



BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Schedule of Lands & Buildings (2023)

INTRODUCTION

BCT is directly involved in the management of fourteen sites in Birse parish through a variety of legal arrangements. BCT:-

(a) *holds ancient land use rights over*

(b) *owns nine properties:*

1. The Forest of Birse Community

2. Slewdrum Forest

3. Balfour Forest

4. Finzean Sawmill

5. The Bucket Mill

6. Birse Kirk

7. Birse Community Hall

8. Finzean Old School

9. Birse Parish Archive Building

10. Ballogie Soutar's Shop

(c) *tenants four properties on long leases*

11. Corsedardar

12. Finzean School Wood

13. Finzean Community Woods

14. Finzean Community Path

This Schedule describes each of these fourteen sites to provide a brief summary of the reason that BCT became involved with each site, BCT's management of the site to date and BCT's management proposals for the site during the five years of BCT's Strategic Plan 2021-2026. The Schedule is updated at the start of each year.

There is further information about the sites, including maps, on BCT's website.

1. Forest of Birse Commonty

Reason for Involvement: Local concern that ancient shared land use rights over the Forest of Birse Commonty might be lost and that the native pinewoods on the Commonty were un-managed and vulnerable to a range of threats.

Basis of Involvement: The ancient shared land use rights over the whole Commonty (c.4000 ha) were vested in BCT in 1998. BCT has also had a formal management agreement over the North Hill (c.528 ha) of the Commonty since 1999 with the other two parties with rights in the Commonty - the owner of the solum ('Birse Estate') and joint owners of the sporting rights ('Birse and Ballogie Estates'). The purpose of the North Hill Management Agreement is to facilitate BCT's use of its ancient rights to manage the native pinewoods on the North Hill. The Agreement, which has been amended and extended since it was first agreed, currently runs to July 2023

Management 1999-2023:

BCT has continued since it first became involved in the Commonty, to work in cooperation with the other two parties with rights in the Commonty. BCT has had annual meetings with Birse and Ballogie Estates and liaised with them regularly over matters related to the management of the Commonty.

BCT has carried out research into the history of the Commonty and investigated its archaeology, including a survey of the Commonty and a supplementary report on further finds. BCT has done a number of woodland and vegetation surveys in the Commonty Pinewoods area, as well as surveys of the relic burnside trees and woodlands and peatlands in the rest of the Commonty. Surveys of particular species have included water voles and wood ants. In 2022 the 10 yearly North Hill Pinewoods survey was repeated by Neil Mackenzie, delayed by Covid.

BCT has also had a range of other involvements in the wider Commonty. These included the major project in 2004-05 to repair and restore the historic Fungle track from Ballochan to the Slochd at the watershed with the Angus Glens, as well as the subsequent maintenance of the route.

BCT has carried out extensive management to conserve and enhance the Commonty Pinewoods on the North Hill. These activities have included:

- fire protection measures and patrols at times of high fire risk.
- annual deer culls to encourage the natural regeneration of pine and birch.
- planting and maintaining over 23,000 individually protected native broadleaves.
- planting over 30,000 pine in an area destroyed by a wildfire on the North Hill.
- selective felling for ecological reasons and to supply timber to the Finzean Mills.
- thinning the hybrid larch and younger pine near the Forest of Birse Kirk.
- heather swiping and other work to promote the conservation of capercaillie.
- making approximately 8 kms of hill track to a high standard on traditional routes to assist management and improve public access.
- improvements to the quality of the informal parking along the Forest of Birse road, monitoring visitor numbers and regular litter collections.
- developing management plans and securing the funding to implement them.

Objectives of Management: To safeguard the Trust's rights and interests over the whole of the Forest of Birse Commonty and, as part of managing these rights and

interests for local community and wider public benefit, to conserve and expand the native woodlands in the Commonty.

Management Proposals 2022-24:

BCT will continue to work closely with Birse and Ballogie Estates in the Commonty, including maintaining the pattern of annual Commonty meetings between the three parties. BCT will seek to clarify further with the other parties, the arrangements governing the relationships between the rights and interests of each party over the Commonty. This will include discussions before the end of this Plan about the North Hill Management Agreement, which is currently due to end in July 2023.

