



OUTDOOR & WOODLAND
LEARNING SCOTLAND
NETWORKING EVENT
EVALUATION

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EVENT BACKGROUND

WHAT?

This two-day event was a networking and learning opportunity for those involved with the Forest Education Initiative and/or interested in outdoor education. On offer was a programme of presentations, outdoor workshops and networking opportunities.

WHEN?

The event was held on Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th of October 2014. While it was possible to book for one day, participants were encouraged to book for the whole event.

WHERE?

The event was held in and around The Stables at the Centre for Stewardship on Falkland Estate. Presentations took place in the Stables Workshop, while all of the workshops and the Masterchef campfire cook off took place in the surrounding woodland and parkland.

WHO?

Numbers were limited to 50 in line with the maximum capacity of the venue. There were 40 in attendance in total including workshop leaders.

The target audience for the event is teachers, rangers, woodland owners, local authorities, environmental charities and other interested in using woodlands for learning.

Sectors represented included:

- FEI cluster groups from Scotland, including NE Fife, West Dumbartonshire, Ayrshire, North and West Argyll, East Lothian
- Forest Education Initiative coordinators from Scotland, and Forest School Coordinator from Scotland
- Forestry Commission staff
- Local authority teachers
- Early years staff
- Private business and freelance consultants

HOW?

The FEI Coordinator created the event flyer and promotional material. The event was promoted through existing networks, including via the cluster group Chairs. Details of the event were also posted on the FEI website, the Centre for Stewardship website, via the FEI bulletins and on the FEI and Centre for Stewardship Facebook pages.

The FEI Coordinator and Contractor created the booking form and additional information for delegates.

The FEI Coordinator had already selected a group of workshop leaders and started the process of booking. The contractor picked up from here and finalised bookings with workshop leaders, gathered payment details and collected a full précis of each workshop for addition to booking and promotional materials. Contractor also liaised with the workshop leaders to ensure that their needs in terms of workshop spaces and resources were met. The Contractor made site visits to the venue to find the most appropriate workshop spaces, with an indoor provision for each workshop in case of inclement weather conditions. The Contractor risk assessed all sites and worked with the workshop leaders to ensure all activities were also assessed and documented.

The FEI Coordinator, in association with the FCS HQ administration team, handled promotion and bookings.

Venue hire at the Stables in Falkland and the Friday evening buffet at Pillars of Hercules Café were booked by the FEI Coordinator. The Contractor took on liaising with both of these venues to ensure services were provided as agreed and that the venues had required information in regards delegates.

The FEI Coordinator and the Contractor devised delegate packs. Centre for Stewardship staff, the Contractor and the FEI Coordinator made packs up the day prior to the event and set the workshop space up.

On the day the Contractor was on hand to show workshop leaders to their venue spaces and problem solve any last minute issues. The Contractor also liaised with the Centre for Stewardship kitchen team in regards refreshments and lunch provision throughout the event.

DELEGATE FEEDBACK

All delegates were reminded about and encouraged to complete evaluations forms throughout the event. Time was also set-aside at the end of the event for participants to complete and return their forms before leaving.

