

BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Minutes of Board Meeting

31st March 2010

Trustees Present: Donald Silcock (Chair), Brian Page, Jean McLeod, Andrew Walker;

Apologies: Dorothy Dinnie

In Attendance: Rick Paul (Secretary to Board), Robin Callander (Project Manager)

1. Introduction

The Chairman noted DD's apologies and that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the purchase of Balfour Wood. It was agreed also to consider three other items.

2. Big Lottery Fund

RC reported that attempts to reclaim any of the expenses that BCT incurred during the BLF's re-assessment from the BLF have been unsuccessful. It was agreed that, particularly with a new Growing Community Assets scheme opening in June, BCT should still raise its concerns about the BLF's processes and BCT's view that its re-assessment had not been treated fairly and reasonably. It was agreed that, as previously discussed, RC should offer the BLF Scotland a meeting to discuss these points and that the Chairman should then write to the BLF's UK Board.

3. Balfour Wood

(i) Purchase: DS noted BCT's remarkable change in fortunes over Balfour since the Board Meeting on 22nd March. RC reported that he is awaiting clarification from his contacts about DS writing on behalf of BCT to thank the anonymous donor. It was noted that Forestry Commission Scotland has agreed that the purchase of the Wood by BCT can be completed on the previously agreed terms, despite the purchase running over the end of BCT's National Forest Land Scheme approval. It was confirmed that Trustees have agreed to buy Balfour Wood for £194K as set out in the Chairman's email of 28th March instructing RC to arrange the purchase. It was noted that there is likely to be an additional c.£2K on legal and professional fees.

(ii) Solicitors Letter: It was noted that the immediate requirement is for J & H Mitchell to write to FCS confirming that BCT has the funds available to complete the purchase. It was agreed, given the delay in receiving the second instalment of SNH's grant until 9th April, to use £12K from the Fire Fund meantime to make up the funds being sent to J & H Mitchell to provide them with the full purchase price.

(ii) Fund Raising: It was agreed that it is very important to try to raise the £25K + fees not covered by the donation and SNH grant and which is currently covered by BCT's reserves. It was agreed to approach individuals and organisations who might contribute and to go public with the appeal once the timing of the purchase becomes clearer.

(iii) Name: It was confirmed that, when BCT becomes owner and as previously agreed, BCT will change the Wood's name to Balfour Forest.

(iv) Lease: It was agreed to lease Balfour to BCo soon after acquisition on a similar basis to Slewdrum and as per the draft lease prepared for BCT's BLF application.

(iv) Management: It was noted that the time required to obtain an IACS registration for Balfour once BCT is the owner, may complicate the inclusion of Balfour in the planned Forest Management Plan consultations for Slewdrum and the Commonly Pinewoods. It was noted that BCT should be able to obtain a felling license to thin Balfour during 2010.

4. Birse Graveyard

RC reported on recent discussions with Aberdeenshire Council and Birse Estate over the graveyard extension. It was noted the Estate are still due to make a proposal to BCT over BCT acquiring the site. It was agreed to consider this proposal in due course, recognising BCT's changed financial circumstances with the purchase of Balfour and the burst pipe expenditure. It was noted that AW will contact RC for an update prior to the Birse and Ballogie Community Council meeting on 19th April.

5. Deeside Way

RC reported on recent discussions with Aberdeenshire Council over the Deeside Way. He tabled a map showing a route using the original Old Military Road in Slewdrum and continuing northwards near the public road to BCT's boundary at the Greenoch Burn. It was agreed to agree this route in principle subject to further, more detailed discussions with the Council and to appoint RC to act as BCT's agent in those discussions.

6. Next Meeting

It was agreed that RC will be invited to the next Board Meeting on 20th April to provide an update on the purchase of Balfour Wood and report on related considerations.

Signed.....

Date.....