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**Outdoor Woodland & learning North East Group Meeting**

**At Greenmyres Eco Bothy, Huntly**

**1st December 2022 10am-2pm**

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

**Present:** Joanne Evans, Julia MacKay, Jill Birch, Lindsey Duncan, Doug Gooday (Aberdeenshire Council Ranger), John Malster, Kate Malster, Neil Taylor, Stephen Reeves, Rebecca (Dorenell Ranger Service), Natalie Campbell.

**Apologies:** Juliet Robertson, Dawn James.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting 14th March 2022, matters arising**

* Julia - the group has received the admin grant of £1200 from OWLS Scotland.
* Doug attended the OWL Scotland Networking Event on 9th-11th September 2022 at Pillars of Hercules, Falkland and collected OWL Scotland old logo branded resources from Eilidh which members can take home. Doug also raised the update on OWL fire guidance and the need to call the Fire Service when fire lighting outdoors. It was thought by OWLS members at the event that it should be a judgement call based on practitioner experience.
* Julia raised the issue from a recent Campfire and Food Safety in Fraserburgh that only 2 participants were aware of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the use of fire. OWLNEG can further signpost and promote SOAC at future events and training.
* Neil (FLS) said that users of FLS land need permission to light fires from FLS. Stephen said that in National Parks no fires are allowed.
* Possibility of a SOAC course through OWLS in the future.
* Minutes approved by Julia and seconded by Doug.
* No other matters arising.

**3. Events**

**Completed Events**

* Outdoor First Aid course organised by Lindsey on 17th and 18th September at Alford was well attended.
* Doug reported on the Foraging Event 27th October run by Dan Puplett at Haddo House. OWLNEG broke even at this event with a flurry of last-minute bookings.

**4. Treasurer**

* Julia has been confirmed as Treasurer and has received the accounts handover and has access to online banking for the group.

**5. Accounts**

• OWLNEG total balance - £38, 857.27p. Running balance for OWLNEG is £16.672.02p and running balance for BOSA is £26,417.77p.

**6. Branching Out South Aberdeenshire (BOSA) (Jill)**

BOSA is in the final stages of Programme 9 with one more session to run, having had to postpone a session in recent adverse weather. Prog 9 started on 1st September at Crathes with an initial 11 referrals from Alcohol Drugs Action, Community Mental Health, GP services, Employability. This programme had an unusual mix of age groups with several clients in their late teens and early twenties. Despite the disparate ages and backgrounds this was one of our most successful programmes in terms of client outcomes with all clients taking very significant steps forward with consequent improvements in both qualitative assessment and quantitative mental health scores. We were particularly pleased for the outcomes for several very vulnerable clients who were variously helped to find how to connect socially after severe isolation, gain confidence and encouragement to reach for goals and to better manage the challenge of long-standing addictive behaviour through exploring and identifying triggers. We will continue to support through Branching Out PLUS our follow-on programme in the New Year.

In other news, we are still planning to collaborate in a research programme with Stirling University whose funding proposal is awaiting a 3rd stage of approval. This will be an exciting opportunity to contribute and will also allow independent assessment of client outcomes for our joint programmes.

**Action:** Jill to send Joanne a short paragraph for the next OWLS bulletin in January 2023.

**7. Future Events**

* **Joint Moray OWLS Group/OWLNEG networking event 26th March 2023 at Greenmyres Eco Bothy, Huntly.** Moray OWLS have applied for funding for event of £700 and OWLNEG can match fund. There will be six 2-hour workshops run twice (morning and afternoon). Each workshop provider receives £250 each total for running the workshop twice. Participants choose one workshop morning and one afternoon. Participants charged £10pp, covers refreshments, booking etc. No charge for 'active' members. Workshops as follows:-
  + 1. Dan Puplett - Tracks, signs and tracking games
  + 2. Ged Connell - greenwood working (mallet) Doug Gooday from OWLNEG has offered to help to allow you to have more people on the workshop. There is a farm shed to provide a sheltered area for this.
  + 3. Earthtime (Eleanor) - ethnobotanical walk
  + 4. N4H - nature crafts or nature connection activities
  + 5. Jill Birch - OWLNEG - pond dipping
  + 6. John Malster - OWLNEG - willow weaving

**Action:** Julia, OWLNEG, is going to handle booking forms, bookings and payment and match fund for workshop provision.

**Action:** Doug to book Greenmyres

**Action:** Joanne to create event on OWLNEG Facebook page and on OWLNEG website.

* **Junior Forester Award**

**Action:** Doug to email PDF on training for this award.

**Action:** Doug to contact Bonnie/Eilidh about training for those interested.

* **Little Acorns CPD 13th February 2023**

Julia has suggested OWLNEG run a series of round robin workshops as part of a CPD day for NHS Nursery Staff. 4 workshops – Julia (shelters and knots), Doug (tools), Joanne (crafts), Jill/Dan (bug hunt). Julia to confirm.

* **Collaborative workshop at Loch of Blairs for OWLNEG and Moray OWLS – April 2023 – date TBC.**
* **OWLS Networking Event at Dounans, Aberfoyle 17th-19th February 2023**

Julia, Doug and Lindsey attending from OWLNEG.

* **Scything Workshop September/October 2023 TBC**

John and Doug organised a scything workshop in September 2022 which was well attended.

This could be run again in 2023 as an OWLNEG event. Doug proposed applying for heritage lottery funding for 6 scything kits (approx. £150 per kit) plus a tent tipi for 25 people which would total approx. £6000. **Action:** Doug to progress funding application.

**8. Updates**

Please send any updates to Joanne to be included.

**9. AOCB**

* No matters arising.

**10. Date for next meeting**

Monday 13th March 2023. Time and venue TBC after AGM on same day.