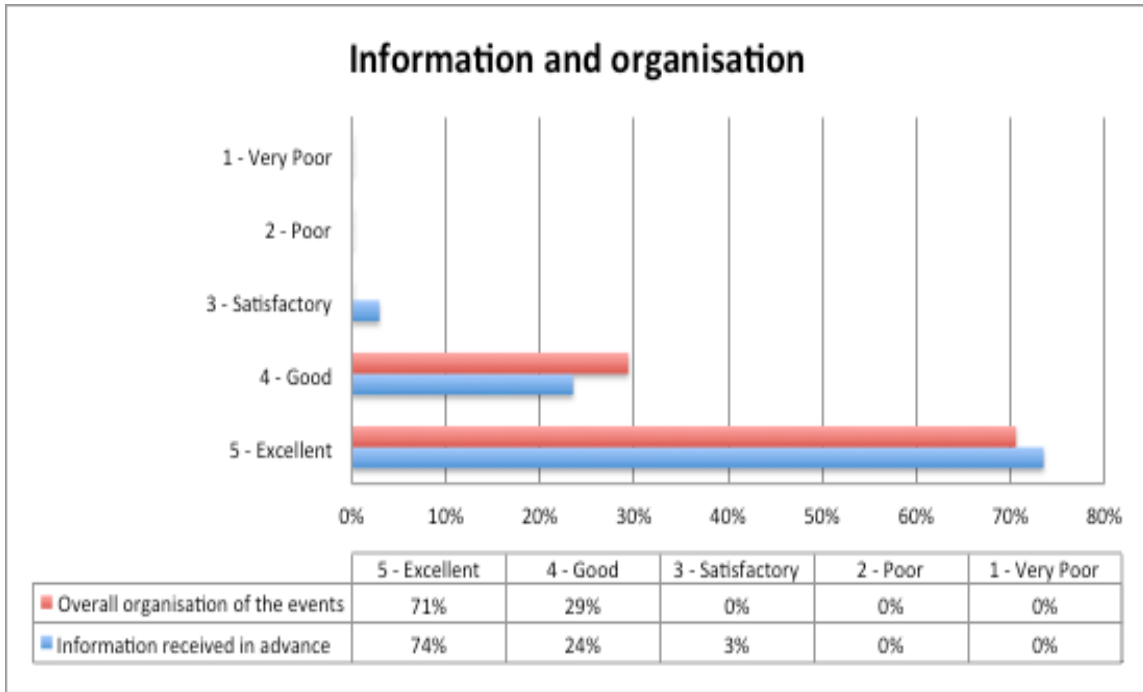
The return rate on feedback forms was 85% with 34 forms returned from the 40 participants. The overall theme of the feedback for the 2014 event was positive. It should be noted when looking at the breakdown of results which follows that quantitative analysis is difficult with small numbers. Results can be skewed by a few individual responses. Additionally please note that percentages were calculated against the number of results per question and not the overall number of returned forms. This gives a more accurate picture and excludes those who have not answered questions due to not experiencing that part of the event.

GENERAL FEEDBACK ON ORGANISATION AND PROGRAMME

Participants were asked to rate 6 areas of the event organisation and facilities offered during the event. For evaluation this was grouped under 3 headers.

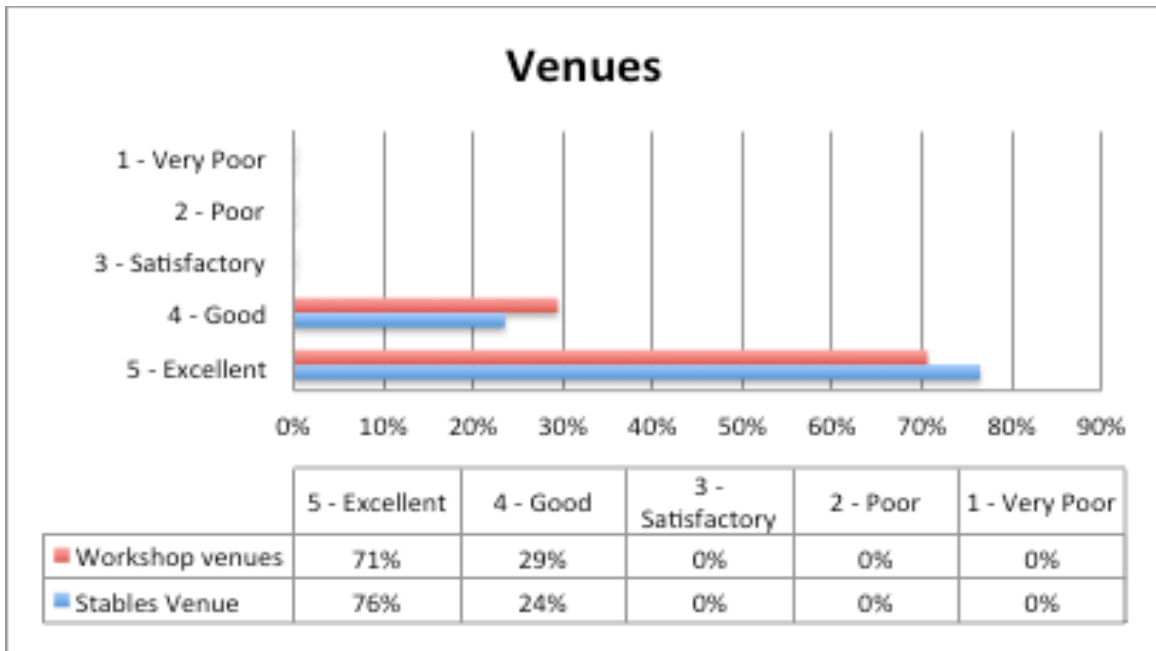
- Information and organisation
 - Information received in advance of the event
 - Overall organisation on the day
- Venues
 - Workshop venues
 - Stables venue
- Catering during the event
 - Lunch provision at the Stables
 - Friday evening Buffet provided by Pillars of Hercules

