

Welcome to the February edition of the OWL Scotland Bulletin. It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our friend and colleague Juliet Robertson on December 27th 2025. Amongst Juliet's many contributions to outdoor learning throughout her life, she worked with Scottish Forestry to develop the Forest Kindergarden model and developed and delivered the Forest Kindergarden Training the Trainers Programme. Our thoughts are with Juliet's family. Do have a read of Juliet's Memorial Booklet which is [available here](#).

All our local OWL groups have been busy and OWL Scotland has expanded the range of 'Music in the Woods' training sessions available in February and March 2026 (see below for booking information). The local OWL groups have been delivering a great range of different skill share, networking and CPD workshops. Thank you to everyone who submitted a response to the Employment in Outdoor Woodland Learning Survey and we will share the results after analysis. We are gearing up for the National Networking Event at Dounans Centre in Aberfoyle (27th Feb to 1st Mar). The Scottish Finest Woods Awards 2026 are open for Schools and Early Years submissions until the 31st of March. Visit our [events pages](#) and [local OWL group pages](#) for more details.



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Diary of Upcoming Events & Opportunities

Jan to Mar 2026: 'Music in the Woods' Training Sessions

18 Feb, 9am-3pm, Abriachan Forest Trust ([bookings](#))

21 Feb, 9am-3.30pm, Midlothian, Clifton Hall School ([bookings](#))

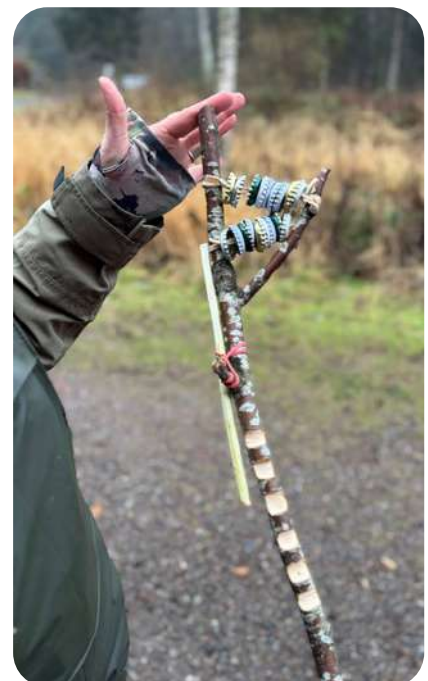
7 Mar, 9am-3.30pm, S. Lanarkshire, Chatelherault C. Park ([bookings](#))

14 Mar, 9am-3.30pm, Dumf. & Gall., Hardgate P. School ([bookings](#))

23 Feb & 5 Mar: Free CLPD training for teachers Nature Discovery Map Scotland. Click [here](#) for booking information.

31st March: Funding opportunity - [Local School Nature Grants](#) open now until the 13th of March, decisions by the 27th of March.

For local OWL events please see the OWL Group updates and also the [OWL Scotland events page](#).





It's that time of year again. The [Scotland's Finest Woods Awards](#) are open for applications from the 7th of January 2026. The entries for the Early Years and Schools categories will be open for submissions until the 31st of March. This is a great chance to showcase your work. Why not take a look at [case studies](#) from previous winners for tips on how to take part?

SFWA are keen to celebrate all the great work in **outdoor learning, connection with nature** and in **biodiversity conservation**. They also want to highlight the work that schools and early years learning are doing to celebrate **the use of local Scottish wood** and to **explore careers in woodlands**. Wood is a local, sustainable material that we use all around us. If you have been making things out of wood or looking at the qualities of wood why not include that in your application? Is your school working towards the Scottish Junior Forester Award or have you have a visit from anyone involved with forestry or forest management? If you would like to find out more about including the use of wood or exploring careers in forestry in your outdoor or sustainability learning then the **Royal Forestry Society** has a range of [learning resources](#) and opportunities including the [Scottish Junior Forester Award Handbook](#).

