



## December 2023 OWL Scotland National News



Hello wonderful OWL Scotland network. I hope everyone is well and enjoyed the recent flurry of snow across the country. My kids were delighted to wake up to a garden full of snow. We spent a glorious morning following different animals tracks and making a jumbo snowman.

As 2024 sneaks closer and closer I would like to say a huge thank you to all the local OWL groups around the country for the brilliant projects and events being delivered to

encourage and increase outdoor learning opportunities. The passion and dedication that everyone has shown is a driving factor in ensuring more teachers and practitioners have the confidence and skills to take children and young people outdoors and learn in the inspiring and nurturing natural environment.

This edition includes updates from OWL Scotland and OWL groups around the country, funding opportunities (including Women in Forestry funding towards forestry related courses), new projects, information on courses and the Winter OWL Scotland National Networking event.

Thanks again for everyone's hard work!

Eilidh and Bonnie 😊

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## OWL Scotland National Networking Weekend 2024



This year's annual get together will be held on the 1<sup>st</sup>- 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2024 at Dalguise House, near Dunkeld. Join us for a weekend of outdoor learning workshops and meet like minded practitioners to share skills, knowledge, resources and build confidence in your practice. It does not matter your amount of experience or what level you work with, this weekend is open to anyone on their outdoor learning journey.

Workshops include – Literacy Outdoors, Filming Outdoors, Making Natural Musical Instruments, Puppet and Mask Making, Basic Woodworking and many more. There will also be lots of opportunities to network, hear updates from across the OWL Scotland Network and relax in this wonderful setting.



Tickets are £85 and available now to local OWL group members. This price includes food, accommodation and workshops over the weekend. Any remaining tickets will be circulated to the wider network after mid-January 2024. Contact your [local OWL group](#) directly if you would like to sign up as a member and to access the link for this event. To gain an insight into the wonderful OWL Scotland network visit our [YouTube channel](#).



### **Scotland's Finest Woods Awards**

Applications for the 2024 SFWA schools and early years categories will open in early January. Updates will be posted on the [OWL Scotland Facebook page](#) and through the OWL Scotland bulletin. To provide further inspiration to applicants we will have case studies created featuring past successful entries. Information on case studies will be available at the start of 2024. For more information, please visit the [Scotland's Finest Woods Awards website](#).



## 2023/24 courses

OWL Scotland is pleased to announce a range of workshops being delivered for the network across Scotland.

### **Scottish Junior Forester Award leader training.**

This course is aimed at teachers/practitioners/youth workers etc. who wish to undertake the Scottish Junior Forester Award with young people. Please note you do not need to attend training to deliver this award.

- [Dumfries and Galloway](#), January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm
- [Crathes Castle and Estate](#), February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm



### **Forest Kindergarten subsidiary training- Fires and Tools**

Please note that you must be Forest Kindergarten trained to attend these courses. A deposit required but after the course is attended, the deposit will be refunded minus the Eventbrite fees.

- [Tools in Forest Kindergarten](#)- Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm
- [Fire in Forest Kindergarten](#)- Greenmyres Eco Bothy, Huntly, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
- [Tools in Forest Kindergarten](#)- Greenmyres Eco Bothy, Huntly March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

### **Women in Forestry- funded courses**

Women in Forestry funding has open again for forestry related courses. 100% funding is available for training up to the value of £500 per course. In exceptional circumstances where you can fully explain the value of the training to you and your business, applications for courses costing in excess of £500 may be considered.

The Women in Forestry Practical Training Fund, has been established by Scottish Forestry in partnership with Lantra to support the personal development of women, providing them with additional skills to progress their careers and employment opportunities in forestry beyond their current role. For more information and to see the badged courses visit the [Skills Hub Scotland website](#).