The graphs, which follow, show how participants rated each of these elements. On the whole the majority of participants scored the organisation and facilities either good or excellent.



Participant comments:

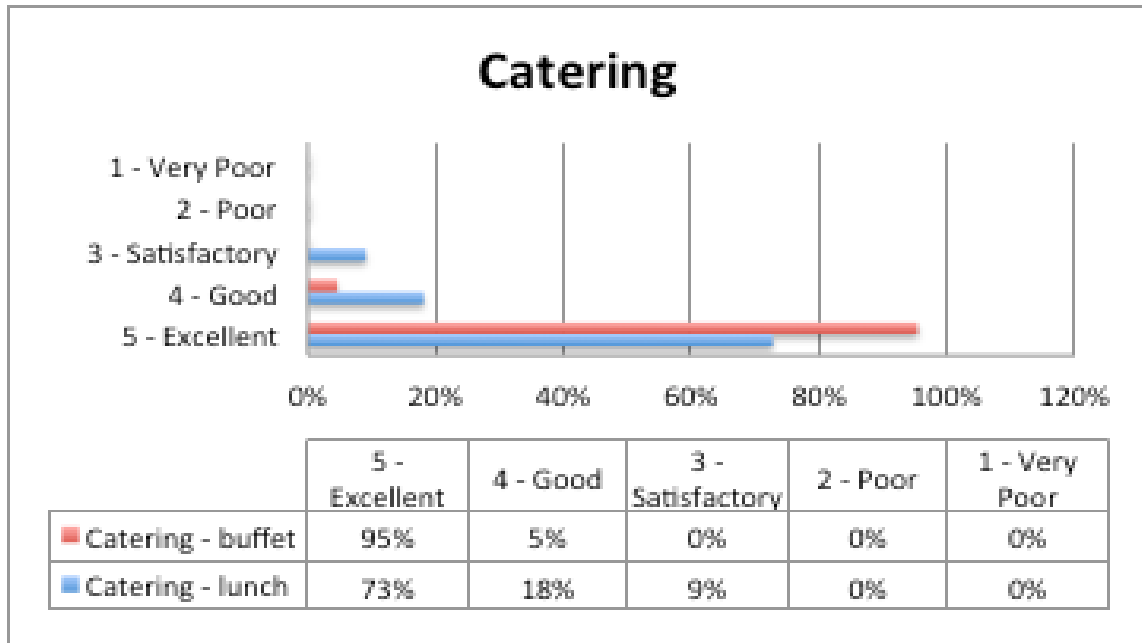
“Online was easy, confirmation quick and accurate” and “Enough balance between informal and informality”



Participant comments:

On the Stables, "Ideal, beautiful, interesting" and "Staff very helpful"

On the workshop venues, "Near but varied"



Participant comments:

On the lunch, "Lovely food" and "Enjoyable and GF catered for well"

On the Pillars buffet, "Most delicious vegetarian cooking and gorgeous venue" and "the best buffet ever!"

