenditure =£6,648-73

Towards: Workshops £2,074-08

Administration £673-00

Bi Annual Grant £277-51

Equipment £2,316-11

Art/Crafts £1,308-03

Funds Remaining = £10,185-32

3. The current office bearers stepped down and our committee for the coming year was voted in as follows:

The position of chairperson – Kerry proposed Simon and Petria seconded the proposal, Simon happily agreed to serve for another year.

The position of administrator – Simon proposed Gregor and Julie Gordon seconded the proposal; Gregor agreed to take on the post.

The position of minutes secretary – Julie Gordon proposed Kerry and Gregor seconded the proposal; Kerry is happy to serve for another year.

The position of treasurer – Simon proposed Shirley Ann and Kerry seconded the proposal; Shirley Ann had agreed prior to the meeting to serve another year if no-one else wanted to take the post on.

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## 4. A.O.B.

(i) Our group has already bought a large amount of kit which is stored in the Averon Sports Centre in Alness. Ian Goode of the Averon Centre donated a cupboard for this purpose allowing easy access to the kit. Julie Gordon picked up 2 unused filing cabinets from Fortrose Sports Centre and has fitted new locks and had keys made.

Julie has also been very busy and compiled a wide range of art supplies and bug hunting equipment and field charts for the group and had them ordered up and delivered to the Avern. This was no mean feat as there were many huge boxes of supplies! Thank you very much Julie for your hard work in this area.

Simon has made good progress in getting our tools, first aid kits and tipi (able to hold 20 adults/children). **A.P.** Simon will get the rest of the tools and cooking kit ordered up.

This kit is to be used throughout our area by schools and groups delivering training, workshops and sessions connected to getting children and adults outdoors to enjoy and connect with our natural world. **A.P.** Simon will organise C.P.D. training in Tool Use and Care so they can be safely used by those borrowing them and look at the risk assessment aspect of using tools with various user groups and ages. Kerry suggested that we keep a record of the people who have been trained in tool use and that only those people will qualify for borrowing them therefore keeping all user groups safe.

**A.P.** Simon is going to be busy as he will also find out from O.W.L. H.Q. how other groups manage their Kit Borrowing system. Ideally we would like to have an on-line document which can be accessed by all members of the group which would catalogue the kit and incorporate a method of logging who had what kit and when it would be returned by. Marcia suggested that using Google Docs would allow us to achieve this.

Julie G. had suggested at an earlier meeting that we should look at compiling two lots of kit and have the second one located farther north; up by Lairg, to accommodate the far north area as we are too far away from Wick, Thurso and Durness area. We will schedule this discussion at our next meeting.

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(ii) As our bank account is too healthy we do not qualify for funding from O.W.L. Scotland at the moment so it was thought that investment in further kit would benefit our area in terms of supporting schools and groups to access and host sessions outdoors. To this end we can also afford to run workshops and C.P.D. events which would extend the knowledge and skills of our group. Our group would be able to fund 50% of the cost to individual group members willing to attend these sessions.

(iii) Simon, Kerry, Shirley Ann and Gregor will represent N.H. O.W.L at the Scottish O.W.L. networking event which takes place in Aberfoyle on the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. Hopefully they will come back loaded with new ideas, skills and make contact with the folk delivering the courses, who might be interested in coming North to do the same. Julie G. suggested that when we plan our C.P.D. events for the coming year that we liaise with South Highland O.W.L. and combine our courses if possible. This would make sense for those delivering as they could do a day for each of us whilst they are here. Kerry mentioned that she was looking forward to the

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Tree Identification in Winter session and Marcia offered to deliver training for the group in this area. Thank you Marcia!

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(iv) Julia McGhee from Highlife Highland is a Youth Development Officer and Working in Partnership Officer. Part of Julia's remit is to source funding for groups who support youth activities. During a discussion regarding this it was suggested that Julia would look into available funding for members to undertake the Coastal Activity Leaders Training through Wild Things in Findhorn <https://wild-things.org.uk/our-events/coastal-activity-leader-training/>

Many of our schools in North Highland have direct access to beaches and it is Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters. Scottish Natural Heritage have launched funding to support community groups with this (£2,000.00 - £10,000.00) – the deadline for funding is February 20<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to hearing back about this!

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(v) Suggestions for C.P.D. events are welcome please. It was suggested that we get The Creeping Toad back up to deliver more training on outdoor literacy as his session with us last year was such a big hit with both the children and adults. Simon will deliver Tool Use and Care and also Great Big Rockets. Simon has had several sessions with the rockets now and as Frederique is soon to be on maternity leave Simon is happy to deliver the training. These rockets have to be seen to be believed apparently – they are super-charged with compressed air and really fly!

(vi) Kerry or Kay will be delivering the Withie Lantern Making C.P.D. session on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> February at 1pm -3pm in Evanton Woods. This will be a relaxed session with tea and cake and not super-charged at all!

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(vii) At our next meeting we will draw up a criterium by which groups in our area can apply for our £300.00 bi-annual grant to encourage people to enjoy and connect with nature. Last year Highlife Highland qualified and used the money to host a free of charge two day event for children in the Alness area in P4-P7 in the October holidays. The event was well attended and the children took part in mountain biking, wide games, tarpaulin shelter building, making Fairy Fires, making and cooking Pizza Wraps over an open fire.

**Our Next Meeting will be held at the Scout Hut in Evanton**

**(beside the sports centre, opposite Kiltearn Primary School)**

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 4pm**

**Skill Share – Simon will go over the safe use of some hand tools**

*We look forward to seeing you all and hearing your suggestions for the C.P.D.  
events you would like to see in your calendar*