

# Newsletter

## Update on a Busy 3 Months



March 2008

Number 2



Welcome to Outfit's second newsletter - since October, we've had a very busy quarter, with lots of groups running, and much activity going on behind the scenes, working on fundraising, social enterprise and evaluation.

We hope you find this newsletter interesting and useful – if you have any comments, please just let us know.

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## Highlights of the Last Quarter



- We have exceeded all of the statistical targets we set ourselves for this year
- We won a Dragon's Den competition in November, and are moving closer towards our aim to become a true social enterprise
- We hosted our first AGM in November
- Our project evaluation is moving forwards very positively
- Our Community Regeneration project goes from strength to strength
- Grant Keil successfully completed his 13 week placement at Outfit

## Outfit's Targets and Statistics 07/08

Every year we set ourselves targets to work towards for the coming year. These are based on the number of staff employed, and therefore the number of days we can work, and sessions we can theoretically run.

Our year runs in line with the financial year from April to April, and during 07/08, we have achieved all of the targets we set ourselves. A summary of what we have done up to mid March is below:



	Target	Actual
<b>Number of different young people worked with</b>	750	1219
<b>Total number of sessions run</b>	364	410
<b>Number of programmes run</b>	48	85
<b>Number of different organisations worked with</b>	32	50
<b>Number of sessions cancelled</b>	15	14

**Outfit Vision:**  
We engage young people through outdoor learning to support them to reach their potential

## EnerG Update



You may reasonably expect that this quarter would be one of our quieter periods, given the weather and the shorter days. However, glancing through the diary a completely different picture emerges. As well as our regular Active Steps groups (this term with Lossiemouth and Elgin Academy), and our one-to-one work with pupils requiring extra support needs, we have also worked with a number of other groups throughout Moray. This has included work with Lossiemouth Community Learning & Development, Moray Young Carers, Elgin Youth Forum and Buckie Active Schools. We have also been involved in More Choices, More Chances, a multi-agency programme aimed at 16-18 year olds who are not in employment or training.

As for activities to see us through the winter months, we have seen the introduction of some basic bushcraft sessions as well as tyrolean crossings (using climbing equipment to cross a group over gorges, gaps, hollows or any other suitable obstacle!) Night biking continues to be an exciting and popular option.

So a busy but enjoyable time, providing learning opportunities for the young people of Moray.



## Grant's Placement



After completing several programmes with Outfit over the last 3 years as a young person through the EnerG strand, Grant Keil came to work with us before Christmas on a 13 week placement, with the possible view of moving into a career in the outdoors. He was mentored by Steve, and gained an in-depth picture of life with Outfit, including helping in the store, assisting groups, and attending team training courses. Following his placement, Grant has started a foundation course in outdoor pursuits at Inverness College, and we wish him every success in the future.

## Innov8 Update

We now have 9 fantastic volunteers, all of whom are either leading or assisting groups of young people. Since our last newsletter we have run 4 in-house courses and 2 NGB courses (bear in mind this is Winter and our quietest time), and they have helped out with 35 sessions, working with over 150 different young people.

We have just finished a series of sessions in Elgin which ended with an overnight expedition to a bothy on the west coast; this trip will be something the young people and volunteers will never forget! This same programme has just started in Buckie and we plan to go away for a night over Easter weekend. We have a regular night mountain biking group which is open to volunteers and staff.

We have a number of NGB courses booked, and have 5 volunteers booked on NGB assessments, which if successful means they will be able to run sessions. We are looking at ways to keep volunteers motivated with discount outdoor equipment, staff uniform and social events.

I have been amazed at the commitment our volunteers have put in: they are truly inspirational people.

Can I take this opportunity to thank them all for their hard work. If you or anyone you know enjoys outdoor activities and would like to get involved with the Outfit Moray volunteers, then please get in touch with Ross.



## Focus on our Volunteers



**Pirouel Dickson** has been an Outfit volunteer for 7 months. He works at Trees for Life, a conservation charity, as the Work Week coordinator, organising the week-long conservation projects at various sites across the highlands. "I joined Outfit for many reasons really. I have a passion for the outdoors and enjoy activities like cycling, hill walking, canoeing and climbing. I really enjoy working with groups, especially young adults, and as a lot of my time at work is office-based, volunteering with Outfit gives me the opportunity to get out and do fun stuff!"

Likes: hot soup at the top of mountains, watching movies in bed, doing northshore, swimming under water, planting trees and eating food..did I mention food already?

Dislikes: going into a toilet with no toilet roll, meeting impolite drivers, jigsaws with missing pieces, being sick or late (not in that order), hunting for sport, cycling into a headwind in heavy rain."