### **JOIN the inspiring movement for change to reach Target 2030:**

Education Scotland, Scottish Government and a wide range of national partners joined forces with Carrick Knowe Primary on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 2023 to issue a national Call to Action for People, Planet and Prosperity. The ambitious goal is to build an inspiring movement for change to realise the ambition of Scotland's refreshed [Learning for Sustainability Action Plan](#) by 2030:

- Every 3 -18 learning setting in Scotland to become sustainable by 2030.
- Learning for Sustainability for ALL



Everyone has a valuable role to play and contribution to make. Please join the movement for change. Access downloadable templates, images, and resources to get you started – or get creative and make your own! [Target 2030: A Call to Action | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

We hope you'll join us in building a fairer and greener Scotland for our children and young people #Target 2030 #LfSforAll

## [Local OWL Events and News](#)

### **Argyll OWL group**

Argyll OWL Group had a lovely meeting last Monday, it was great to welcome some new network members joining in for the first time.

Due to the success of our Network event in Sept we are very excited to share that some folks in the network are going to be rekindling our Little OWL groups in Roseneath and Oban. If you are living and working in these areas and want to be involved in meetups, then please do be in touch and we will ensure everyone gets linked up. If you're interested in co-ordinating or joining in activities in the Little OWL in your area, then please do also be in touch - [Argyll OWL Group | Facebook](#).

### **Dumfries and Galloway**

Another year is drawing to a close and we are busy planning our delivery for 2024. However, before the end of the year the group AGM will be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December in Gatehouse of Fleet. For more information, please visit the group [Facebook](#) page.

DGOWL hopes to introduce a new summer Branching Out programme to increase the impact we have and reach a greater number of people within our community.

Our colleagues from the Dumfries & Galloway Health & Social Care Partnership attended the Scottish Physical Activity Research Connections (SPARC) conference and displayed the incredible work done by Amy, a student who spent time with them over the last year. Amy collated the information from the participant evaluations we collected from those attending Branching Out, demonstrating both the benefits to participants and Dumfries and Galloway as a whole. The info-graphic poster she created won 'Best Poster' award at the event!



### **Forth Valley OWL**

Unfortunately, the much-anticipated Christmas Craft Event had to be cancelled due to icy conditions on site. Keep an eye on the [Forth Valley OWL Group Facebook page](#) for more exciting sessions planned for 2024.





### Lanarkshire FEI Group- soon to be Lanarkshire OWL Group

Do you live or work in Lanarkshire? Would you like to be involved in the establishment of the new Lanarkshire OWL Group? We are currently in the process of transforming the Lanarkshire FEI group to an OWL group and would love to have more folks involved in this exciting process. Please see the OWL Scotland bulletin and Facebook page for more information on this group or email [Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot](mailto:Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot) to be included in emails from the group.

### Midlothian OWL Group

Midlothian OWL are gaining momentum and looking to gather interest and encourage new members to sign up. The group are still in the process of restabilising their systems so if you would like to be added to future Midlothian OWL correspondence, please contact [midlothianowl@gmail.com](mailto:midlothianowl@gmail.com).

The group are due to hold their next meeting at the start of February. More details will be posted on the [OWL Scotland Facebook page](#).



### Moray OWL

Our first Ash Rise project is underway, as local group Nature 4 Health are working with Dallas Primary School.

An additional Ash Rise project with young people from secondary, primary, and early years age groups in Moray is in the planning and will take place in late winter/early spring.

We also look forward to working with a high school group on a very special skills project aimed at sharing information about careers in forestry. We have an outstanding line-up of professionals ready to inspire students, including foresters working in conservation and tree planting, tree surgeons, foragers, wildlife specialists, educators, and artists/craftspeople, all keen to share their love of the woodlands and forests as a place to be inspired and to work.



### Confirmed dates for your diaries for next year include:

- Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February - Moray OWL group social meeting in the Mosset Tavern, Forres, 5.30pm
- Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> February - Moray OWL CPD days at Loch of Blairs, Forres – programmes to be released before the end of term.
- Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March – Moray OWL Networking event, in conjunction with OWLNEG at Greenmyres Bothy, Huntly – programme to be released in the new year.

Moray OWL Group have also updated our kit inventory and spruced up the storage shed! Members (or anyone interested in becoming a member and benefiting from that!) can request the kit list and request to borrow items.

