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

**Via Zoom**

**4th October 2021 2pm-4pm**

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

**Present:** Joanne Evans, Julia MacKay, Juliet Robertson, Joan Anderson, Lindsey Duncan, Neil Taylor,

Jill Birch, Doug Gooday (Aberdeenshire Council Ranger), Stephen Reeves (Dorenell Ranger Service), John Malster.

**Apologies:** Elaine Crawford, Aileen Salway, Mandy Tulloch.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting 14th June 2021, matters arising**

* Freshwater workshop - Jill still keen to offer a further freshwater workshop (EY/Primary) to encourage engagement and understanding and to encompass biosecurity and safe access to water. Line of enquiry to chase again; Doug offered help too with safety aspects
* Minutes approved by Doug and seconded by Jill.
* No other matters arising.

**3. Branching Out South Aberdeenshire (BOSA)**

We have completed programme six and Jill has written an excellent report which has been distributed to the main OWL members. To keep within Government guidelines, we had two split groups which became quite challenging when numbers were low. In those cases, we came together as one group. However, all the participants had a very positive experience and signed up to Branching Out Plus (BOSA). We received COVID money from Foundation Scotland to help fund a doubling of BOPLUS delivery across two geographical areas to keep travel and numbers low. This also funded our recent reunions at Glen Tanar and NTS Crathes. Recent BOSA activities involved volunteering at Portlethen Moss, which was led by Helen Young, Aberdeenshire Ranger. Future plans may include linking up with Stirling University to look at the long-term combined effects of our two programmes, Branching Out and BOPLUS to provide some independent evaluation for future funding proposals.

Cohort 7 – 8 referrals for this new group.

Action: CH/JB to discuss finance/accounts for BOSA & OWLNEG.

**4. Members’ survey (John M)**

* John M. suggested a survey of the OWLNEG group to find out about skills in the group.
* 2 different types of membership – Facebook (1.4K) and email distribution list (40+ members).
* Google Forms being used for survey.
* **Action:** subgroup of John, Jill, Juliet and Joan to formulate questions for the survey.

**5. Workshops/Events 2021/2022**

* John Malster
  + Willow workshop 10th April 2021 at Muirfield School.
  + Seed sowing – Woodhead of Fyvie 11th August 2021 and James Hutton Institute (with NESBIP) 18th September 2021.
  + Willow maintenance at Oyne School 6th November 2021.
  + Creating willow structures at Orchard Brae School, Aberdeen end of November/December 2021.
* Doug/Joanne
  + Tools workshop on Thursday 28th October 2021 at Daviot Scouts Campsite 10am-3pm. This will be booked via Eventbrite at £30 per person. 12 participants. John/Kate to attend to help with workshop. For adults working with children aged 7/8+.
* Doug/Justin
  + Tools workshop 2 TBC at Camphill, Aberdeen.
* Enquiries on Facebook group for Early Years Tools workshop. Kate/John to investigate as a potential future workshop. Pete Moorhouse is a useful online source.
* Julia read out an email from a group of headteachers with a workshop request. **Action:** Julia to send email onto Doug to investigate further. DG contacted Echt school cluster and I am going to deliver Nature engagement CPD including literacy and numeracy skills on in-service days in November and February.
* Jill has had a request for an event in Banchory. JB to investigate further.
* Hedge laying workshop in February 2022 is a possibility.
* Stephen reported that Aller Croft would be available Summer 2022 for events/meetings.

**6. W4L Grants (JE)**

• JE is still receiving reports and she is chasing previous successful applicants.

* Julia reported that community grants have not been allocated yet within FLS.
* Sally York has retired. Bonnie has moved into Sally’s job. Job application deadline closed last week.
* Linnean Society local nature grants available. (Juliet)

**6. Finance**

* Total balance is TBC, Branching Out balance TBC. OWLNEG only balance TBC. **Action:** JE to email Claire for details.
* Treasurer position to be advertised on Facebook group and email distribution list. **Action:** JE.
* Current account signatories are Aileen, Julia and Ian. **Action:** DG to review.
* Changing the account from a treasurer’s account to a business account would make life easier.

**7. AOCB**

* Julia – 2 newly qualified forest school leaders – Rhona Mowat and Kim Neilson have passed FOLA training.
* John said he would like to be Vice Chair rather than co-chair. Unanimous vote.
* Juliet – spoke about PEEP training in Aberdeen City Council and working with families.
* Lindsey – working at Tough and Dunecht Schools.
* Stephen – new ranger starting at Dorenell Ranger Service.

**8. Date for next meeting**

Next meeting is on Monday 6th December 2021 at 2pm on Zoom or face to face TBC.

**9. Updates**

Updates received.

**Jill Birch**

I continue to enjoy contributing to NESOLG's delivery of FOLA re. Woodland Ecology Unit and this year taking on the marking of the Learning and Development Unit for Cohort 11. Also volunteering when I can with Banchory Wildlife Friendly Village Initiative and hoping that these activities (e.g.wildflower patches/nestboxes) will allow connection and involvement for local BOPLUS members also.

BOSA programme mg'mt/ delivery - this summer was busy preparing for referrals for Programme 7 (end August- Nov) and end of year reports and budget for The National Lottery, Foundation Scotland and for our very supportive partners (ADA, ADP, Community Mental Health South and NTS Crathes). Our BOPLUS community continues to grow in strength and it's wonderful to see folk taking on new challenges and reaching out to support others. BOPLUS events continue year round in a wide variety of locations to reflect our large geographical range of referrals. In the last three months we enjoyed events ranging from walks at Clune Wood Durris and St Cyrus, to reunion events in August at NTS Crathes and Glen Tanar - with the very welcome support of both NE Ranger Service and Glen Tanar Ranger Service respectively. Most recently we assisted Aberdeenshire Ranger Helen Young to cut gorse and dam a small stream to help retain water levels on Portlethen Moss. We hope to return here as this is a particularly special 'go to' place in nature for several clients. Next week we are assisting St Cyrus Rangers with grass removal after a scythe cut - fingers crossed for some dry weather between now and then!

Together with the What's App group (which takes up quite a bit of time too!), these are great opportunities for our BOPLUS friends to meet up in wild spaces, chat, work alongside and encourage each other for more sustained mental health gains, following completion of the Branching Out programme. Always looking for new connections on Deeside or the Mearns - do please get in touch if you know of a conservation project that needs a little assistance!

**John Malster- Curam Fyvie**

Workshop on propagating local provenance plants was held at Woodhead of Fyvie in August and attracted 9 participants. Another workshop on the same topic, run on 18th Sept. at the James Hutton Institute, was organised by NESBiP and attracted 15 participants.

Hoping to run more Willow workshops. The first one would be held at Oyne School covering maintenance. Suggested date for this is Saturday, 6th Nov.

Orchard Brae School in Aberdeen has asked for the construction of a Willow structure and it may be possible to do this as a workshop, perhaps in early December.

A training course was run for staff at the Croft Nurseries in September, covering the potential for nature connection in their outdoor area.