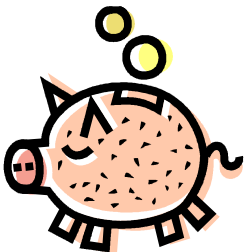
**Caroline Saunders** has been an Outfit volunteer for a year. She works part time at Outfit doing evaluation and admin, & part time at Elgin Youth Cafe, dealing with the day-to-day running of the Cafe. "I moved to Scotland in 2005 after working in industry in Nottingham for 12 years, and I wanted to do something different and worthwhile with my life. Volunteering with Outfit allows me to gain hands-on experience of working in the outdoors with a huge variety of young people with different needs, and to see the positive difference that Outfit makes to their lives. The volunteer scheme gives me high quality training, development and support, and is a fantastic way to gain new skills and feel that I am doing something valuable.

Likes: anything orange, evening light, snowball fights, laughing, & the sound of the sea.

Dislikes: being cold, grumpy people, and losing things."



## Funding Update



The last financial year (07-08) has seen remarkable growth in delivery of programmes. As a result, our turnover has increased to over £200,000 for the first time. At a time where funding from the Local Authority is decreasing, it accounted for just 10% of our income (5% for 08-09), our search to find funds from elsewhere has been a major challenge.

Our sustainability has become focussed on attracting grant-making trusts to fund our work. Despite great competition from so many charitable organisations we were able to obtain over £125,000 from these sources. This work is ongoing and while going to press we are awaiting some important decisions from some of our major sponsors. A huge thank you is in order for all those Trusts, Foundations, individuals and Friends that have helped us. They are very much a part of our success and team.

The fact that we are able to attract a large number of funders speaks volumes for what we are trying to achieve and indeed in the quality of work that is produced.

## Becoming a Friend of Outfit

Raising funds so that Outfit can continue to exist is an ongoing battle, and we are constantly looking for ways that we can become more financially self-sufficient (see our article on Social Enterprise on page 4). One way that you can help us is to become a Friend of Outfit by making a small annual donation, that will help towards training, equipment and staffing costs.

Friends will receive a copy of each newsletter, and any little you can give really will make a big difference to us. If you are a UK taxpayer, we can also claim tax back on your donation.

If you would like to become a Friend of Outfit, please just contact the office for a form, or visit our website where you can download one. Thank you!



## Outfit as a Social Enterprise - Taming The Dragon



As Outfit has expanded and is offering more and more subsidised programmes and activities, our running costs have of course increased. We now need over £200,000 per year to run at our current level, and we recognise that fundraising for this amount is becoming more and more difficult. As a result, we are focusing a lot of time and energy on becoming more financially self-sufficient, and have set ourselves the target of generating 50% of our required income ourselves within 5 years.

Obviously the decision of how to do this effectively is critical, and we have already generated a number of large and small ideas that are being considered. In November we entered one of our ideas into a Dragon's Den competition hosted by the Moray Social Enterprise Academy, and we won! Our idea is to maximise our existing resources by creating an Outfit Outfitting service, providing groups and individuals who wish to explore the outdoors in Scotland with tailor-made packages, involving clothing, equipment, accommodation and guiding. Our prize was £1500 to get this venture off the ground, so watch this space! Our services will be advertised in a brochure shortly being published by the Cairngorm National Park, and we need to move forward with advertising this initiative.

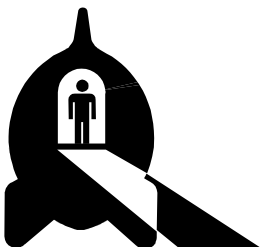
## Evaluation Update

Since August, we have been working very hard to develop our evaluation systems so that they are more appropriate for the work we do and the young people we work with. Ibrahim & Caroline attended a course on visual evaluation techniques in Edinburgh, and we have since been working closely with Evaluation Support Scotland to clearly define our aims, outcomes and techniques.

Over the last few months we have been trialling some new techniques, including using new feedback forms after every session to help young people to focus on areas that they need to work on. We have also been trialling video diaries with groups, and generating case studies of young people that we have made a difference to. This process will be ongoing until we have a system that we and our funders believe is effective.



## Office Move - Welcome to our Spaceship!



Our office move took place as planned just before Christmas, and although we had a couple of teething problems with phones, it went very smoothly. We are now comfortably settled in our portacabin in the Pinefield Church car park in Elgin, where we are likely to be for about 9 months until we move into our new offices. The smooth move was thanks in no small part to the tireless energy of our Chairman, Iain, who battled and negotiated his way around every obstacle to make the move possible.

## Next Newsletter: July 2008

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