



July 2023 OWL Scotland National News

Summer is in full swing and despite the fluctuating weather conditions around the country I know groups have been busy delivering sessions. I had the pleasure of visiting several local OWL group projects before the school holidays started and it was wonderful to see school teachers fully embracing new outdoor games and activities with their pupils.



At the Royal Highland Show in June the winners of the various categories in the Scotland's Finest Woods Awards were announced. More details on this below.

With several networking weekends coming up across Scotland Bonnie and I look forward to seeing new and familiar faces over the next few months. Remember if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Eilidh, Education Programme Manager
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OWL Scotland Summer Networking Event- sold out!

25th- 27th August- Pillars of Hercules. Workshops leaders include Willow Lohr, Dan Puplett, Ailie Finlay and Seona Anderson covering topics from wood carving through to foraging. Additional tickets may become available closer to the time so please add your name to the waiting list on [Eventbrite](#) if you are keen to attend.

Scotland's Finest Woods Awards

Our judges once again had their work cut out for them with a range of extremely good applications in the Schools and Early years categories of the 2023 Scotlands Finest Woods Awards. In the end **Fordyce Primary School in Aberdeenshire won the Crown Estate Scotland Schools Trophy** and the **Scottish Forestry Early Years Trophy** was won by **Bushcraft Bairns, based at Comrie Croft.**



The judges were impressed with the tireless work of pupils and staff at Fordyce Primary as they were involved with various projects such as the Fordyce Plantation project and planting a woodland in the school grounds as part of the Queens Green Canopy Project. The judges commented “what shone out was the pupils’ voice in driving the school improvement journey and their investment and enthusiasm for the projects”.



The judges were immediately captivated on arrival at Bushcraft Bairs as staff have created a fantastic forest school setting that nurtures connection with nature through play commenting that “a magical woodland space for young people to grow and learn about trees and woodlands” was evident for the visit to this wonderful site.

Banchory Academy, Oakbank Primary and Linnvale Primary School were highly commended by the judges for the fantastic effort by staff and pupils to foster a greater connection to woodlands and enhance learning opportunities through this work.

Congratulations to all winners and highly commended schools. Thank you to everyone that entered as all applications were of a very high standard and it’s wonderful to hear about the great work taking place around the country. Applications for the 2024 awards will open in early 2024 and updates will be posted on the OWL Scotland Facebook page and through the OWL Scotland bulletin.

OWL Scotland National Networking Weekend March 2024

We are excited to announce the dates of the 2024 National Networking Weekend! The 2024 event will be held on Friday the 1st to Sunday the 3rd of March at Dalguise Outdoor Centre, Dunkeld. Local OWL groups members will have priority booking from December until the end of January. So please ensure you have signed up to your local group so you can secure your ticket.

OWL Resources

OWL Scotland have a range of free resources available to download from the website including the recently launched ‘[Sensory Woodland Stories](#)’. This lovely resource has been produced in partnership with Ailie Finlay. Created for children with complex additional needs it includes a range of simple and inspiring educational stories and rhymes. A supplementary [Storytelling Tips and Origins](#) document can also be downloaded.



2023/24 courses

We will shortly be announcing the next round of Forest Kindergarten subsidiary training courses, Sensory Woodland Stories training and Scottish Junior Forester Award leaders training sessions. Updates will be added to the OWL Scotland events page and Facebook page.

Local OWL Events and News

Joint networking event

North & South Highland and the West Coast OWL Groups are excited to announce that they will be hosting another joint networking event in 2023. This event will be held on **Sat 9th September @ Abriachan Forest Trust** from 1000 - 1600. The event will be promoted on Eventbrite with 80 FREE tickets available. Workshops on the day will include literacy & drama, willow weaving, film & dance and much more. We are delighted to have Creeping Toad as one of our workshop leaders! More information will be posted on the [OWL Scotland website](#) and through Facebook once details are finalised.



Argyll and Bute OWL group

Following on from last year's popular networking event the group will be hosting this year's event on the **2nd of September from 9.30am- 3.30pm at Inverary Primary School.**

Workshops this year are focusing on connection and include wet felting flowers, nature connection and nature games, exploring the rock art of Argyll and supporting learners therapeutically in our outdoor settings.