PRESENTATION FEEDBACK

There was a mixed response to the presentations delivered over the two days of the event.

- Update on OWLS – Of the 31 participants who scored this section 18 scored excellent, 9 scored good and 4 satisfactory.

Participant comments: "Very informative" and "Looking forward to using the new site and promoting it to schools"

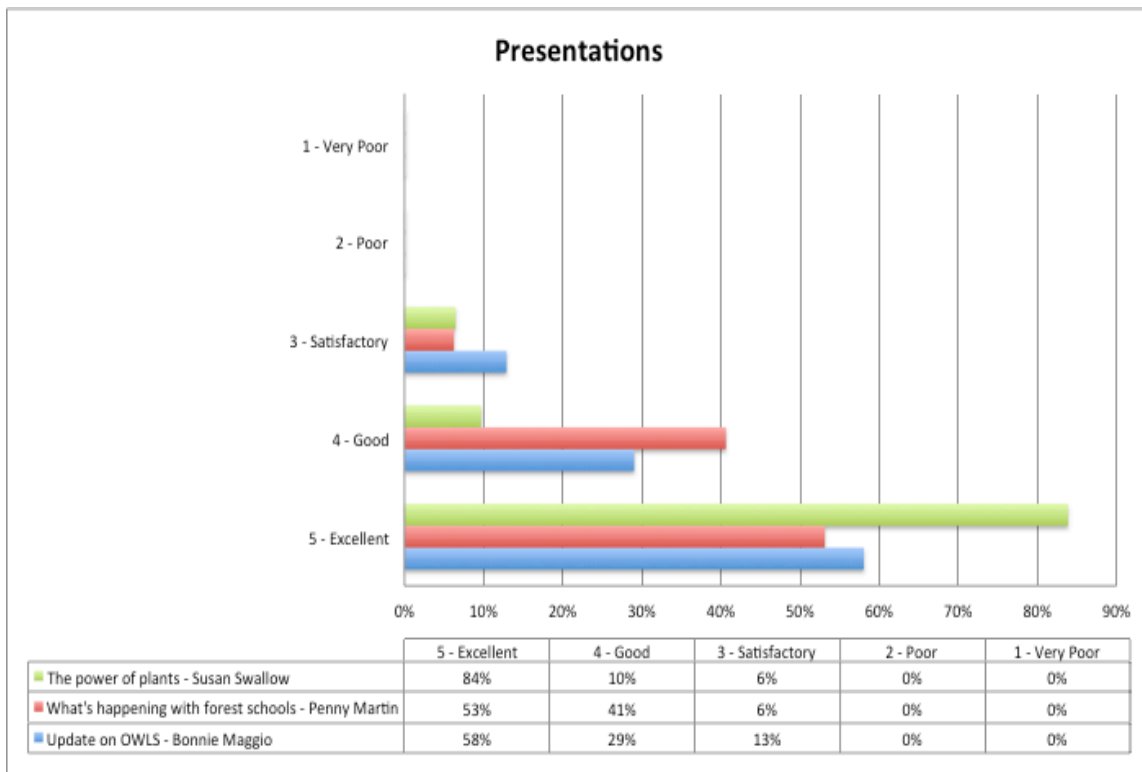
- What's happening with forest schools - Of the 32 participants who scored this section 17 scored excellent, 13 scored good and 2 satisfactory.

Participant comments: "Great to hear about the progress" and "Informative"

- The Power of plants - Of the 31 participants who scored this section 26 scored excellent, 3 scored good and 2 satisfactory.

Participant comments: Most commenters agree that this presentation, the project and Susan were "Inspirational".

