



Historic Birse Kirk and Birse Community Hall

BCT bought these two buildings on the open market in 2003 to save them for the community. BCT then leased the management of the Kirk to the Ecumenical Trust for Birse Kirk (ETBK) and reached an Agreement with Birse Area Community Association (BACA) to enable them to manage the Hall.

In August this year, BCT, ETBK and BACA held a special meeting in the Hall to celebrate the success of the first five years of these arrangements. After a minuted discussion of



topics related to their shared interests in the buildings and associated grounds, a cake was cut, photos taken and hospitality enjoyed.

Representatives of BCT, ETBK and BACA at Birse Community Hall to mark the first five years of their management of the Kirk and Hall.

Chairman's Comment

On 31st December 2008, BCT will complete its first ten years of operation. BCT has achieved a great deal in those years and I am pleased to report that, with less than two months to go, BCT should reach this next milestone in good shape.

During 2008, BCT has been busy developing its project to buy Balfour Wood and install the Woodchip Heating Scheme at Finzean Old School. A huge amount of work has been needed to meet the requirements of potential funders and obtain other approvals and authorisations. Trustees are grateful to everyone who voted in the very successful community ballot over Balfour Wood. The result, like that of the Slewdrum ballot in 2006, was a higher percentage response rate and 'yes' vote compared to any other equivalent ballots elsewhere in Scotland.

Trustees have also been encouraged by the support for the Project amongst public bodies and other interest groups. There seems widespread recognition that the Project would bring important local community and wider public benefits.

BCT's existing achievements have also been acknowledged recently by the Scottish Government's new Rural Development Council deciding to hold their third meeting in Birse in December. BCT is the first community group in Scotland to be invited to make a presentation to the RDC and was chosen as "a widely recognised example of a successful and pioneering community development trust".

BCT has made ten funding applications to be able to develop and implement its Balfour Wood and Woodchip Heating Project. So far, BCT has been successful in seven out of seven and has also managed to set aside the funds that BCT will need to contribute to the Project. When BCT finishes its first ten years in a few weeks time, we will still be waiting anxiously to hear the outcomes of the remaining grant applications. Success with them would be a tremendous way for BCT to start its next ten years!

Donald Silcock
Chairman

November 2008

Associate Membership

Anyone who lives outside Birse parish can support BCT by becoming an Associate Member. The subscription is £20 within the UK and £25 overseas. Membership runs for 12 months from the date of joining. Members receive BCT's newsletters, other mailings, special discounts on BCT's publications and other benefits. Please support BCT and send your subscription to BCT's office.

Donations

BCT greatly appreciates donations to support its projects. Please send donations to BCT's Office. BCT can provide a Gift Aid Declaration form for donors who are UK taxpayers. Signing the form will increase the value of the donation to the Trust by 20%.

Acknowledgements

BCT is very grateful to all who have supported the Trust's work with donations and other assistance during the last twelve months, including the following for grants: Aberdeenshire Council, Big Lottery Fund (Investing in Ideas), Cairngorms National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

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