



# BCT UPDATE

## Birse Community Trust

ISSUE 19

Autumn 2008

## Progress with Project

Since the last Update, BCT has been very busy developing its major project to try and buy Balfour Wood and install a woodchip heating scheme at Finzean Old School.

The impressive result of the Community Ballot in June on BCT's proposal to buy Balfour Wood, was a great boost for the project. There was a very high response rate to the postal ballot, with 75% of the 619 voters on the parish's Electoral Registers returning their individual forms to Aberdeenshire Council and 96% voting in support of BCT's proposal.

BCT's application to be able to buy Balfour through the National Forest Land Scheme was also successful, with Forestry Commission Scotland's Grampian Conservator John Risby commenting at the time that BCT "have been leading the field of community forestry groups for nearly ten years and are a fantastic example of what rural communities can achieve".

BCT is now awaiting the result of a funding application to know whether or not the community will be able to buy Balfour. BCT has also managed to develop the woodchip heating component of the project to a similar stage. The scheme would be fuelled by woodchips from Balfour and also provide heat to Finzean Primary School to replace its use of oil for heating. BCT has been working closely with Aberdeenshire Council throughout the process from feasibility assessments, design specifications and planning permissions to the quantity surveyor estimates and initial tenders from contractors to cost the Scheme.

BCT's funding applications to buy Balfour and install the woodchip heating have all been submitted. BCT is now waiting to hear if it will be able to implement the project, with the decision on the main application to the Big Lottery Fund not expected until February 2009.

## Finzean Sawmill

The remarkable revival of this early 19th century water powered sawmill continues. Ten years ago, the mill was in such poor condition that it looked like it would never work again. However, the major restoration programme that



BCT started in 1999 brought the sawmill back into full working order and in recent years the mill has been busier than for a very long time. None of this would have been possible without David Duncan. He is the fourth generation of his family to run the Duncan's Turning Mill on the Sawmill site. David also operates the sawmill for BCT, which uses the mill to cut timber for its own community projects, including over 7,000 tree stakes a year. BCT also now brings in additional timber to supplement its own supplies from the Community to meet other special orders.

Given the nature of Finzean Sawmill and all its related structures, repairs are on-going and can often involve special knowledge or skills to carry out.



The BCT's Trustees Board Meeting at Finzean Old School in June shortly after the very successful result of the Balfour Wood Community Ballot was announced. BCT's five Trustees are (L-R above) Brian Page, Dorothy Dinnie, Donald Silcock (Chairman), Jacqui Christie, Jean Mcleod.

## BCT

Birse Community Trust 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 five local Trustees who run BCT on behalf of the community. The Trust has been going nearly ten years and undertakes a wide variety of projects on behalf of the local community, including the ownership and management of buildings and lands. BCT's core partners are Birse parish's three Community Associations and two Community Councils.

BCT is a company limited by guarantee (SC188799) and a Scottish charity (SC28220) with its registered office at J&H Mitchells, WS, 51 Atholl Road, Pitlochry PH16 5BU.



David Duncan demonstrating the operation of the Turning Mill during a visit by the Grampian Woodworkers Association in August. Every year, a wide range of groups enjoy visiting Finzean Sawmill with its two water powered mills and many other features.