



BCT UPDATE

Birse Community Trust

ISSUE 1 JUNE 1999

Chairman's Welcome

IN AN AGE WHERE IMAGE is everything, the words '**Birse Community Trust**' may appear to lack lustre. Yet contained in these three words are heritage and vision. **Birse** has a documented history that goes back to almost the dawn of the last Millennium. The Trustees of BCT are very aware that we are privileged to be involved in taking that history into the next. The promotion and strengthening of good **Community** remains our ultimate goal and to do that in the widest possible partnership with others committed to the same ends. **Trust** is what we hope to build in working to attain our goal.

This first issue of *BCT Update* demonstrates that even in the short time since our first AGM, **Birse Community Trust** has been hard at work for the benefit of the people it was created to serve. I hope this will encourage you to participate in making this venture a great success in the new Millennium.

Reverend Jack Holt

Making a Start...

Birse Community Trust, BCT, is an exciting new local initiative "*to promote the common good of the inhabitants of the parish of Birse and deliver wider public benefits*".

BCT has only been fully up and running for three months, but it is already managing several major projects. This newsletter tells you more about BCT as an organisation and about these projects, which feature some very distinctive and important aspects of Birse's heritage.

Community Enterprise

BCT involves the three communities encompassed within Birse parish: Finzean, Birse and Ballogie. Everyone listed on the Electoral Registers for these areas is automatically a member of BCT and, as the voting membership, elects BCT's Board of five Trustees. BCT is constituted as a company with charitable status and the Trustees are responsible for running BCT on behalf of the community. The first Trustees were elected at BCT's first AGM in February and are: Reverend Jack Holt (Chairman), Robert Dinnie, Alison Farquharson, Ken Hall and Liz McConnach. The Trustees have been able to employ a part-time manager, Robin Callander, and this has been crucial in achieving BCT's early progress.

First Projects

The impetus to establish BCT came from the need to safeguard the future of ancient shared rights over the extensive area known as the Forest of Birse Common and to secure the sustainable management of the native pinewoods there. BCT's project to achieve these objectives for the benefit of the local community is described on page 2. BCT's second main project is just downstream from the Common - the restoration and continued operation of the three remarkable nineteenth century water-powered wood-working mills in Finzean. That project and others that BCT is starting elsewhere in the parish are also described in the following pages.

Birse Parish

Birse covers over 125 sq.kms. (12,500 ha. / 31,500 acres) of Mid Deeside. The parish has four main parts: the three scattered rural communities of *Finzean*, *Ballogie* and *Birse* and the largely uninhabited Forest of Birse, which covers over a quarter of the parish's total area. These four parts provide the basis of BCT's logo. The parish has c.260 households and a total population of c.700, with half the households and population in Finzean and half in Ballogie and Birse.

Local Partnership

BCT's task as a community company is to develop and implement projects that meet local needs and aspirations. That role is distinct from, but complementary to, the role of the two Community Associations (Finzean, Ballogie) and Community Council representatives that cover Birse parish. Those organisations are responsible for representing the democratic views of the local community. BCT will therefore always be guided by the concerns and priorities identified by them and work in full partnership with them over all its projects.

The production of this newsletter has been sponsored by the Cairngorms Partnership and Aberdeenshire Council. The very welcome support of these and other organisations for BCT's work is acknowledged on the back page.



Part of the expanding native pinewood on the Finlets in the Forest of Birse Common