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

**The Acorn Centre, West High Street, Inverurie, AB51 3SA**

**10th March 2023 11am-1pm**

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

**Present:** Joanne Evans, Neil Taylor (Forestry & Land Scotland Ranger), Julia MacKay, Jill Birch, Lindsey Duncan, Doug Gooday (Aberdeenshire Council Ranger), Simon Whitworth (Aberdeen City Ranger Service), John Malster, Joan Anderson, Dawn James (RSPB).

**Apologies:** Stephen Reeves, Eric Baird, Rhona Mowat, Juliet Robertson, Grace Banks, Grampian FLS Conservatory.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting 1st December 2022, matters arising**

* Matters arising to be covered in meeting.
* Minutes approved by Julia and seconded by Doug.

**3. Greenmyres Networking Event (JM)**

* This is taking place on Sunday 26th March 2023 at Greenmyres Eco Both and is being run jointly with Moray OWLS.
* This event is fully booked with 6 workshops running throughout the day with 6 people on each workshop (a total of 36 people plus workshop leads/helpers up to 40 people). Workshops as follows:-
  + Tracks and signs (Dan Puplett)
  + Green woodworking (Ged Connell)
  + Ethnobotanical walk (Eleanor Foster)
  + Nature crafts (Ruaraidh Milne)
  + Pond dipping (Jill Birch)
  + Willow weaving (John Malster)
* Timings:-
  + Set up 9am
  + Registration 9.45am
  + Workshop 1 – 10am to 12noon
  + Lunch 12-12.30pm
  + Workshop 2 – 12:45pm-2:45pm
  + Evaluations – 2.45pm-3pm.
* Participants and workshop leaders to liftshare as much as possible as car park is small.
* A range of participants this time including some new faces. Everyone has paid apart from one person.
* Moray OWL group have received funding for their workshop leads.
* Charge is £10 so that people will commit to attending and to pay for resources used.

**Actions**

* Doug to contact Greenmyres re access to sheds and outbuildings for workshops.
* Doug to bring kindling for fire.
* Julia to bring spare kettle and 2 urns from Loch of Blairs and Lindsey to bring along a kettle.
* Julia to remind participants to bring a mug.
* Lindsey to supply tea, coffee and biscuits.
* Flags are organised for event.
* Julia to bring hi vis vests for workshop leaders.
* Leaders to bring along first aid kit each.
* Julia to remind participants to bring wellies for pond dipping workshop.

**4. Scottish Finest Woods Award (JM)**

* Deadline for this is 31st March 2023.
* Further information - [Scotland's Finest Woods Awards (sfwa.co.uk)](https://www.sfwa.co.uk/)

**5. Seaweed Workshop (JM)**

* Daniel LaCasta Fitzsimmons to deliver a seaweed foraging workshop on Tuesday 21st March 2023 4pm-6pm at Cummingston, Moray, £20 per person.
* 5 people booked in.
* **Action:** Joanne to email out to OWLNEG distribution list. Julia has taken over from Estee as treasurer.

**6. First Aid (JM)**

Julia has organised a 2-day outdoor first aid course on 22nd and 23rd April at Fetternear Hall £140 per person. 8 people are currently booked on.

**7. Other workshops/events 2023**

Various ideas were discussed for events this year. This included:-

* Scything workshop – John/Doug – venue TBC.
  + Doug is hoping to apply to Awards for All for an equipment grant for loppers, scythes (x6), tent tipi. £10K would be available.
* Camphill, Murtle Estate in Aberdeen is now available as a location for an event.
* Julia to talk to Terri about Nature Nurture equipment in OWLNEG shed.
* Dry stone walking – Steve/Justin at Camphill. This could be run as a rural skills day with scything event.
* Shed painting day at Camphill.
* Forestry Day – Eric organising on 18th May at Glen Tanar.
* Big Cairngorm Weekend – 13th/14th and 20th/21st May.
* Julia suggested a Junior Forester Award promotion day in Aberdeen at Mucky Boots. Julia to talk to Dawn Ewen.

**8. Branching Out Update (JB)**

BOSA started a new programme in early March, our tenth since the project began in 2018.  While its early days still, the most challenging weeks are past and we have eight referred clients who are beginning to settle into the programme with a good rapport developing within the group.  Already we are pleased to see that the content seems well-matched and proving helpful, and we look forward to following up clients' developing interests over the coming weeks. Branching Out PLUS continues successfully with evidence of supportive relationships being strengthened through recent nature-connection walks and local community partnership working with Aberdeenshire Ranger Service at Portlethen, NE Ranger Service at Drum, Birse Community Trust at Finzean, Wildlife Friendly Village Initiative at Banchory.

We had some discussion regarding the need for new training to allow Aberdeen City Rangers' Branching Out group to restart after a long break.  Jill has undertaken to raise this with Nathalie Moriarty at Scottish Forestry to discuss ways in which BOSA might proactively help solve the difficulties - in providing training for new Aberdeen City Ranger staff in the short term and potentially for similar situations in the longer term (where nationally provided training proves too difficult to access). We envisage that this would be an occasional assistance that we could offer to ensure that established groups can manage staff turnover without breaks in delivery, and potentially also to help funded groups in new referral areas.'

**9. CAMHS Project (JM)**

* CAMHS has been working with FLS Fife to deliver an after-school programme for children and parents/carers.
* Julia was contacted by Grampian FLS to run something similar in Grampian 2 years ago. Nothing further was progressed.
* Julia has now had an online meeting with 2 occupational therapists from CAMHS to progress this project.
* Julia has written a proposal for targeting children who have been referred to CAMHS after-school in Moray and Aberdeenshire and is waiting to hear back.
* Julia has applied to NHS Grampian Endowment Fund for funding for a pilot project and should hear next month about this. Potential venues are Loch of Blairs and Mucky Boots in Aberdeen.
* Kickstart funding could then be applied for going forward.

**10. OWLNEG Finance/Accounts**.

See AGM minutes and separate accounts.

**11. AOCB**

* Doug reported that he will be building a greenwood A frame structure for Stephen and Soozy at Aller Croft with Ged. Stephen and Soozy are keen to run events going forward.
* Doug and John proposed establishing a craft willow and hazel plantation. Possible venues include Aller Croft and Uryside in Inverurie. A number of varieties could be grown. Simon said that there was a hazel coppice at Den of Maidencraig which was managed by arboricultural department at Aberdeen City Council. Simon also said that the Aberdeen City Ranger Service has also planted willow with a local community group on Scotstown Moor.

**12. Date for next meeting**

Friday 23rd June 2023. Potential venue: Aller Croft.