

Woodcraft Folk DFs

Spring Thing 2025 Minutes

22nd February 2025, Chester



"I'm gonna start being a fed" - Tyler Eckersall, Chair of DF Committee

Present: Aisling, Alex T, Callie, Esme, Eva, Katy, Lida, Maya, Molly, Rowan, Sadie, Tyler, Wilf

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0 Introductions

Tyler took the chair and welcomed everyone to Spring Thing and ran through the agenda. The participants sang a round together to open the meeting (*Campfire's Burning* from the Woodcraft songbook).

1 Quarterly Reports

Note: In advance of the meeting, anyone holding a Committee or Non-Committee role was contacted and asked to prepare a report. Those who were present at the Thing delivered their reports verbally.

2.1 Reports from Committee Members

2.1.1 Events Representative (Aisling Stuart)

I have been working on ways to respond to drugs and alcohol in DFs. I have been discussing these issues with some other committee members and I am looking forward to continuing discussions at this Thing. I have been helping with Spring Awakening but I won't have a central role at the event.

2.1.2 Events Representative (Callista Smithson Swain)

Winter Wonderland was a success. I am still looking for people for the Spring Awakening team. The site is confirmed and will be half price because it is the same site that cancelled on us last year.

2.1.3 Shadow Events Representative (Nyx Cook-Hayward)

I was on the coord team for Winter Wonderland. I am glad that there have been local events happening in Brighton recently. There have been a lot of events on a local level in DF groups throughout the country recently and the Thing was excited to hear news of them. However, concern was expressed that residential events planned on a local level still needed to go through the safeguarding and risk assessment processes required of national events in order to be properly covered by insurance.

Action #1: Safeguarding and Events reps to contact active local group leaders who are looking to run events

Action #2: Safeguarding and Events Reps (and other members of Committee) to produce a written guide to local events organising

2.1.4 Chair of DF Committee (Tyler Eckersall)

I have been a lot less stressed with this role this year, because chairing committee is my only role. I have been trying to fill my time. I have been looking into the archives of the DF website and working on the Wikipedia page with Lizzie and discovering lots of interesting artefacts from past committees. My main issue with my role has been struggling with the question of when to step in and tell Committee members to do things, and when to just let things happen. I don't want to overstep and act like a fed. I have been trying to keep up communications with everyone on Committee but its been difficult to contact some people.

2.1.5 Communications Representative (Katy Indeka)

I haven't been able to do very much with the role this quarter. My computer has been broken, and communication with Lida (the other Comms rep) has been patchy.

2.1.6 Safeguarding (Sadie Lamont)

I wrote a number of incident reports and had meetings with coord team members following Winter Wonderland. I have also been working on intoxicating substances policy.

2.1.7 Outreach Representative (Molly Hawker)

I have had some contact with organisations in Gloucestershire with compatible aims to DFs. In Stroud we have discovered a booklet published by DFs in the early 2010s, which is a general introduction to DFs and how we work aimed at Venturers entering the movement. It's a really great resource and I think we should make an updated version, which is something Eunice (Zine Rep) has also been keen on. There is something really cool about creating something physical to record DFs!

Action #3: Zine and Outreach Reps to coordinate a DF Transition Guide and/or a DF Committee 2025 Zine for outreach at Camp 100.

The booklet also has inspiring amount about DF activism and campaigns. We need to revitalise this!

Action #4: Chair to link relevant Committee members into a discussion around activism. Channels to be created for activism to be discussed and coordinated, perhaps informally because of concerns about political engagement of a charitable organisation.

2.1.8 Training Representative (Esme Thompson)

The situation with first aid training in the Movement is pretty dire. I tried to get training for Winter Wonderland but because the site was confirmed relatively late and it was the Christmas period, it wasn't possible. I have been working very hard to secure training for spring Awakening, but the site is quite remote and it is difficult to find providers willing and within budget. I think we are going to have to consider training DFs in a third location separate to a regular event, eg. London or Bristol, potentially expensing DFs to attend. A Biblins Weekend is also a possibility but it is quite remote and unlikely to attract many takers. We have to sort this out otherwise DF events won't be able to continue!

Action #5: Training Representative to organise a meeting to discuss first aid training in more detail.

2.9 Shadow Treasurer (Alex Thompson)

I was part of the admin team for Winter Wonderland, which went well. The process of adding me to the DF bank account has started so I hope I will be ready to take over from Maya in the Summer.