In 2025, The Alba Trees Early Years' Trophy went to West Johnstone ELCC, in Johnstone, Renfrewshire, and the Crown Estate Scotland Schools' Trophy was awarded to Hardgate Primary School in Haugh of Urr, near Castle Douglas in Dumfries and Galloway. In addition, Selkirk High School was the Climate Change Champion.

Why not celebrate your hard work and share your experiences with others? Click [here](#) to submit your application for the 2026 award.





We caught up with Jules, the chairperson of MEOWL, at her work to find out more about how she started in outdoor education and worked with the MEOWL team to build a strong local Outdoor Woodland Learning Group.

How did you first get into outdoor education? I'm Head of Nursery and Early Years Outdoor Learning at Clifton Hall School and I decided to study for my FOLA 8 qualification at Newbattle Abbey College in 2023. I didn't realise until then how many other people shared my interest in outdoor learning and that there was a big network in Scotland.

How did you get involved with the Midlothian OWL Group? The original group had declined during lockdown and there was a call out for volunteers to take on roles in the group because it was in danger of closing. I took the plunge and became Chairperson in 2023. I was quickly joined by John Jackson (treasurer) and then Helen New (secretary). We work really well as a team.

How did you grow the membership? We started off with baby steps by holding our first meeting online. Since then we have held in-person events advertised via Eventbrite. We charge £10 to keep it accessible but to reduce non-attendance. We built a structure of holding four seasonal skill share workshops and this has worked really well. We also take every opportunity to host events and workshops run by others when they come up.

Partnerships with other OWL groups. We have formed a partnership with East Lothian educators through Patrick Boxhall at Queen Margaret University to form a new group called Mid and East Lothian OWL. We are in talks with Borders OWL about joining together and we communicate regularly with Victoria Scott from Lanarkshire. This regional hub structure helps everyone and we hope that any partner groups will have their own committee member. It can always change and adapt in the future.

Top tips for new or growing groups. Be realistic and don't beat yourself up if you don't get a huge membership or attendances quickly. Use the OWL Scotland logo to underpin and advertise your work and don't forget about all the free resources, training and support from across the OWL Scotland network. Don't be afraid to ask for advice or support.

Thanks to our local members. I want to say how much our local membership helps with all aspects of the group from attending or running events to providing venues for our workshops. For example, Donna Strachan, Diane Kristofferson and Corinna Dawson who supported several of our events with great success.





Northern Scotland



South Highland OWL

South Highland OWL have a busy season coming up with two events planned in March. There is an [online planning meeting](#) on the 12th of March (5-6pm) to discuss CPD training and coordination with the north and west.

The [BIG GET TOGETHER](#) Spring Equinox Craft Share and AGM will take place on the 21st March from 10am to 2pm. This will be held at the Aigas Center near Beuly. The emphasis is on networking sharing and planning CPD workshops. It is FREE and all teachers and outdoor educators are welcome.

NORTH EAST OWL GROUPS

North East Region OWL (OWLNEG)

North East Region OWL have already had a very successful **Peg Loom Weaving** workshop on the 24th of January with Willow Lohr at Blair Lochs, Forres. ‘**Three things to do with Kids in the Woods**’, is on Saturday 7th March, Aller Croft, Huntly.

On Tuesday the 10th of February (9.30 to 3) there is a [Scottish Junior Forestry Aware Training Day](#) at Aller Croft, Huntly (£10 booking fee). On Wednesday 11th there is a [Music in the Woods Training Day](#) (9.45 to 3.30) at the Sir Arthur Grant Outdoor Centre, Monymusk, Inverurie (£10 booking fee).

Scottish Junior Forester Award Training Day

Tuesday 10th February 2026

At Aller Croft, Huntly

From 9.30am—3pm

Cost: £10 non-refundable booking fee



WEST COAST OWL GROUPS



West Dumbartonshire OWL

West Dumbartonshire OWL are continuing to develop resources and activities based around their very successful ‘**Lost Words**’ Project.