### Scottish Borders

The Scottish Borders OWL Group are keen to increase the number of active group members. We are currently reviewing CPD delivery and looking at working in partnership with a local outdoor nursery to develop new connections and workshop delivery. The group are working towards completing the installation of the Gala Policies Tree Trail posts. To see the current information boards for this project please click [here](#).



### South Highland OWL

We were lucky with the weather for our **Forest Bathing CPD workshop** at the end of October in Aviemore. **Forest Bathing**, or Shinrin-yoku is the practice of immersing yourself in nature; 'bathing' in the awesome goodness that trees release into the atmosphere; reaping the benefits from magic little things called 'phytoncides' and receiving mental calmness from the fractal patterns, vibrant shades of green and calming blues around us.

During the session, Cath Wright guided the group through a series of 'invitations' aimed at opening out senses and reconnecting us with ourselves and the environment around us. Many of these invitations can be easily adapted to use with learners of any age. We spent time sharing what we noticed with the group and finished with tea and snacks to bring our experience to a close and thank the land we have been supported by during the session.



Here are our planned workshops for 2024:



1. **\*\*\*Crafty Christmas** on Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Nov - this has been postponed \*\*\*. We are going to incorporate craft into the next networking event instead.
2. **Winter Tracking** on Sat 10<sup>th</sup> Feb @ Inverness with Dan Puplett
3. **Fire Safety Training 2** on Fri 22<sup>nd</sup> March @ Abriachan. Certificates of attendance to be issued.
4. **Reptiles and Amphibians** on Fri 19<sup>th</sup> April @ Muir of Ord with Highlife Highland
5. **Art Therapy 2** on Sat 11<sup>th</sup> May @ Ness Islands with Sarah Robinson
6. **Tree ID for outdoor educators** on Sat 1<sup>st</sup> June @ Grantown-on-Spey with Rachel Avery
7. **Drama in the woods - Midsummer's night's dream** on Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> June @ Ness Islands with Eden Court

In terms of **booking** any of the CPD workshops - these are **FREE for any outdoor educators** and Juliet will send out **EVENTBRITE** booking forms one month before each event. This is being done to try and reduce the number of cancellations. If any readers would like to receive our emails/ Eventbrite updates, please **email Juliet** at [julietpcrobinson@gmail.com](mailto:julietpcrobinson@gmail.com)



### Tayside OWL

Perth Outdoor Playgroup, POP is a group for parents and children to get outside and play together in the woods. We meet every Monday morning at Kinnoull Hill. The group is aimed at children aged 1-5 but older and younger siblings are welcome to come too. The group is free to attend. Please check out our [Facebook page](#) to see what we have been up to over the summer. If you would like to come along to the group or have any questions, please get in touch on [perthoutdoorplaygroup@gmail.com](mailto:perthoutdoorplaygroup@gmail.com).

Tayside OWL Group recently ran a very successful Nature Dyes Workshop with Bushcraft Bairns at their site at Comrie Croft. Participants used the ancient craft of using natural dyes from plant sources such as berries, bark, and vegetables. Everyone attending had a great day learning new skills and meeting other members of the Tayside OWL group.



### West Coast OWL





West Coast OWL and [Slattadale SCIO](http://www.slattadale.org) are running woodland skills sessions following successful collaboration with OWL Scotland to secure funding for careers in forestry taster sessions for the local Gairloch High School and youth groups. The next session is focussing on Forest research with Dr. Elspeth Macdonald then tree planting and deer management with Doug Bartholomew and the NatureScot team at Beinn Eighe National

Nature Reserve in December.

If anyone is interested in sharing what they do in terms of forestry careers, please get in touch with [Fiona.Mackenzie@slattadale.org](mailto:Fiona.Mackenzie@slattadale.org)



### West Fife



West Fife OWL Group delivered a super networking event in November titled 'Delivery of Explore, Learn, and Connect Outdoors'. Around 60 current and new group members met at Bellyeoman Primary school. Participants could visit the indoor market place with a variety of local providers demonstrating what outdoor activities and support they can offer to education settings including tool use and hire, educational resources and practical sessions.