BCT will continue to record archaeological sites that have not been described before and to investigate aspects of the history of the Commonty and the settlements of Ballochan and Auchabrack. BCT will aim to compile an initial draft list to record all the known place names in the Forest of Birse. BCT will carry out further habitat and species surveys and will aim to develop with Birse and Ballogie Estate, a map of the areas in the Commonty that should not be burnt under the terms of the Scottish Government's Muirburn Code.

BCT will continue to represent its interests in the wider Commonty and to undertake various involvements there. BCT will aim to maintain and develop current liaison with the Birse and Ballogie Estates over appropriate deer control in the Commonty, the safeguarding of protected raptor species and other relevant topics.

BCT will continue to maintain the Fungle south of Ballochan and to try to develop a project through discussions with Birse Estate and others, that will resolve the problems over the public access routes connected to the Fungle in and around Ballochan. BCT will also aim to expand its restoration of native broadleaved riparian woodland in the Commonty to include sites outwith the North Hill.

In 2022 BCT replaced its Forestry Commission approved Commonty Pinewoods Forest Plan, with an updated Scottish Forestry approved plan covering 2021- 2040

The Plan mainly involves:

- maintaining all the planted broadleaves until they become fully established.
- achieving an adequate level of deer control to encourage natural regeneration and ensure adequate establishment of the planted pine in the 2003 fire site.
- maintaining the hill tracks and the quality of public access along the public road.
- maintaining and improving the protection of the site from the risk of wildfires.

2. SLEWDRUM FOREST

Reason for Involvement: Opportunity to ensure that this former ancient local community contributes greater social, environmental and economic benefits in Birse.

Basis of Involvement: BCT had a twenty-five year Management Agreement over the Forest with Scottish Ministers as represented by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), from 2000 until BCT purchased the Forest (168 ha) in December 2006. BCT has leased the Forest to its trading company, BCo, since July 2007. The Community Fishing Proprietors have a right of access down the Fishing Track governed by a 1954 Minute of Agreement. BCT and FCS have reciprocal access rights over parts of the forest roads in Slewdrum and Blackhall to the Shooting Greens car park. In 2016, BCT purchased the additional 5 ha of land between the Kettock Burn and the Shootings Greens forest road from FCS.

Management in 2000-23: BCT's first bid to buy Slewdrum was in 2000 and from then until BCT became owner at the end of 2006, the main management in the Forest under the Agreement with FCS was clear felling by FCS and some deer control. In 2007/08, BCo thinned many of the stands in the Forest and subsequently clear felled five small areas of non-native conifers in the native broadleaved woodland closest to the Dee. BCo improved the deer control to encourage natural regeneration in the areas felled by FCS and also planted individually protected native broadleaves at several sites. BCo upgraded over 1 km of the middle forest track into a forest road to improve vehicular and public access, created the new Ord track (660ms) and improved the Forest's three public road entrances. BCo erected BCT signs at all the entrance to the Forest. In 2011, following agreement between BCT and Aberdeenshire Council, the Council constructed the Deeside Way running through the edge of the Forest beside the public road. The trees on the length of Old Military Road in the Forest were also felled and sold with some windblown timber. BCo has carried out other amenity fellings and supplied the firewood to local households. In 2012/3, BCo removed the old fence running through the Forest and cleared the old garage from the Ord. In 2013, BCo clear felled the Lower Kettock stand (10 ha) and Ord Burn stand (3 ha) and carried out site restoration work following the felling. In 2014, BCo fenced and replanted the Lower Kettock stand. In 2015, BCo thinned the Muckle Ord compartment. In 2016, BCo improved the east end of the middle forest track to timber lorry standard and then thinned the Little Ord, Horse Hillock and Dee Banks compartments, including clear felling two small areas of Lodgepole pine and an area of spruce and fir on the slopes down to the Dee. BCo had the sides of some tracks flailed in 2020 to suppress the encroaching gorse.

Objectives of Management: To manage the Forest to produce the social, economic and environmental benefits that sustainable forestry can provide for the inhabitants of Birse parish and the wider community.

Management Proposals 2022-24: In 2022, BCo replaced its Forest Plan for Slewdrum Forest with an updated Scottish Forestry approved plan covering 2021-40.

The Plan mainly involves:

- achieving an adequate level of deer control to encourage natural regeneration.
- ensuring the felled Kettock and Ord Burn areas are successfully re-established.

- implementing the felling and thinning programme in the updated Forest Plan.
- maintaining the forest roads and tracks in good condition.

3. BALFOUR FOREST

Reason for Involvement: Local concern over the management of Balfour Wood (as it was known) by the Forestry Commission, including concern that the Wood might be sold.

