



Chairman's Comment

BCT SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED its first three years of operation at the end of 2001 and this newsletter illustrates the growing number and expanding range of different projects that the Trust is now carrying out on behalf of the local community.

Central to the original establishment of BCT as a local community business, was the idea that BCT should increase the ability of the community in Birse parish to undertake community projects. BCT has achieved this in two main ways. Firstly, it raises all the funds for its projects from outside the parish and so avoids competing for funds raised locally for other good causes in the parish, such as the village halls, churches and school. Secondly, BCT implements its projects by paying people to do the work as part of their normal employment and so avoids competing for the finite amount of voluntary time that members of the community can contribute.

It is a very positive testament to local community spirit that, in addition to BCT and its projects, the 260 households in the parish manage to support the halls, churches and school and all the other activities of the three community associations, two community councils and over a dozen hall user and other community groups.

BCT's strategy of drawing in funds from outside and delivering community projects by increasing local employment opportunities, should be seen as a complementary part of the overall community effort and a role that has come into clearer focus over BCT's first three years.

Reverend Jack Holt

January 2002

FE Partnership

BCT AND FOREST ENTERPRISE (FE) have continued to develop their joint management of Balfour Wood (240 ha / 600 acres) and Slewdrum Forest (155 ha / 400 acres).

At Balfour, there was further work to complete the removal of the 1960's deer fence around the Wood. Birse parish is part of Scotland's core capercaillie conservation zone and the fence, which was no longer effective against deer, posed a threat to capercaillie.

In October, through a pioneering arrangement, BCT took over the deer control in Balfour Wood from FE to increase the cull and so help reduce the damage caused by deer locally. BCT is implementing the new arrangement by sub-contracting the shooting to Ballogie Estate, with whom BCT already

works on deer control in the Forest of Birse Community Pinewoods.

At Slewdrum, a start was made on removing the sitka spruce which were planted in 1980 in the botanically rich birchwoods at the north end of the Forest. The visit to BCT in November by Scotland's Forestry Minister, Rhona Brankin, gave extra impetus to the on-going discussions about Slewdrum possibly coming into community ownership through BCT.



Slewdrum Forest from the air, with the Shooting Greens road on its west side and River Dee to the east. The birchwoods that form the northern part of Slewdrum can also be seen. The clear felled areas in the south are part of Blackhall Forest.

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Improvements to the Finlets track.

Community Pinewoods: Routine management continued during the period July to December including deer control, bracken cutting, fire protection and litter collections. A start was also made on the fairly extensive work required to improve the drainage and surface condition of the hill track running up the Finlets from the bridge over the Bogturk Burn.

Community Planning



Photo by Aberdeenshire Council

BCT's Manager, Robin Callander (right), receives the grant for BCT's Community Planning Project from Councillor Audrey Findlay, Leader of Aberdeenshire Council, and Mark Hope, Director of External Affairs at Shell, the sponsors of the grant.

BCT WAS SELECTED in October to be one of four pilot projects in Aberdeenshire on "community planning" at a local level. BCT's project will mainly involve consulting locally over potential improvements that could be made to some of the public services in Birse parish, such as roads and water supplies. A project management group involving BCT and the three community associations and two community councils in the parish, will be implementing the project during 2002.



Finzean Community

Woods: The main work was the regular grass cutting along the mile path around Finzean Village. The annual walk to consult local householders about the management of the Woods was held in November. BCT also carried out docken cutting and other site maintenance at the Finzean School Wood.



Souter's Shop:

Following the major restoration of the building, there was a series of local visits to BCT's 'timecapsule' souter's shop in Ballogie during the autumn. Research also continued into the shop's unique contents.