The network events are a perfect place to meet up in person with other folks across Argyll and Bute, have a blether, share experiences and learn something to take back to your place. To book a space please click [here](#).



Ayrshire

Ayrshire OWL will be hosting their AGM on the 8th of August at 5.30pm on Teams. The group are looking to recruit more committee members and ordinary members to join the team. To express an interest in joining the group and/ or meeting please email me directly (Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot).

Dumfries and Galloway

The Dumfries and Galloway group are pleased to announce that they have recently become a Community Interest Company and have been busy advertising and recruiting a Branching Out project officer.

Group members also delivering two programmes with secondary schools to improve skills and confidence in teaching staff to increase outdoor learning opportunities for young people.



Edinburgh

The Edinburgh group hosted a great 2023 Nature Play conference in April at Cramond Woodlands & Kirk Halls. A super range of workshops were well received by those attending. Workshops included The Soil Beneath our Feet & A Wormery for Your Setting, Saving the World with Stories, Wild Food and Remedies, and many more.



South Highland OWL

We have had a wonderful Spring/early summer up here in the Highlands! We have started using **Eventbrite** as a mechanism for booking which has been very effective.

- In April we were delighted to go to Dundreggan, the new Rewilding Centre, and thanks to Trees for Life for hosting a CPD workshop on **Gaelic in the Landscape**, led by Gaelic expert Ceit Langhorne.
- In May we had an innovative CPD workshop on **Art Therapy in the woods** which was held on the Ness Islands. Art therapy student Sarah Robinson managed to inspire the group to use art as therapy which could be used for any age group. You can see the photos below.
- In June we held **Songbirds in the woods** with Dan Puplett in Strathspey.

We are now in the process of planning new CPD workshops for Autumn 2023 - Summer 2024. Our next online meeting is scheduled for the 5th October at 4pm, if **anyone would like to join us/suggest ideas** for workshops, please email Juliet - julietpcrobinson@gmail.com



West Fife

Next group meeting- August 29 @ 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm, Little Bugs, Fordell Scout Centre, Hillend, KY11 7HQ. For further information please visit the [OWL Scotland website events](#) page.

On the 6th of June the West Fife OWLs held their AGM at Little Bugs Outdoor Nursery. We enjoyed some good company and tried out some apple and cinnamon skewers as a healthy alternative to Smores. We then balanced this off with some toasted marshmallows! There was also some CPD including elder branch whistle making and a review of how to use our resource kit. The minutes will be available on the OWL website. We are currently in the planning stages of a network event, watch this space for updates.



Funding Opportunities

Local School Nature Grants

Open to schools and early years settings in England, Scotland, and Wales, this outdoor learning grant fund has two elements – £500 of outdoor equipment chosen from a catalogue of over 100 items, and an outdoor learning training course for your staff. For more information and to access the application form visit the [Learning through Landscapes website](#).

Tesco Stronger Starts Grants

Greenspace Scotland's team of friendly Community Enablers can support you to apply or answer any questions. To find out more or to apply, please visit the [Greenspace Scotland website](#).

For further funding opportunities, please visit the [Creative Star Learning](#) webpage.

Courses

Engaging Young People with Green Spaces Training

As part of the [Scotland's Young People's Forest](#) project, YouthLink Scotland have been running training for youth workers to try and support them to feel more confident and knowledgeable working with young people on topics related to the environment, climate and green spaces.



When? Wednesday 23rd August 11:00am - 12:30pm

There will be 2 - 3 expert speakers who will share tips, advice and guidance to inspire youth workers to better connect the young people they work with in green spaces.

You can find out more about the event, or sign up through the [Youthlink Scotland website](#). For more details on the Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector please click [here](#).

Young children, the outdoors and nature

Do you have a professional or personal interest in learning opportunities for young children? Are you working with children or are you a parent or carer?

This free course, Young children, the outdoors and nature, looks at the importance of babies and toddlers having opportunities to engage with rich outdoor environments. By completing the activities, you will be introduced to the benefits of outdoor engagement for babies and toddlers as well as a variety of practices and provision which will help you develop your own environments for young children. For more information please visit the [Open University website](#).