We have held a series of skill share workshops but those who could not attend we have developed a [padlet board](#) which contains all the **digital resources** This can be used by other groups or outdoor educators.



WEST COAST OWL GROUPS



West Coast OWL

SAT 21st MARCH 12-4pm

At: The Plock, Kyle of Lochalsh

Come and join us for an open network gathering, welcoming in the spring together. This event will be a fun and supportive afternoon where we will be exploring all things Fire and Pine in an outdoor learning setting. We will have Fire Stories, Top Down Firelighting Techniques and fire-starting materials plus Kelly Kettle practice and use. There will be fire snacks and pine tea as well as other light refreshments and a little pine cone creativity.

There will also be a selection of OWL Scotlands free learning resources available to take away.

This is a free event but you will need to book to give us an idea of numbers. Click [here](#) for information.

CENTRAL REGION OWL GROUPS

Tayside OWL Group Networking Event

Camperdown Wildlife Centre, Dundee

Saturday 7th February 2026, 10am - 1pm

Join us for a morning of meeting others with a passion for outdoor learning. You'll be able to find out all about what OWL Scotland resources are available for you to use and take part in two fantastic workshops. You can choose from:

- Elder Crafts
- Lost Words
- Knot That Shelter!
- Multi-Sensory Outdoor Learning for ASN

Scan here to book your space

Tayside OWL

Tayside OWL are holding a group networking event at Camperdown Park on Saturday 7th of February (10am to 1pm). The aim is networking and skill sharing and the workshops will include Elder Crafts, Lost Words, Knot that Shelter & Multi-sensory Outdoor Learning for ASN.

We are holding a **'Whispers of the Trees: An Introduction to Ogham Writing'** workshop and AGM on Saturday 28th of March, at the Shed, Kinnoull Hill. All welcome.

MEOWL (Mid and East Lothian OWL)

MEOWL are hosting a **'Music in the Woods'** workshop at Clifton Hall School on the 21st Feb (9am to 3.30pm)

MEOWL is looking forward to our **Spring Skill Share Event**, running a stall at the Midlothian event **'Vogrie Pogire'**



Lanarkshire OWL

Lanarkshire OWL are hosting a **'Music in the Woods'** workshop at Chatelherault Country Park on the 7th March (9am to 3.30pm)





Upcoming Grants

Learning Through Landscapes: the [Local School Nature Grants](#), supported by the People's Postcode Lottery, are now open for applications until the **13th of March**, decisions by the 27th of March. The grant fund has four elements — an outdoor learning training course for your staff, a school grounds climate survey, a Climate Curriculum Kit (valued at £150) and £500 of outdoor equipment chosen from a catalogue of over 100 items.



Freobel Trust: the Freobel Trust has a range of [free outdoor education resources](#) based on the Froebelian Approach to early childhood education. They also run [CPD courses](#) in the UK which may be available for grant funding.

Projects: Nature Discovery Map Scotland (NDMS)



The NDMS is an exciting new toolkit for schools that support Learning for Sustainability. There are 6 map-based tools in the toolkit which allow schools to LOOK, DISCOVER, PLAN, ACT and LOOK AGAIN at the nature around them.

The toolkit can provide opportunities for digital and practical learning as well as supporting schools to deliver awards programmes and projects like Eco-Schools.

Free CLPD places for teachers on the **23rd Feb/ 5 Mar**. Click [here](#) for details.

You can learn more at the [NDMS hub](#).

Contacts

Visit the [OWL Scotland Website](#) for a wide range of resources and information and links to local OWL groups.

Find out more about your local OWL Scotland Groups across Scotland. [Click Here](#)

For more information about the work of OWL Scotland please email Eilidh Malcolm (Eilidh.Malcolm@forestry.gov.scot)

To subscribe to this newsletter [click here](#).

