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

**Meeting via Zoom**

**15th March 2021 at 2.30pm - 4pm**

**Minutes**

**1. Welcome & Apologies**

**Present:** Joanne Evans, Ian Talboys (Aberdeen City Council Ranger

Service), Neil Taylor (Forestry & Land Scotland Ranger), Julia MacKay (acting

Chair), Jill Birch, Lindsey Duncan, Claire Livingstone (Treasurer), Doug Gooday

(Aberdeenshire Council Ranger), Stephen Reeves (Dorenell Ranger Service), John Malster, Kate Malster, Alex Stuart (NESBiP), Dawn Ewan, Caroline Hay-Crawford, Bryan Duncan, Joan Anderson.

**Apologies:** Juliet Robertson, Aileen Salway, Roddy Hamilton, James Nott, Claire MacDonald, Elaine Crawford.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting 7th December 2021, matters arising**

* Julia made contact with Aberdeen City Council regarding outdoor learning CPD for teaching staff in secondary schools. She had a tel con with Gael Simpson and Erin McGowan and has not heard back anything since from them.
* Hedge laying course has been removed from list of events for 2021/22.
* CL has made no further progress on finding a bookkeeper. Possibility of buying bookkeeping software e.g. QuickBooks or Xero. **Action:** CL to contact Petra to see if she is interested in treasurer position.
* No other matters arising. Approved Julia Mackay, seconded Claire Livingstone.

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

* JB updated the meeting on BOSA.
* BOSA Plus is a follow-on programme for clients after completing the BOSA course. During COVID restrictions this has been run via WhatsApp. Participants have taken in a nestbox project. Nestbox kits have been made up by a local joiner and delivered to participants. This has managed to connect the group under current restrictions. No face-to-face dates have been set yet.
* BOSA. A taster event has been set up for week beginning 22nd March for separate groups. Simon McBain is to join the group. Start date for next cohort is 8th April 2021
* IT reported that BO in Aberdeen City is likely to start mid to late April 2021.
* Follow on discussion on mental health support for Branching Out Programme leaders.

**4. Workshop Events 2021/22**

* Discussion on first draft issued after discussions from last meeting.
* Aller Croft near Huntly is unlikely to be a venue until the summer.
* Hedge laying event has been taken out of programme.
* DG is in discussion with Justin Dearsley in using the conservatory at Camphill for some of the tool workshops.
* DG put a post on the Facebook group asking about what people wanted to see training wise for tool use. 4 events are likely to run – tools for complete beginners, tool progression for forest school practitioners, tool use for early years practitioners and tool use for primary school practitioners. Dates are subject to COVID restrictions.
* Willow workshop at Muirfield School in Aberdeen on 10th April 2021 is already fully booked.
* **Action:** all to let Julia know if they are interested in dry stone walling course.

**5. Woods for Learning Grants**

* Covered in Chairs Report from the AGM.

**6. Finance**

* Covered in Treasurer’s Report from the AGM.

**7. AOCB**

* OWL website – JE to take over as administrator from Julia.
* OWLNEG Facebook Group - JE to take over as administrator from Julia.
* DG to become group contact for Bonnie.
* OWLNEG documents – JM to put important OWLNEG documents onto USB stick and send to JE.
* NESBIP Biodiversity Award – JB thanked Alex from NESBIP for the biodiversity award for BOSA.
* DG thanked Julia and Claire for all of their hard work as office bearers for the OWLNEG group.

**8. Date for next meeting**

Next meeting is on Monday 14th June 2021 at 2pm on Zoom or at Aller Croft.

**9. Update from constituent organisations**

**Joan Anderson, journalist and storyteller**

Not much to report on my 2021 Easter and Summer walks programme as I'm waiting to find out what will be possible. I have found the information I was seeking about Baillie Austen, the man credited with getting better public access to Craigendarroch Hill and Woods a hundred years ago. Thanks to all who tried to help with that one. Eventually discovered the answer in old copies of the P&J through the British Newspaper Archives. I am doing one of 3 Grampian Association of Storytellers' (GAS) / Elphinstone Institute online workshops called Tellin Tales o Fowk an Far They Bide. These will be run by Jackie Ross and Pauline Cordiner, plus Sheena Blackhall (personal stories Mar 27), Diana Peers (traditional tales April 10) and me (Stories o' Place April 24) Places are free for unemployed people, £8 for waged folk and £4 concession, and I can send the poster on to anyone who wants.

**Ian Talboys**

**OWLNEG Update Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service March 2021**

As Covid-19 restrictions, including schools delivering most learning through home learning, we have not been able to deliver any face-to-face outdoor learning in 2021 so far. We are in the process of developing our programme of talks and walks to P6 and P7 classes, normally delivered in partnership with the Scottish Fire Service, Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service around the Kincorth/Tullos Hills and Bucksburn Valley/Kingswells areas. These aim to raise awareness of the environmental and human harm wilful fire-raising causes in these and other areas. As it is unlikely we will be able to deliver the talks in schools in March or on site for the walks after Easter we are creating a powerpoint presentation with a commentary built in, which teachers can present either in class or via online learning to the relevant classes.

We are hoping to resume our Safe use of Fires training for teachers and early years practitioners as a series of twilight sessions as soon as the Scottish Government and local restrictions allow. We have a list of participants to fill a couple of courses at least.

Following on from John Malster’s willow structures maintenance training course for teachers which we assisted with, we are planning to repeat the course with John in April, subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

We are planning to restart our Branching Out programme at the Grove Nursery in mid to late April, subject to the Covid-19 restrictions. We have a list of potential clients. Funding for two programmes has been secured from Scottish Forestry/NHS in 2020/21 which we are hoping to be able to roll forward to 2021/22.

We have had increased demand from Rotary Clubs and other similar organisations for online presentations about our countryside areas and associated wildlife which is also contributing to our outdoor learning work to a different audience in a different way.

We were given the opportunity to take over the Scottish Countryside Ranger Service Facebook page for the last week in February which gave us the opportunity to share what we do with a wider audience and gave us a forum to launch a new feature for our social media – Ask a Ranger. We asked people and schools to ask us questions which we answer with a 60-90 second video. During the week on the SCRA page we posted one a day, we are carrying these on with one or two a week.

We are still in the process of recruiting a Countryside Ranger to fill Jen’s vacant post.

**Joanne Evans**

* Gardening4Kids 2021 is unlikely to run this year due to COVID current restrictions.
* Working 1 to 1 on learning pathways plus with a pupil at Turriff School.
* Working 1 to 1 on learning pathways plus with a pupil at Elrick School
* Gerbera Designs – garden design has been very busy with lots of enquiries.
* Working with NESOLG on delivering the FOLA Level 8 training in 2021 for our next cohort of trainees.

**Lindsey Duncan**

My forest school work with schools has been on hold while the school children have been at home. My Forest school sessions with Tough and Dunecht are due to start up again after the Spring break.

I did manage to run some outdoor learning and forest school sessions with Clatt, Tough and Dunecht before the Christmas Break.

I am currently the chairperson of NESOLG and am also helping to deliver the next FOLA course (cohort 11).

The training is having to be delivered via Zoom at the moment. We hope to get back to face-to-face training as soon as possible.

I have been homeschooling may two primary age children which has been a challenge!