2.10 Secretary of the Movement (Wilfred Lamont)

I have been relatively inactive since the last Thing, and I apologise for not circulating a proper agenda in advance of this meeting. I have had a particularly busy term at university.

Over the Easter holidays I am hoping to continue work on the resource packs that I have been developing for future Secretaries and Committees. They will include tips for running Althing and Things and more!

2.2 Reports from Non-Committee Role-Holders

2.2.1 Venturer Liaison (Eva Buutjens-Gold)

I have been liaising with Venturers! I attended a Venturer Committee meeting in the Autumn and worked with them on their plans for Vcamp 2026. They are very keen and we should try to work with them. I have set up a DF group in Hackney with lots of young people transitioning from Venturers, which has been successful.

2.2.2 Chair Carer (Sadie Lamont)

I have not managed to publish the photos with the Chair from Winter Wonderland, but I would like to create some more educational content relating to Committee, either to post on the @travelsofthechair instagram, or the main @woodcraftdfs account.

Unfortunately, after a few falls, the Chair has broken. It was already showing cracks at Winter Wonderland and it's fully gone now.

Action #6: Chair Carer to find someone to make a replacement Chair of DFs. Communications Reps to support advertising.

3 Financial Report

The accounts are looking relatively healthy. A £2,042 surplus was made at Winter Wonderland. After the Thing has been expensed, there will hopefully be approximately £1000 left over which can go towards the first aid training that we need to organise. We have made back the loss that was made at Autumn Nocturne and we hope to make a reasonable surplus on Spring Awakening because we were offered 50% off the site booking because it was the site that cancelled on us last Spring because of an electrical fault on site.

4 Discussion of Upcoming Events

4.1 Spring Awakening

Dates: 7th to 11th of April

Location: Raven Gill Scout Campsite, nr Whitby

Callie opened the discussion. The dates of the event have caused issues because Easter is quite late this year. This has given a wider variance in the dates of Easter holidays so there are no weeks that are holidays in all local authorities. It is unfortunate that this has happened, but the Thing did not think there was anything that could have been done when provisional dates were decided at Old/New last September. The Thing recommended that Committee publish the timetable of provisional dates for events immediately after Old/New. At this point the dates will still be subject to change and this will allow feedback from the broader movement.

The event will be indoors with an option for camping overflow. Callie will include an option to express preference/accessibility requirement with regards to camping vs. indoor accommodation.

During the discussion, the Thing recognised the need to change the medical information in the booking forms

Action #7: Events Reps and Comms Reps to publish the booking forms immediately after Spring Thing.

4.2 Span the World with Music

Dates: TBC

Location: The Old England, Bristol

A report submitted by the coordinator of Span the world with Music, Oskar, was read out:

Progress on Span the World with Music:

- I've found a good venue to host (the Old England). We can potentially hire it for free (maximum £50)
- We have a sound engineer in DFs (Huw)
- Some people have expressed interest in performing (Ray)
- I won't be able to organise for anytime before mid-May due to my dissertation! Wish I could but I have too much work :(Could potentially delegate if we want it sooner? I can organise it for the summer if that's not an issue - early June?
- Apologies for not saying anything on the discord chat for ages
- I know a really good graphic designer for making a poster. If comms want to do it that's fine though!
- There's not really *much* to do apart from securing a date and finding acts. It would be great if I could get a list of people in DFs / DF-adjacent people who make music and might be interested.

Think that's all, contact me if there are any more questions.

4.3 Camp 100

Dates: 27th July to 6th August

Location: Kelmarsh Hall, Market Harborough

Seren, Big Camps Rep and Camp 100 coordinator was not at the Thing, but we discussed what we could do to help the Camp and also help the DF Movement.

Action #8: Comms Representatives to advertise Camp 100 Working Week and Takedown for DF volunteers. Discuss the information that Seren would like to include.

4.4 DF Everything

Dates: 15th to 20th August

Location: TBC

At Old/New, DF Committee provisionally decided that there wouldn't be volunteer capacity nor participant demand for a full week DF Camp following Camp 100. DF Camp 2022 (after Common Ground) was lovely, though poorly attended. Like in 2022, Committee decided it would be best to combine the summer social event with the summer business event (Althing) to ensure good attendance. Spring Thing finalised the plans for this combined summer event, to be called the DF Everything. The event will start on Friday night and will begin with a day and a half of Althing business on Saturday and Sunday. The social event will begin once business is over, giving us an incentive to work quickly and efficiently. There will then be three nights of social programme.

