



BCT UPDATE

Birse Community Trust

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Extension to Finzean School Wood



Photo © Eileen Bailey

Birse Community Trust has recently agreed a lease of the remaining triangle of ground at the small housing development beside Birse & Feughside Church. This agreement was the result of the continued generous support of Finzean Estate for the School Wood.

Finzean School Wood was established in 1973 with the first trees being planted by school pupils. In the Spring of 2004, in a joint venture with the Tern Television programme "Beechgrove Garden", pupils & staff from the school, parents and other members of the local community created a community garden. As featured in issue 10 of BCT's "Update", the work was filmed and shown later in a "Beechgrove Garden" programme.

The new area is adjacent to the existing School Wood and will extend the project thus creating even more areas of interest for

pupils. A plan has been drawn up which matches the most appropriate species of trees to the soil and ground levels. After preparatory work, tree planting will be undertaken in the Spring of 2007.

Slewdrum Forest

In Update 14, BCT reported the impressive results of the postal ballot over Slewdrum Forest with the 80% response rate from individual voters in the parish and over 98% support for BCT's proposed purchase of the Forest on behalf of the community. Since then, BCT has continued to make progress in its long running bid to buy Slewdrum. BCT's crucial application to the National Forest Land Scheme has recently been approved. This means that Scottish Ministers, the owners of the Forest, have agreed to sell Slewdrum to BCT on the terms already negotiated between BCT and Forestry Commission Scotland. BCT's grant applications to the Scottish Land Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Enterprise Grampian have also all been successful, so that BCT now has 95% of the purchase price. The remaining 5% or £8,000 has to come from sources other than public or lottery funds and BCT is

currently considering how it will raise this final amount.

At the same time, BCT is working with its lawyers on the details of the trading company which BCT needs to set up as a wholly owned subsidiary of BCT to handle sales of commercial timber from the Forest. Once these details are sorted out, BCT expects to conclude the purchase of the Forest. It is also hoped that this trading company will, as discussed at BCT's last AGM, handle all BCT's commercial activities come time.

In September, it was six years since BCT first formally asked to buy Slewdrum Forest as a former ancient common that had been considered locally to belong to the parish. Trustees hope that, while BCT has faced many challenges along the way, the Forest will soon be owned and managed by BCT on behalf of the community.

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 Trustees who run BCT on behalf of the community.

The Trust has been in operation since 1999 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.

Birse Community Trust is a company limited by guarantee and a Scottish charity (SC28220) having its Registered Office at 51 Atholl Road, Pitlochry, PH16 5BU. It is a government approved Local Rural Partnership.

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