Issues with the IT equipment on the day may have impacted some of the presentation rating. These issues will have affected the overall participant experience and impact of the presentations.



WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

The feedback received on the workshops offered was largely positive.

- Exploring Tree Health - Of the 20 participants who scored this section 10 scored excellent, 7 scored good and 3 satisfactory.

Participant comments: "Interesting, food for thought" and "Very interesting mix of nature and technology, made me aware of tree character and life"
- Fungi, Identification, Folklore and Fun - Of the 23 participants who scored this section 20 scored excellent and 3 scored good.

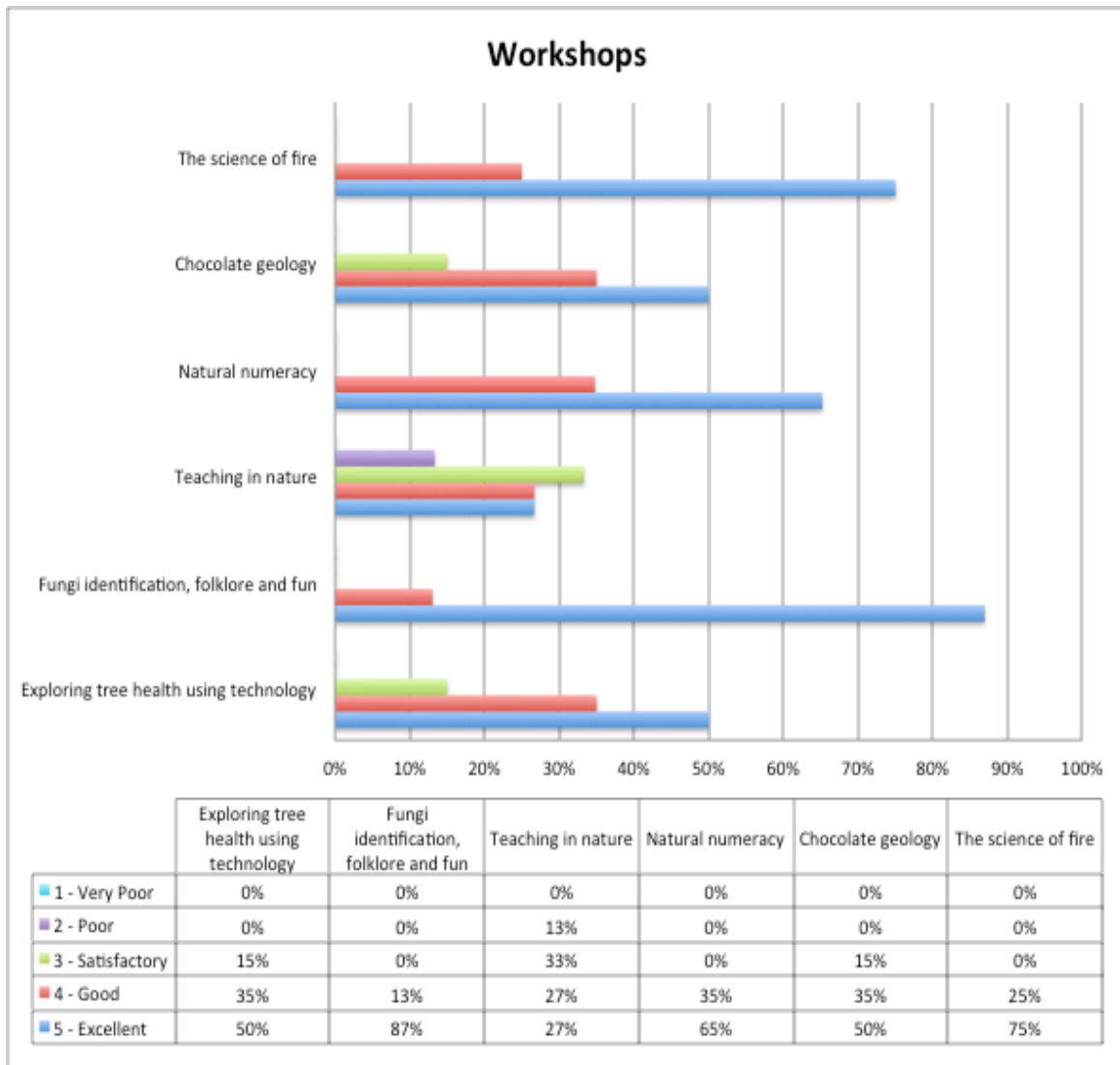
Participant comments: Most commented on Ali's infectious enthusiasm. "The best workshop that I have ever been to. Alison's passion really infectious".
- Teaching in Nature - Of the 15 participants who scored this section 4 scored excellent, 4 scored good, 5 satisfactory and 2 poor.

