



BCT UPDATE

Birse Community Trust

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Spring 2007

Slewdrum Success

On 28th March, BCT and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) hosted a reception in Finzean Hall to mark BCT's historic achievement in buying Slewdrum Forest on 14th December 2006.

The event was attended by many of FCS's senior managers, including their Chairman, Director and Chief Executive. Other guests included representatives of the Community Councils and Associations in Birse and of the grant bodies that helped BCT to buy the Forest.

In a speech at the reception, FCS Chairman Calum MacDonald congratulated the Trust on reaching its goal after over six years of hard work and paid tribute to BCT's purchase of the 415 acre (168 ha.) Forest as the first of its type by a community under FCS's National Forest Land Scheme. He described BCT achievement as "a pioneering and inspiring example to other communities across Scotland of what can be achieved through the determination and commitment of communities to enhance their local environment and provide greater opportunities for local residents and the wider public alike."

For the community in Birse which voted so emphatically in 2006 in support of BCT's proposal to buy the Forest, bringing this former ancient local common into community ownership and management is a historic local development.

After the reception, there was a site visit to Slewdrum during which BCT's Chairman Donald Silcock presented Calum MacDonald with a spurtle from the Finzean Turning Mill as a souvenir of his visit and symbol of the woodland culture that still survives in Birse.

BCT is now actively involved in managing the Forest and taking forward the plans discussed at the local consultation meetings in the parish in 2006. Progress is slower than expected at present, however, as the government's forestry grant schemes have been suspended during 2007 while they are reviewed.

Commonty Pinewoods

This spring, BCT is starting an important five year planting programme to restore more native broadleaved trees and riparian woodland to the native pinewoods managed by the Trust in the Forest of Birse Commonty.

BCT will be planting around 5,000 native broadleaves each year as part of its Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme project for the pinewoods. The trees required are being grown from seeds collected by BCT in the Forest of Birse area, so that they are all of the right local genetic origin.

The work builds on BCT's initial planting of over 4,000 native broadleaves in spring 2000 along the Feugh and up its three tributaries on the North Hill of the Commonty: the Finlets, Bogturk and Allochrowan Burns. Those original trees are now largely established and the new planting will involve further sites in those areas where appropriate native broadleaved woodland will bring a wide range of environmental benefits.



BCT Chairman Donald Silcock (on left) presented a spurtle to Calum MacDonald, Chairman of Forestry Commission Scotland, during his visit to Slewdrum Forest. © BCT

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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