

## **MOWL Meeting Tuesday 26 January 2021 (Zoom Call)**

**Present:** Judy Paul (chair), Cathy Samou (chair), Eve Reid, Suzie Robinson (minutes), Laura Goble, Sarah Falconer, Donna Strachan, Sean Humphries (Guest).

### **Agenda**

1. Chairs to open the meeting
2. Guest Speaker Sean Humphries
3. Members' experiences of lockdown - activities in nature.
4. Contributions to this year's programme
5. AOB, Date of Next Meeting
6. Toast, Thanks and Close

### **1. Open**

Cathy and Judy opened the meeting and Cathy gave an overview of MOWL for new members:

She expanded on OWL Scotland and its aims. That OWL are dedicated to increasing the use of outdoor environments for learning in Scotland. OWL aims to increase learning first hand, health and wellbeing through OL and recreation, increasing knowledge, confidence and the importance of our outdoor environment. She explained that there are learning, training and networking opportunities. MOWL is supported through funding, grants, resources, events and networking opportunities by OWL Scotland. We are open to everyone – Forest School leaders, kindergarten leaders, photographers, teachers, etc.

Around March 2019 MOWL planned a launch, but the event didn't happen due to Covid. Since then meetings with committee members have been held regularly and we are trying to restart the group at the moment.

Cathy explained that there are more established groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We aim to get to the level they have achieved, of providing opportunities for all of our members.

Judy – introduced herself as joint chair and secretary. She gave information about our group. She described the paperwork and set-up requirements. In August 2019 MOWL was established; aiming for Launch in March 2020. Unfortunately the nation went into lockdown on 23/3/20! The group were reeling from this unexpected turn of events and unsure how to proceed. Hardly anyone came to meetings during lockdown. Online meetings were not too effective and Judy was concerned about losing the momentum. The committee tried various things to keep ideas and momentum going, but it wasn't effective as members had to prioritise other things and people were not able to engage for a variety of reasons. MOWL lost the original treasurer Janet and Bethany, the administrator. Judy and Cathy had to act quickly to retain the group and uphold the constitution. Eve agreed to be treasurer temporarily; an essential committee role, especially as we had funds in the bank account. MOWL had begun to line up CPDs and had money to spend. Suzie was asked to be administrator and was able to step in. Judy explained that we are now in the position of trying to reenergise and invigorate people and get going with MOWL. She is hopeful that this new lockdown won't stop us.

Judy modelled the new 'buffs' merchandise she has received and asked any members to email their address to have one sent out to them.

Judy introduced our guest speaker Sean and invited him to speak to the group.

## 2. Sean Humphries.

Sean, from Now Counselling (<https://www.nowcounselling.org.uk/>) gave an uplifting talk entitled ***Living in the Moment – The Power of Nature***.

Summary:

**Mental health and wellbeing.** Our mental health and wellbeing is as important to all of us as our physical health and our wellbeing is a combination of our conscious and subconscious. It can change at any moment. We all have the same human needs, but how we meet our needs to maintain our health is unique to each of us.

### **What do we need and how do we get it?**

We all have needs relating to our 'Love and Belonging', 'Self Worth', 'Freedom', 'Fun' and 'Survival'. We each have thoughts, feelings, actions and biology which are inter-related. Change one thing and we change them all. When we express stress or discomfort through our feelings and biology, self-care actions and thoughts can help us to regulate and rebalance.

Sean reminded us that the time is NOW – we meet our needs in the moment. It is human nature to spend time focused on the past or the future, but it is important to live in the present.

### **How do we live in the moment?**

Using mindfulness, meditation and awareness of our senses we connect with the information around us.

This enables us to take effective control and allow thoughts of the future and worries about the past to melt away. **Nature provides many opportunities for this.**

### **The gifts of nature.**

What things do you like to do in nature? How do you feel when you spend time in nature? Nature gives us so many tasks that feel needs satisfying. We can connect with the natural rhythms of nature. We can gain confidence from unpredictability of nature. We experience new things, places, activities and people. We learn from our experiences and, deep down, connect with our hunter gatherer genes.

Sean believes that gratitude also provides opportunities for important self care actions and thoughts, especially when combined with nature. We can be part of a wider experience, shared with others. MOWL is ideally situated to provide this with and for members. Together we can be mindful of living in the moment with nature.

Cathy thanked Sean for his super presentation. She shared her love of nature while wild camping. Other countries have had a very tough experience of lockdown. Cathy is grateful for our experience and looking forward to being outdoors with friends and colleagues again. She invited discussion from the group.

## 3. Member's experiences of lockdown – activities in nature.

Members shared personal experiences and expressed how they are managing their mental health and wellbeing through connection with nature.

We collectively love wild swimming, foraging, discovering local gems, connecting with our families, Straiton pond, finding renewed purpose in our work and pride in our contributions to our communities.

#### **4. Contributions to this year's programme.**

Eve continued meeting with thoughts that we would like to pursue new goals for the group. She asked for everyone to share MOWL on Facebook and get the word out that we are here. It is important for us to develop our network and get as much support as possible.

Judy and Cathy would like to hear ideas for new launch event. We discussed whether we should we proceed with an online launch or wait until the pandemic has largely passed. Opinions were mixed, but none strongly held.

Donna liked to have a guest speaker as it provided a focus and talking point. She appreciated the CPD as providing opportunities to small groups. Donna suggested separating our reasons for involvement with MOWL into sub-groups to target certain demographics and suggested a series of mini-events; wellness walks, etc. We looked at the timeline of necessary spending to assist with targeting smaller events.

Laura agreed that smaller events were a great idea and felt we need to await government guidelines regarding coronavirus before we can begin to plan these.

Sarah identified that small groups to target members' interests and needs would be helpful.

The group consensus was to aim for after Easter; to make a flexible plan for events and be ready to go when restrictions allow.

We discussed our CPD hopes. The group are looking for ideas for outdoor activity and places to visit as our personal resources are depleted; having used them all repeatedly during the past year in lockdown. Knot workshops were suggested, with resources posted out ahead of time. A whittling meeting would be welcome. We queried whether we could we use CPD money to provide meeting information and resources, such as filming tutors in the wild and having them lead meetings to facilitate learning. Laura felt this would work for Woodland Management.

All agreed that it would be helpful to know who is interested in actively continuing with MOWL and where our expertise and learning goals lie as a wider group. This information will enable the committee to provide focussed and appropriate CPD, meeting entertainment and launch events.

#### **5. AOB, Date of Next Meeting**

We will be meeting in one month. Those present were invited to consider becoming part of the committee as ordinary members; to improve group communication and ideas sharing. Donna highlighted potential conflict of interest as both she and Eve are directors of Big Wild Life. We should be mindful of this in the course of providing opportunities and tenders equitably. The chairs both agreed, but would appreciate the expertise and networking capabilities of both Eve and Donna in a voluntary context.

The committee agreed to request a response ahead of next meeting, to inform numbers and to advise any guest speaker. Suzie will refreshing mailing list, ensure all existing members are happy to continue to receive MOWL communications and to look at connections we already have and can expand. The introductory information on our Facebook page should be reworded to encourage greater interaction and connection.

#### **6. Toast, Thanks and Close**

Judy performed a Scots Toast written by her husband, with a topical theme. Thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.