

Minute of Board Meeting

19th April 2016

Trustees Present: Jean McLeod (Chair), Doug Boyle, John Hector and Mark White;

Also Present: Rick Paul (Secretary to Board), Jane Winton (Administrator), Robin Callander (Adviser)

Apologies: Anita Stutter and Jonathan Kitching (Trustees), Robert Dinnie (Patron)

1. Introduction

Apologies were noted from AS, JK and RD. The Agenda was confirmed and it was agreed to take the one topic for AOB as item 5.5.

2. Minutes of the Last Board Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting on 15th March 2016 were approved and signed.

3. Matters Arising from Last Board Meeting *(not covered elsewhere on Agenda)*

3.1 Annual Accounts: It was noted that the 2015 Accounts were agreed when circulated.

5.4 BTCO Records: It was noted that search for the early BTCO Minutes is ongoing.

4. Finances

4.1 Management Accounts: The previously circulated tables of income / expenditure in first quarter were discussed. The significant reduction in unrestricted funds with bills now due for the Accountants, Annual Report and other items was noted, together with the fact that BCT will not know for some time yet whether the pine planting grant will be paid or BTCO will carry out its thinning in Slewdrum on schedule. It was agreed that the current position reflects the need for BCT to take a cautious and prudent approach in managing its finances.

4.2 Annual Expenditure: It was noted that, while the graph of BCT's expenditure shows that it has reduced since 2011 to a lower level than formerly, the histogramme tabled by RC showed that BCT's average annual expenditure including its subsidiary BTCO has remained at a very similar level to that in the years before BTCO was set up. It was noted that BTCO has invested over £100K in managing and improving Balfour and Slewdrum during the last 4 years and that, during that period when BTCO was also establishing its harvesting pattern, BCT has taken a prudent approach to managing its own expenditure.

5. Administration

5.1 Annual Report: Hard copies of the Report were handed out. It was agreed that thanks will be passed to Ellie Flather for producing another attractive report and for ensuring it was printed on time. It was noted that the wrong totals are given for the legal fees in the last Note on the last page.

5.2 Membership: It was noted that little progress has been made with signing up members so far this year, and that BCT may miss its target of around 50% of the electorate by the AGM.

5.3 AGM Papers: The text on the AGM Agenda to describe what happens after the formal business, was endorsed. The approach to be taken regarding members and non-members with the invitation and mailing to local residents, was also endorsed.

5.4 AGM Event: It was noted that two nominations have been received so far by J&H Mitchell. It was agreed that RP will circulate the AGM attendance records, liaise with Dave Bracegirdle over his performance and set up the AGM seating with the Trustees' table against the west wall. It was agreed that RP and JW will update the Trustees AGM briefings and liaise with JM, DB, MW and AS over different Trustees dealing with different Agenda items.

5.5 Charity Law: The previously circulated list from J&H Mitchell on the range of topics that they can provide assistance on to Trustees, was noted as a useful list. It was confirmed that Trustees should raise any topic from the list they wish to discuss. The importance of the induction or training for new Trustees was noted. It was agreed to review to material to be sent to new Trustees in advance of the AGM, and to review this material annually in future.

6. Properties

6.1 Finzean Mills: The success with the applications to Council and Foundation Scotland was noted. RC reported on the current repairs at the mills and on his contact with SEPA over the current and planned works. It was noted that SEPA has agreed BCT can remove the material from in front of the Sawmill sluice gate when it is ready. It was noted that BCT has signed a letter of

engagement with J&H Mitchell over the proposed acquisition of land at the Sawmill and that, while they have written to the Estate's solicitors, no reply has been received yet.

6.2 Slewdrum: It was noted that the purchase of the 5 ha had been completed successfully and that the Minute of Agreement to extend BCo's lease over the area has been signed. BCo's proposal to revise its Forest Plan to fell several small stands during the planned thinning in 2016, were discussed and endorsed.

6.3 Community Woods / Path: It was noted that c.100 birch have been planted in the south east part of the Woods, that construction of the memorial is underway in the School Wood, that path repairs had been carried out there and that a new bench is due to be installed at the end of the month at the top of the Community Path just below the School.

7. Other Topics

7.1 Special Landscape Areas: It was noted that Aberdeenshire Council propose to designate the west side of the parish as a SLA, and that this is an example of a topic that BCT would hope to be consulted on by the Community Councils, given BCT's interests in the area. It was agreed that BCT would not respond directly to the Council's consultation, but that RP will circulate the link to the proposal.

7.2 Deer Management: It was noted that the previously circulated table showed the cull in 2015/16 in BCT's three forests was the highest to date and the third year in a row when over 250 deer have been culled. RC noted that he is currently drafting the Birse Parish Deer Management Group's 2015/16 cull report and that this will show a cull of over 700 deer for the first time. The environmental, economic and social benefits of adequate deer control locally were noted, together with the practical and strategic benefits of BCT's wider land use discussions with the local estates through the DMG and annual Local Land Management meetings.

7.3 Social Housing: The previously circulated paper about the Ord Cottage in Slewdrum and the Scottish Government's new Rural Housing Fund was discussed. It was agreed that developing the Ord and Whinbrae sites to provide local housing at an affordable rent, remains a positive strategic aim for the sites. It was agreed that it would be good to explore this possibility further at some stage, but noted that BCT would need someone local with the capacity to investigate and develop the project if BCT wanted to take it forward.

7.4 Strategic Plan: The comments received about the Plan being behind schedule were discussed, together with the points that Trustees might make at the AGM about the delay to the Plan and work so far on developing the Plan. Guy Haslam's offer to draft BCT's Plan was considered and it was confirmed that BCT will thank him for his offer, but not take it up. It was confirmed that the current schedule for the Plan is for:

- RC to introduce the draft Plan at the August Board Meeting and the Trustees will then consider the Plan, with an extra meeting specifically about the Plan if that might be helpful.
- Once Trustees have an agreed Draft Plan, they will circulate it to the Community Associations and Community Councils and organise a BPLG meeting to discuss the Draft, with the scope to invite all the respective committee members rather than one or two representatives from each as at normal BPLG meetings.
- After making any appropriate revisions in the Draft Plan, Trustees anticipate organising an open meeting in the small hall in Finzean Hall as was done when BCT consulted on its Forest Plans, with posters about the Plan on the walls and members of the community able to drop in to discuss and comment on the Plan.

In considering the Plan, it was recognised that its implementation will depend on BCT having the appropriate human resources and the position was discussed in relation to each of the four main categories - Trustees, core administrators, project managers and regular contractors.

8. Any Other Business *(none)*

9. Trustees Meetings

9.1 Board Meetings: The meeting on 5th June in the Luncheon Hut in the Forest of Birse Community was confirmed. It was also confirmed that the subsequent meetings will be on Tuesday 16th August and Tuesday 20th September..



05/06/2016

Signed & Dated