Basis of Involvement: BCT had a 25 year Management Agreement over the Wood with Scottish Ministers as represented by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), from 2000 until BCT purchased the Wood in May 2010. BCT then changed the name to Balfour Forest. BCT's title to the Forest has access rights over Balfour Estate, including along the Coffin Road and through the Estate timber stack yard. The Forest has been leased to BCT's trading company, BCo, since July 2010.

Management in 2000-23 In the period until 2005, BCT was able to encourage a range of management improvements by FCS, including clear felling non-native conifers from riparian areas sooner rather than later, removing redundant deer fences to help conserve capercaillie, repairing the dykes and protecting the Church Road from use for timber extraction. BCT also carried a range of initiatives, including wildlife surveys and path mapping. In 2001, BCT took over responsibility for deer control, sub-contracting the culling to Ballogie Estate until BCT's purchase of the Forest in 2010. Few further improvements to the management of the Forest were achieved through FCS in the five years before the purchase. During 2010-15, BCo carried out a wide range of improvements. BCo thinned most stands in the Forest in 2010-11, cleared some subsequent windblow in 2011-12, and cleared areas of windblown Lodgepole pine on Creagantoll in 2015. BCo re-created the Foggage road, upgraded the southern length of the Coffin road, created a new track across the foot of the Allansack Burn and carried out other small scale track improvements elsewhere. Other works included amenity fellings over each winter, with the firewood supplied to local households; felling regenerating spruce to waste in the Lower Allansack and Bogranda, and clearing around the old pine on Creagandummie. BCT erected BCT entrance / boundary signs and cleared redundant tree tubes from the Lower Allansack. BCo appointed a new deer stalker in 2012 and the annual deer cull in the Forest has been substantially increased to encourage natural regeneration.

BCo thinned the Forest in 2017-18. An interpretation board was erected at the main entrance in 2020. BCo completed the construction of the Baudylace track along the western side of the forest in 2020.

Objectives of Management: To manage the Forest to produce the social, economic and environmental benefits that sustainable forestry can provide for the inhabitants of Birse parish and the wider community.

Management Proposals 2022-24: In 2022, BCo replaced its Forest Plan for Balfour Forest with an updated Scottish Forestry approved plan covering 2021-40.

The Plan mainly involves:

- achieving an adequate level of deer control to encourage natural regeneration;
- maintaining the condition of the existing forest road, tracks and entrances;
- creating a new length of track on to Brown Hill
- implementing the felling and thinning programme in the updated Forest Plan.
- Felling spruce to waste along the sides of the Allansack Burn

4. FINZEAN SAWMILL

Reason for Involvement: Local concern that the deteriorating and dangerous condition of the Sawmill threatened its survival.

Basis of Involvement: Ownership of the Sawmill site south of the public road (0.4 ha), including the land used by the Turning Mill (as held by David Duncan under a ground lease) and the weir in the Feugh, were donated to BCT by Donald Farquharson in 1999. BCT bought a further 0.2 ha north of the road, including the car park and adjoining area of woodland, from Donald Farquharson in 2003. In 2016, to complete BCT's ownership of the historic mill site, the 0.3 ha of land between the mid sluice and the weir was donated to BCT by Donald Farquharson with the bothie and 0.03 ha of land on the north side of the public road from the mill. The nature of David Duncan's rights and interests in the Turning Mill buildings by virtue of his annual ground lease, is a relatively unusual situation and a matter that BCT has examined closely with its lawyers. The Sawmill, Turning Mill and associated structures are Grade A Listed Historic Buildings.

