

Forest Education Initiative

Minutes of the meeting

6th February 2006

Present Kate Jones, Richard Hurst, Yvonne Conchie, Richard Gilchrist, Lorna McLeod, John Allom, Jeff Searle, Ian Robinson, Sarah Green

Claire Longstaff, Liz Beech

Apologies

Possible contacts to explore

Contacts

Debby Allen - Classroom Assistant, FS leader
Cath Beddingfield, FS possible, Wingate
School governors, LEA

Welcome to Ian Robinson and Sarah Green

1

Minutes of last meeting, Yvonne wanted the minutes altering that state that she didn't want to be involved with wood, just timber production and processing. Claire Longstaff works for Groundwork West Durham not Groundwork North East.

2

Matters arising.

3.

John Allom came up with some dates for a Forest Schools taster day, it would have to be a Friday, the dates mentioned were:-

5th, 12th, 19th, 26th May

16th, 23rd, 30th June

7th, 14th July

Dates were discussed and the date agreed upon was **Friday 5th May**.

This taster day would take place at West Boldon Environmental Centre and would take a whole day.

Costs for the event were discussed. John would have to charge approximately £350 for time/resources/hire of venue etc. Numbers were discussed and a maximum number of 20 places were agreed upon. The invite being opened to people with children (the children in question were pre-school age) was brought up but due to health and safety and it not being practical for pre school children to use mallets/tools etc and the day involving theory, it was decided that if we were to pursue the Forest Schools perhaps another day could be arranged to involve these and other children and to keep the taster day for adults.

John wants it to be clear that he is not a Forest School trainer, he is organising a taster day to show us what he does and how he goes about delivering Forest Schools.

Members want parents to see children experiencing Forest Schools and consequently the benefits first hand. There are community/interested groups in Chopwell who would be keen to become involved in Forest Schools. Due to the interest of these groups the idea to possibly run a taster day in Chopwell or Thornley was mentioned or perhaps the group could assist with Chopwell Primary School?

John welcomed people to come down on a Tuesday when he runs courses for early years to see how he delivers the programme.

It was highlighted that Forest Schools need to be promoted as an accredited course, rather than woodland activities that anyone can do without a certificate.

The National Networking Day in Swindon was outlined and brief descriptions

4. were given of the various workshops held during the day. The group would like a list of the various local projects being carried out.
On mentioning the xylophone workshop various names to do with Junk music/sculptures were mentioned i.e. Jack Drummer from Weardale. 'Paddy' – -musical sculptures in Hamsterley

5. It was agreed that we needed to be aware of what was going on in the area with regard to Forest/ Woodland Environmental Education projects. There are many examples in the area of Forest School/ Woodland Activities but these are not called Forest Schools. It was agreed that we needed to make a list of people delivering Forest School type activities.

There had been a conference of deliverers various organisations were mentioned in the North East:-
NEEF – North East Environmental Forum
NEEN – North East Environmental Network
NEST – Northern Education for SusTainability (Voluntary group involved in Earth Education)
NEEL North East Environmental Link ('Nick' CPRE, National Trust)

As a group it would be helpful have some information on these organisations.

- We need to be clear on what each organisation does?
- How they are funded.
- Who the various groups deliver to.
- What the focus of each group is – schools/environment

The group's activities could link with the Strategic Partnership, as a group we could focus on school activities up to the age of 19?

It was discussed that strategically a board of key regional players could be put together. It was also pointed out that the cluster group could be seen as a key way of co-ordinating delivery of Forest Schools and other activities. It was also considered important that we see how all the groups fit together eg Healthy Schools/Eco schools etc.

Another idea was to run a research project into the impact of Forest Schools on the wider community. How the programme affects behaviour/self esteem and how this affects changes in attitude. Maybe approach Gateshead Council to fund research?

Possible four sides of the group

- Deliver Activities
- Training side/Building capacity in the region
- Research
- Raise awareness

Possibly organise a half-day seminar to recognise who is out there/ what they are doing in terms of environmental education and to aim to get more people connected in terms of the region.

'Growing Schools' website was mentioned it is a list/database of various outdoor education places in the uk. It was thought everyone should put their details on the website.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/growingschools

Maybe try and get more people connected in terms of the region (NE).
NE seen as 'brain drain' as the educated and skilled workforce tend to move away, Forest Schools may help by giving people a better education by teaching

them about their local environment and getting them to take ownership of their local area. Maybe it would encourage people to stay up in the North East. Long term goals of the group were discussed and the focus of the group could be to gain funding to run Forest School courses and to also raise the awareness of Forest Schools in schools.

Funding

6. As a group we need to find out how many times a year you can apply for FEI funding and what the stipulations are.
We also need clarity on the Lottery bid funding that has been applied for, as we don't want to miss out on any possible funding.

7. Nominations for positions- reluctance for anyone to come forward to volunteer for positions. It was mentioned that the FEI group could come as a project for NECF, the account could be held with the GNF. Previously the Acorn Trust used to charge for time taken regarding work carried out etc. Needs to be looked into.

AOB

8. Chopwell Festival was discussed as a possibility for launching the group but it was pointed out that it was too soon (July) as we would need to be clear about who we are/ what we are aiming to do.

Forest Schools Taster Day – YMCA Lorna needed to be clear on what the money for the day would be spent on if she were to apply for funding for the day. Site hire/ Materials/ Resources/ Food – she would need an invoice.

Discussion was had about whether to have it as a free day but then this sometimes devalues the event. If we had funding we could offer it free to the community or people from a charity- maybe 10 pay and 10 free places. We would have to be clear on who it is aimed at – environmental practitioners.

Decided cost would be £20 per person – 20 places = £400
YMCA would possibly put up £200 to cover 10 free places and then 10 paid at £20 = £200.

Email invite out to

- Woodland Trust members
- BCTV volunteers
- Thornley voluntary wardens.

Places allocated on a first come first served basis. Email out invite.

Date of next meeting

Monday 10th April

Location – Whickham Thorns Activity Centre,
Dunston, Gateshead, NE11 9NX

Time 9.30am

Basis of meeting to discuss content and arrangements for the forest schools taster day.