A range of inspiring workshops were also on offer including:

- Music in Nature
- Bushcraft and Whittling
- Gardening in the School Grounds
- Literacy and Numeracy Outdoors



### 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](http://www.learningthroughlandscapes.org).



#### Tesco Stronger Starts Grants

This scheme can provide grants of up to £1500 to local projects from across the whole of Scotland. A wide range of projects fit the bill - improving school playgrounds, growing and food projects, outdoor play and purchasing kit for healthy



activities. 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

### **Young children, the outdoors and nature**

This free course looks at the importance of babies and toddlers having opportunities to engage with rich outdoor environments. 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](#).

## Careers Information

### **Discover Green Jobs for Nature**

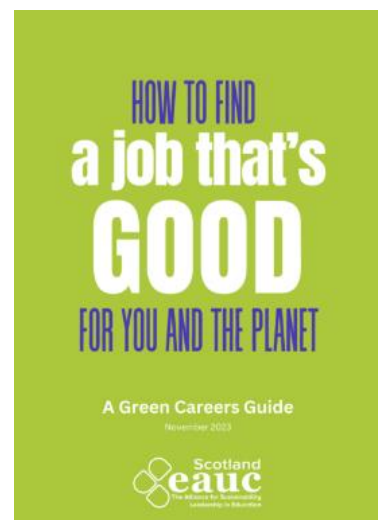
Are you ready to change the world? Then welcome to the [Green Jobs for Nature website](#). This website is packed with useful information about what a green job for nature is, how to get one, and who you can work for. Find inspiration to think about contributing your enthusiasm and talents to a career that will help tackle both the nature crisis and the climate change emergency.

### **Green Careers Guide**

EAUC is the environmental and sustainability champion within Further and Higher Education in the UK and Ireland. They have recently published a new resource [How to find a job that's good for you and the planet - a Green Careers Guide](#). This guide is written with students in mind but will be relevant for anyone interested in a career that supports a more sustainable future. The guide takes an inclusive approach that goes far beyond "windfarms and wellies".

Developed by EAUC Scotland, with input from education organisations and students, the guide covers:

- What green jobs are and examples of current professionals
- Why you should do a green job.
- What skills and knowledge you need.



## Other News

### Young People's Forest

Congratulations to the [Scotland's Young People's Forest project](#) after they won the 'Youth Champion' Holyrood Climate Action Award. Two members of the youth leadership panel accepted the award on behalf of the project at the awards ceremony, which was held in Edinburgh.

The project had also been involved with the creation of the [Scottish Young People's Forest Toolkit](#) for the youth work sector.



### Out to Play - caring for our outdoor spaces

Guidance from the Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare Directorate encourages early learning and childcare settings to make the most of their outdoor spaces as well as caring for the environment through embedding Learning for Sustainability. This guidance supports practitioners to provide high quality outdoor play experiences. To view this document please visit the [Scottish Government website](#).



### Ways to get involved - Tree Council's Young Tree Champions



Whether you are looking for teaching resources and training opportunities, trees, and hedgerows to green your school grounds or support to run an impactful project in your school, The [Tree Council's Young Tree Champions](#) can help you! Wherever your school is on your nature journey, they have something to support you and help you grow.

### Climate Ready School Grounds

Climate Ready School Grounds explores using school grounds to address the impacts of climate change whilst creating outdoor environments that support learning and play. The project offers a suite of resources to help schools, local authorities, and design professionals create climate ready school grounds.

If you are a teacher or educator, visit the [Learning Through Landscapes website](#) to view and download resources to support you in planning and implementing changes to your school grounds. If you are a landscape architect, designer, or local authority, please visit the [Architecture & Design Scotland website](#) to find appropriate resources to support you in creating and adapting school grounds to be more climate ready.



## 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 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](#).

## 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



**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.

## [Contact Us](#)

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

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