Action #9: Secretary and Comms Representatives to organise Committee elections to take place online in advance of Everything

The Thing recommended that coordinators look for an indoor site or a site with mixed indoor and outdoor space. A meeting room and tables will be vital for business and many people will have had enough of camping following 10 days plus at Camp 100 (exceeding two weeks for some volunteers!).

The Thing decided that Committee would not be expensed to travel to Everything and that the Thing Fund that would be assigned to such expenses would instead be placed in the Fairer Fare pot.

A poll was conducted on the @woodcraftdfs Instagram story to gauge interest in an event on the proposed dates and received over 50 positive responses, so the Thing is confident that the event will be viable.

4.5 Vcamp 2026

Dates: TBC

Location: Biblins Youth Campsite

Aisling and Wilf announced that they were going to coordinate Vcamp 2026 and that they were looking for volunteers for lots of core team roles. They ran through the roles that they were looking for and the workload that volunteers could expect.

5 Policy Reviews

The Thing reviewed and updated the following DF Policies:

- Intoxicating Substances Policy
- Safeguarding Procedures
- External Visitors Policy
- Policy Policy

The multiple copies of each policy were printed out and distributed around the room for small groups to annotate. We compared annotations and made a final set of changes which the Secretary implemented on the online documents afterwards.

6 Musings

6.1 How can DFs improve the way we deal with intoxicating substances?

Sadie opened a discussion on the culture surrounding intoxicating substances (including alcohol) at DF events. There were incidents at Winter Wonderland which made it clear that we need to do more to support and protect each other and need to change the way we think about intoxicating substances as a community. She explained that there was some pressure from central Woodcraft to improve. She wanted to gather thoughts from the Movement and develop some action points.

The discussion began from an acknowledgement that the environment that we create on DF events is made unsafe because of the way that intoxicating substances are used. The Thing split into small group discussion before returning to feed back key points.

6.1.1 Culture

The role of peer pressure is not to be underestimated. The young people who exceed their limits with intoxicating substances are often influenced by peers who are more experienced with a substance. Alcohol is particularly problematic for this because it is so ingrained in youth culture at all ages within the DF age range. Younger DFs who are rarely away from their parents are particularly at risk.

Because DF events are short periods away from home, many participants respond by trying to use intoxicating substances in excess every evening. This is an aspect of the culture of the movement that we have the power to change.

It is very easy for our culture surrounding intoxicating substances to slide in the wrong direction and negative behaviour to become normalised or even expected.

6.1.2 Communicating with event participants

It is difficult to direct our culture because of the radical lack of hierarchy that is a fundamental part of the DF ethos. The policy briefing which occurs in the opening circle, when the DF Intoxicating Substances Policy is read in full is important. It means we engage with DF policy and its exact wording every time and outline the expectations to everyone clearly, but there are two main issues:

- **It can be boring - listeners do not take everything on board.** The Thing explored alternative ways to deliver the information. The Thing agreed that a well-prepared summary could convey *more* information than the full policy because people just don't listen to a long dry speech.
- **The policy as is does not have the right focus.** It doesn't make the negative impact of intoxicating substances on the DF community clear enough. *"Do we have to be more feddish?"* asked a participant of the Thing.

6.1.3 MEST-UP and First Aid

Our solution to these issues must integrate our current peer support system, MEST-UP, and our system of on-shift responsible people. Ways to improve:

- **First Aid:** Heavy-handed responses to issues with intoxicating substances which approach them as medical emergencies can do more harm than good. We need to create resources to help first aiders cooperate with MEST-UP
- **MEST-UP:** Improve training for the fuzzy MEST-UP /First Aid boundary. Run more workshops for MEST-UP that are not training workshops to make MEST-UP a community project and forum, not just a policing arm. Run workshops on the specific issues we often encounter.

- **Shift engagement:** Some people who would have experience to contribute to supporting and protecting others do not volunteer because they equate MEST-UP with policing others and missing out on the fun of the event.

Action #10: Committee to write a Rough Guide to Shifts for MEST-UP, First Aiders and Orange Shift

Action #11: MEST-UP Coordinator to work on written resources to permanently preserve MEST-UP knowledge and practice.

“Have more open conversations about drugs, be less open about doing drugs”

6.1.4 Relationship between DFs and the wider Woodcraft Folk

There is pressure on the DF Movement from central Woodcraft. Because we straddle the legal adult-child boundary with our 16-20 age range, we are in a particularly precarious position and consistently failing to protect our younger members is not acceptable. This has the potential to become an existential threat to the DF Movement as we know it.