Learning through Landscapes

FREE Erasmus+ Early Years practitioner course - learn how to develop great outdoor spaces for 0–6-year-olds. For more information visit the [Learning through Landscapes website](#).

Foresight Sustainable Forestry: Skills Training Programme – Scotland

Tillhill, the UK's leading provider of nature based solutions and [Foresight Sustainable Forestry Company](#), the UK's first listed natural capital investment company, is delighted to announce that the fully funded 2023 [Sustainable Forestry Skills Training Programme- Scotland](#) is now open for applications. For more information please visit the [Tillhill website](#).

Other News

“Target 2030” A movement for people, planet and prosperity- Scotland's Learning for Sustainability Action Plan 2023-2030- Now launched!

- A refreshed action plan placing sustainability at the centre of the Scottish education system—including an ambitious commitment to ensure that every school and early learning setting will be sustainable by 2030.
- Includes a new commitment to take further steps to support Outdoor Learning.
- Find out more in this [Scottish Government Press Release](#), and download the refreshed Learning for Sustainability Action Plan (2023) [here](#).



Paid internship Opportunity

Linked to the refresh of the launch of the Learning for Sustainability Action Plan (2032) an exciting paid internship opportunity is available. This will explore the relationship between Learning for Sustainability, equity and educational attainment. The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science is supporting this internship and is targeted at PhD students (second or third year). **The deadline for applications is Friday 4 August at 12pm.** For more information please visit the [Scottish Graduate School of Social Science website](#).

Hayward Review

The Hayward review which was considering the future of qualifications and assessment in Scotland has now been published.

Key recommendations of the Hayward report include:

- Adopting the SDA (Scottish Diploma of Achievement) as a graduation certificate for all senior phase educational settings
- The end of exams in S4 and a wider range of assessment methods used in Highers and Advanced Highers
- A digital profile for all learners which allows them to record personal achievements, identify and plan future learning.

To view the full report please visit the [Scottish Government website](#).

John Muir Award Redesign Plans

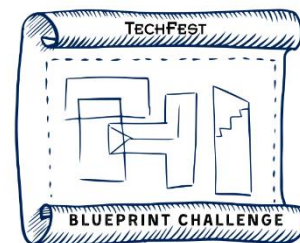
The John Muir Trust wishes to expand its reach to a greater number of people and communities across the UK to help build awareness, experience and understanding of the many and varied benefits a connection to wild places can bring. The more people value wild places the more they will join the Trust on the journey to advocate for their protection. Wild places are for all, and everyone can help protect them.

The John Muir Award remains a vital component of the Trust. It creates partnerships, connections and reach. Following a review of its engagement work and new strategy, the John Muir Trust wishes to ensure that the Award has a bright future in a rapidly changing world. Find out more on the Trust's plans redesign its John Muir Award including an invitation to get involved, FAQ's and contact details by visiting the [Award Redesign webpages](#).



Blueprint Challenge: A Future High Street- Team project for S3-S6 pupils!

TechFest's Blueprint Challenge: A Future High Street project, supported by Bluewater, challenges S3/S6 students to reimagine and redesign a high street and create a space that allows society to thrive whilst simultaneously celebrating the natural world. By bringing energy, technology and nature together there is the opportunity to create a high street that employs innovative technologies and mechanisms in the drive towards net-zero, nature-positive urban areas. For more information on this challenge please visit the [TechFest website](#).



A FUTURE HIGH STREET
SUPPORTED BY 

STEM Nation

This online resource was created as part of Scotland's STEM Education and Training Strategy. On this site you will find a range of resources to support, inspire and connect such as: the latest developments in STEM, interesting practice examples to inspire and make connections, information on the STEM awards programmes available in Scotland and links to the Young STEM Leaders Programme, and much more for ELC, primary, secondary, ASN, CLD, and school based technical support staff.



Visit the [STEM Nation website](#) for more information on training events and opportunities.

Scotland's Outdoor Learning Directory

This website aims to provide a portal to outdoor learning services provided by various Scottish organisations, plus news and research from the wider network. Click [here](#) to visit the website.



**Outdoor
Learning
Directory**

Contact Us

To contact your local OWL Scotland group please visit the [OWL Scotland website](#).

Or contact us:

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Or visit our [Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland Facebook](#) page.