Participant comments: "Interesting different approaches from teachers (focus on curriculum) to creative (focus on child led play/supported)"
- Natural Numeracy - Of the 23 participants who scored this section 15 scored excellent and 8 scored good.

Participant comments: "Very thought provoking – new ideas to try" and "Great – best maths ever"
- Chocolate Geology - Of the 20 participants who scored this section 10 scored excellent, 7 scored good and 3 satisfactory.

Participant comments: "Great, looking forward to trying this" and "So simple but effective – learned stuff and this time will remember"
- The Science of Fire - Of the 16 participants who scored this section 12 scored excellent and 4 scored good.

Participant comments: "Practical advise I really needed and fun ideas and activities" and "Brilliant new ideas for taking forward".



WHAT PARTICIPANTS GAINED BY ATTENDING

Participants were asked what they had gained by attending the event. There were some overarching themes in the responses such as,

- Gaining new ideas and reviving enthusiasm
- Networking with likeminded people, making new contacts and renewing contacts
- Gaining confidence to take children outside and to move forward with outdoor education

One participant commented that the event "Reminds me why we do this work!" another noted that what they had gained from the event was knowledge of the role of FEI/OWL in Scotland and "have decided to join [their] local cluster group."

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

When asked for suggestions of things to consider/include in future events there were again some overarching themes. Many did not comment, suggesting that they were happy with event. Some also commented that they enjoyed the venue and the event and requested more of the same in the future.

Those suggesting changes requested,

- Workshop handouts to take away on the day while the new ideas were still fresh in their minds
- A change to the programme to allow everyone to attend all workshops, and a wider range of choice of workshops.
- More structured networking to offer more opportunity to introduce people to one another and match people up with a view to skill sharing and perhaps mentoring

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

Based on the feedback from participants in the evaluation forms and the observations of the Contractor the following are recommendations for considerations when planning future events,

- Amendments to the booking form
 - Confirmation of attendance for Friday buffet to get accurate numbers.
 - Question if participants are happy to share contact details so they can be added to the participants list to be shared in the delegate pack and can also be given to workshop leaders to allow follow up.
 - Provide more detail on the workshops available to show the audience and age group the workshop is aimed at to help participants make an informed choice.
- Require workshop leaders to have workshop resources available on the day for participant to take home.
- Contractor should ensure there are two people trouble shooting on the day. This will avoid the issue faced during this event where there were issues with the IT

- equipment while the Contractor was showing workshop leaders to their outdoor venues.
- Where possible mixing groups up a little more to maximise networking opportunities. Participants often selected the same workshops so were in the same group all day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks goes to all involved in the organisation and administration of the 2014 OWLS event. In particular a big thanks to,

- Staff at the Centre for Stewardship for venue hire, catering and support before and during the event.
- Pillars of Hercules Café for the evening buffet.
- The contributors for interesting and informative workshops and presentations.
- All of the participants for bringing and sharing their experience and skills.

USEFUL WEB LINKS

www.owlscotland.org

www.centreforstewardship.org.uk

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