Management in 1999-2023: When BCT became owner of the Sawmill, it started on a major programme of restoration work. BCT carried out a substantial re-build of the Sawmill, including replacing the roof sarking, corrugated iron and wooden gutters; replacing wall claddings and structural timbers; rebuilding the drystone retaining wall and abutting wooden platform, lime pointing the building's walls, reinstating the lade to the generator wheel and other tasks. BCT also cooperated with David Duncan to restore the smiddy building at Turning Mill. BCT continued to carry out a wide range of repairs including, for example, replacing the sawmill timber ramp and re-building part of the weir. In the three to four years to 2010, the Sawmill was at its busiest for some decades cutting timber mainly supplied by BCT from the Commonly pinewoods. Cutting continued in the following years; mainly posts, tree stakes and rails for BCT projects. BCT has worked in partnership with David Duncan throughout. In 2011, BCT moved the Sawmill garden further back from BCT's boundary down the side of the road to the bridge to allow for bigger vehicles. In 2012, David Duncan replaced the roof of the Turning Mill Kiln Room, while BCT's recent repairs have included replacing the boarding below the Sawmill wheel and replacing the wooden bridge that goes to the wheel. BCT also cuts back the vegetation along the sides of the lade as part of its regular maintenance. Most years, BCT organises visits to the Mills for local members, while also hosting visits by other interested groups to the Mills from time to time. During 2015, BCT cut posts and rails and tree stakes at the Sawmill. However, in December 2015, BCT had to end of the use of the mill to cut timber as it has not proved possible (to date) to bring the machinery up to the necessary Health and Safety standards. The exceptional, sustained level of spates over the 2016 new year period resulted in extensive damage at the Bucket Mill and Sawmill, including washing out the Sawmill weir. At the Sawmill, BCT excavated and repaired the lade, replaced the intake sluice gate and, as a first phase of restoring the 30m weir, rebuilt 12m from the north bank. BCT completed the restoration of the weir in 2017. An interpretation Board was erected by the car park in 2018. The debris was cleared out from under the timber ramp in 2017 to expose the top of the Mill wall.

In 2022 a start was made cutting back the bamboo below the mill lade and clearing vegetation on the mill site with help from volunteers. BCT engaged consultants to carry out a Project Viability Study on the Sawmill and Turning Mill site to identify

maintenance required and with David Duncan consider possible ways forward for the mills. The report is due to be completed in 2023.

BCT hosted a SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) working party in September 2023 to carry out maintenance on the site and train the volunteers taking part. Work included making spare paddles for the mill wheels, repairing wooden guttering, handrails and lime mortar work on the Sawmill building. As part of the work party Finzean Primary School also visited the mills.

Objectives of Management: To ensure the conservation of the Sawmill and Turning Mill, their continued operation as working mills and their use for educational purposes.

Management Proposals 2023: BCT will continue to ensure that the Sawmill and its associated structures are kept in good condition. BCT will also continue to run the Sawmill on a regular basis as part of conserving it, even though it can no longer be used for cutting timber. BCT will also support David Duncan's operation and conservation of the Turning Mill where possible. BCT will continue to give consideration to how it can best secure the longer term conservation of the Sawmill Mill and Turning Mill. This will include further discussions with David Duncan, Historic Environment Scotland and others about the future of all three wood mills - the Sawmill, Turning Mill and the Bucket Mill.

5. THE BUCKET MILL

Reason for Involvement: Local concern at the lack of use and deteriorating condition of the Mill, and the lack of progress by the Finzean Water Mills Trust.

Basis of Involvement: Ownership of buildings, site and weir (c.1 ha), but not the kiln room and some fixed equipment, were donated to BCT when the Finzean Water Mills Trust was wound up in 1999. The ownership of the kiln room and fixed equipment was subsequently donated to BCT by the National Museums of Scotland, together with tools and other items that BCT retrieved from Edinburgh. While Stan Moyes has been the sole operator of the Mill since the late 1970s, this has never been on the basis of a lease or equivalent formal legal arrangement. The Mill and associated structures is a Grade A Listed Historic Building.

Management in 1999-2023 BCT carried out extensive repairs after it became owner of the Mill and worked in partnership with Stan Moyes to bring the Mill back into operation producing periodic batches of buckets that were sold by BCT. The repairs included restoring the main drive drum in the Mill, major work on the Mill roof and upgrading the electrics in the Mill. While most of the original contents of the Mill remain in the Mill, BCT stores some of the items at Finzean Old School as part of the Archive. BCT has continued to work with Stan Moyes to maintain the Mill in good repair, although no buckets have been produced for over five years. Recent work has included re-roofing the kiln room building in 2013-14, repairing part of the wooden lade in 2013 and then replacing a more major section in 2014 after it had collapsed. The work on the lade and subsequent maintenance repairs to the wheel in 2015, brought the Mill back into operation. In recent years, BCT re-started organising visits to the Mills for local members, while BCT also hosts visits by other interested groups to the Mills from time to time. The exceptional, sustained level of spates over the 2016 new year period resulted in extensive damage at the Bucket Mill. In 2016, BCT repaired the weir, mid sluice gate and part of the wooden lade damaged by the floods. BCT also restored the drop board off-let at the start of the wooden lade.

