



BCT UPDATE

Birse Community Trust

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Slewdrum Forest

BCT has been given an exciting opportunity by the Scottish Executive to try and buy Slewdrum Forest, which would bring major benefits to our local community.

Slewdrum Forest covers 410 acres between the Shooting Greens road and River Dee at the eastern edge of the parish (no.8 on back page map). It is amongst the most historic local sites in Birse and survived as an ancient common until only 50 years ago, when the Commissioners of Crown Lands gave it to the government and the site was planted by the Forestry Commission.

One of the benefits of BCT becoming the owner of Slewdrum (*pronounced Slou – as in 'now' – drum*) is the tremendous potential to improve its amenity and wildlife so that it becomes a very attractive place for members of the community to visit and enjoy, with its two summits of Meikle Ord and Little Ord, attractive views along the Dee and unusually rich variety of plants.

Another very important benefit to the community, and one recognised by the Scottish Executive in offering BCT the chance to buy the Forest, is that ownership would give BCT an asset base to support all its other work in the parish. Income from BCT restructuring the dense conifers at Slewdrum would help ensure the long term conservation of the sites BCT already manages for the community: the Finzean Mills, Commonty Pinewoods and others.

BCT has long been interested in buying Slewdrum and the proposal has twice been endorsed at its AGMs. Now, with negotiations underway, BCT will be mailing every household in the parish over the coming months as details of the proposed purchase become clearer. If you would like to join one of BCT's guided visits to the Forest, please phone the BCT Office: 01330.850200.



Native woodland at the north end of Slewdrum Forest
Photo © Eileen Bailey.



The Dee beside Slewdrum Forest. Photo © Eileen Bailey.

Natural Heritage Projects

A BCT survey discovered in 2003 that there are still water voles in the Forest of Birse. Mink are a major threat to their survival and BCT therefore installed four small 'mink rafts' along the Feugh to monitor their presence. Each raft includes a patch of clay kept damp by contact with the river and these are checked regularly



Jimmy Christie (left) who monitors BCT's 'mink rafts' with the North East Scotland Water Vole Project Officer and a visiting Polish scientist.
Photo © John Forster.

for mink footprints. BCT's other recent natural heritage work has included a habitat condition survey of the Commonty Pinewoods, so BCT can further improve the area for capercaillie; a survey of the ecological site types in Slewdrum Forest to guide future management and of a report on the geology and landforms of the parish.

BCT

BCT exists "to promote the common good of the inhabitants of Birse parish and deliver wider public benefits".

Everyone on the Electoral Registers for the parish is a member of BCT and responsible for electing the five Trustees who run BCT on behalf of the community. The Trust is a limited company, Scottish charity (SC28220) and government approved Local Rural Partnership.

The Trust has been going over 6 years and undertakes a wide range of projects on behalf of the local community. BCT's role in developing and implementing projects as a community business complements the roles of the local Community Associations and Community Councils that cover the parish.

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