

# **BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST**

## **Minutes of Board Meeting**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2019**

Trustees Present: Guy Haslam (Chair), Hedge Shand, Alison Bell, Jonathan Kitching, Toby Rider, John Hector, Nancy Davidson.

In Attendance: Eoghan Cameron (Manager), Sian Loftus (Heritage Consultant)

Apologies: Pam Taylor (Trustee), Jane Winton (Administrator), Rick Paul (Secretary)

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 The agenda was confirmed and three apologies noted.

1.2 The Chairman invited Sian Loftus (SL) to provide a status update on the Old School project.

There was a brief discussion on the viability of the Old School site for a BCT-run deer larder. It was confirmed that BCT culls sufficient deer numbers to warrant having its own deer larder. SL voiced her opinion that the site is unsuitable due to access and proximity with the school. SL presented the architect's concept for the Old School site, outlining its purpose as a community hub and learning space. SL noted that the Soup Kitchen purpose is less defined and, while it remains flexible, use as a holiday let is not considered viable.

SL outlined the next steps for the project. Once the architect's report is complete and agreed, BCT will need to approach potential funders. SL advised that this could be undertaken within 3-6 months. It was noted that funders could either accept the proposal as-is, or require further work to be undertaken. SL clarified the emphasis placed on community by funding stakeholders. SL therefore clarified importance of BCT starting to make Old School more available to the community from now on.

SL noted that the all-in cost of the full concept is circa £800k. This would require to be funded almost exclusively from grant sources, with BCT possibly contributing £10-30k. SL anticipated annual running costs to BCT of circa £8k.

SL stated that the final version of the architect's report will be available for review by the Trustees imminently. SL left the meeting.

The Chairman stated that once the report has been issued and reviewed by the Trustees, it will be necessary to organise a meeting to discuss follow-up actions.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Board Meetings**

2.1 The Minutes of Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 were approved and will be signed at a later date when the Secretary is available.

### **3. Matters Arising**

3.1 The smoke detector and emergency lighting checks for March were completed.

### **4. Finances**

4.1 Annual Accounts 2018: The Chairman explained that BCT is currently running a small budget overspend which should be cleared by end Q2 once further grant funding is received.

4.2 Management Accounts: The Chairman confirmed that he had signed the Management Accounts.

### **5. Administration**

5.1 AGM: The Chairman asked for comments on the AGM invitation. There were none. ND confirmed she will cover the Slavery element, but is awaiting confirmation from the school as to whether some of the children involved will also speak. AB will cover the Old School element. TR will cover BCTCo business. EC will present the Commonty, Mills and the 2018 – 2019 update sections. Target duration for each speaker is no more than 5 minutes.

5.2 Annual Report: EC confirmed that the Annual Report hardcopies were due back from the printers imminently. EC would contact the Secretary to confirm arrangements for distribution to the members.

5.3 BCTCo AGM: TR updated the Trustees on the BCTCo AGM by providing an overview of the accounts, income, expenditure and the £20k donation to BCT. TR noted that operating costs for the year had been higher than usual, primarily due to extensive track maintenance. TR noted that BCTCo's accounts are in a stable position and that no felling operations are planned for 2019. TR gave an overview of key activities, including an update on initial Lyme disease research in Slewdrum which found 4% of ticks to be infected. The same research noted a higher density of red deer and lower density of roe deer in Slewdrum than reported in BCTCo's deer count for Slewdrum.

TR provided an update on track construction in Balfour. TR also confirmed that RTS will be removed as BCTCo's forestry agent imminently and the contract put out to tender. This is important for BCT as the Commonty will be an integral element to the work. The Chairman noted that a significant clear-fell is on the horizon for Slewdrum, but is dependent on the trees in the fenced enclosure reaching a height of 6 feet. AB asked whether there was an obligation to replant the area with mixed species. It was noted that there is no requirement, but that it will remain important to ensure that it is replanted with commercially viable species.

The Trustees thanked TR for a clear and informative update.

### **6. Properties and Projects**

6.1 Old School AHF Bid: This was covered by SL at the beginning of the meeting.

6.2 History and Heritage: ND stated that the cartoon illustrator for the graphic novel has been ill and therefore the initially specified June deadline may be postponed.

6.3 Slewdrum: EC stated that BCTCo had agreed to carry out further tree cutting to improve the view from the bench.

6.4 Balfour Wood and Footpaths: JK stated the Aboyne Paths and Tracks Group meeting will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> May. Volunteers complete "Paths for All" training.

6.5 BCTCo: This was covered earlier in the meeting by TR.

6.6 Wood ant project: EC provided a brief overview of a Hutton Institute research project in the Forest of Birse. The overarching purpose is to ascertain whether the presence of wood ants is in fact an indicator of forest health. The Trustees felt it would be interesting for the PhD researcher to give a talk on the research to members of the community. EC will contact the researcher to gauge feasibility.

## 7. Trustees Meetings

7.1 Board Meetings: The dates of the next two meetings were confirmed as 7<sup>th</sup> May (to discuss the Old School Report) and 18<sup>th</sup> June at 7.15pm in the Soup Kitchen.

## 8. Any Other Business

8.1 Commonty Fire Sign: EC noted Trustees' feedback on the sign and will ensure this is implemented.

8.2 Interpretative Panels (Commonty, Corsedardar, Finzean Community Path): EC noted Trustees' feedback on the signs and will ensure this is implemented.

8.3 Community Path Maintenance: JH confirmed his father wishes to continue doing this work for BCT.

8.4 Old School Usability: Following a meeting with SL, EC advised the Trustees there is demand for a more user-friendly community space within the Old School. The majority of current furnishings are unsuitable, uncomfortable and unnecessary. The Trustees agreed to:

- Allow EC to put out a Facebook post offering such furnishings to the Community for free.
- Contact Magpie to gauge their interest

TR noted that Banchory tip may recycle old furniture and that BCT should mention the availability of free office furniture at the AGM.

8.5 Archaeology Scotland Visit 21 May: GH asked for volunteers to support the visit. AB volunteered. JK will advise his availability.

8.6 Balfour MTB warning signage: Trustees agreed that A4 is an appropriate size. BTCo to be involved in the process. JK to approach Ellie Flather for a design and quote. JK advised there is a tree adjacent the MTB track that is continually struck by handlebars. It would be desirable to remove this tree for safety and JK will approach BTCo to arrange this.

8.7 Trustees: The Chairman noted that PT is standing down from the Trust and therefore there is no requirement for JH to resign.

8.8 Commonty Roadside Fire Risk: HS asked what BCT is doing about the risk of fire starting at the FoB roadside. EC advised that the roadside is due for swiping shortly.

8.9 E-bikes: AB advised that funding is available for community E-bikes. AB to investigate and advise.

8.10 Community Climate Club: AB advised local young people may be interested in setting up a climate change club and asked whether they could use the Old School as a venue. Permission was granted by the Trustees and the Chairman stated that it is customary for users of the Old School to make a donation.

Signed.....

Date.....