2021 repairs carried out included replacing the kiln ramp, replacing all gates, saw ramp entrances, replacing drop hatch in wooden lade, side posts in mid sluice gate and roadside 2 rail fence.

In 2022 BCT engaged a consultant to carry out a quinquennial survey of the Bucket Mill and its associated buildings. This has drawn up a list of maintenance and repair work required which BCT can start to raise funding for.

As part of the SPAB (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) working party at the mills, spare paddles were made for the Bucket Mill wheel and some repair work was carried out on puttying the windows to prevent glass loss.

Objectives of Management: To ensure the conservation of the Mill, its continued operation as a working mill and its use for educational purposes.

Management Proposals 2023: BCT will continue to work with Stan Moyes to ensure that the Mill is kept in good condition. BCT will carry out maintenance and repair work as required. BCT will also encourage the production of some new buckets by Stan Moyes as part of conserving the skills involved in making the buckets. BCT will continue to give consideration to how it can best secure the longer term conservation of the Bucket Mill. This will include further discussions with

Historic Environment Scotland and others about the future of all three wood mills - the Bucket Mill, Sawmill and Turning Mill.

6. BIRSE KIRK

Reason for Involvement: Local concern over the future of the parish's historic Kirk when the Church of Scotland decided to sell the Kirk on the open market.

Basis of Involvement: Ownership of Kirk and the grass parking area south of the old graveyard since BCT purchased the site on the open market in September 2003 (c.0.1 ha). The Kirk is a Grade B Listed Historic Building

Management 2003-23: Following BCT's purchase of the Kirk, BCT granted a 25 year repair and maintenance lease over the site to the Ecumenical Trust for Birse Kirk (ETBK). BCT owns the contents of the Kirk, except any items brought in by ETBK, and also has material associated with the Kirk in BCT's Parish Archive. The Kirk has been managed and maintained by ETBK since 2003. The work has included external pointing and painting, as well as repairs to the gutters. In 2010, BCT replaced the wooden sign for the Kirk at the entrance to the old graveyard. BCT has not used the option in the lease to charge some rent. BCT, ETBK and the Birse Area Community Association (BACA) have had an annual meeting since 2008 to discuss matters of shared interest related to the Kirk and Hall. 2021 repairs were carried out to the belcot and skews, repointing work and removing a self-sown shrub from the belcot.

Objectives of Management: To safeguard and conserve Birse Kirk, including its condition and continued use for ecumenical and educational purposes.

Management Proposals 2023- BCT will continue to fulfil its responsibilities under the lease to ETBK and to work with ETBK to ensure the future of the Kirk. BCT will continue to hold a meeting in August each year with ETBK and BACA to discuss the management of the Kirk and Hall.

7. BIRSE COMMUNITY HALL

Reason for Involvement: Local concern over the future of the Church Hall because of its importance for use with the Kirk and as the community hall for the Birse area, when the Church of Scotland decided to sell the Hall on the open market,

Basis of Involvement: Ownership of the Hall, the associate grounds and former farm steading building since BCT purchased the site on the open market in May 2003 (0.2 ha).

Management 2003-23: Following BCT's purchase of the Hall, BCT carried out a range of initial improvements to the grounds around the Hall, including tarring the access road and erecting an entrance sign. BCT then entered a 20 year Management Agreement over the Hall with the Birse Area Community Association (BACA). Under the Agreement, BACA is responsible for the maintenance and use of the Hall. The external building maintenance has included painting the woodwork and pointing cracks, while inside all the walls have been re-painted and the curtains replaced. BCT has also continued to be involved in some projects at the Hall, including improving the water supply connections in 2009 and planting some hazel trees in 2010. BCT has not used the option in the Agreement to charge some rent. BCT, the Birse Area Community Association (BACA) and ETBK have had an annual meeting since 2008 to discuss matters of shared interest related to the Hall and Birse Kirk.

Objectives of Management: To maintain the Hall as a community facility for the Birse Area, and to support the continued use of Birse Kirk.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will continue to fulfil its responsibilities under the Management Agreement with BACA and to work with BACA to ensure the future of the Hall. BCT will continue to arrange a meeting each year in August with ETBK and BACA to discuss the management of the Hall and Kirk.

8. FINZEAN OLD SCHOOL

Reason for Involvement: Local concern over the fate of the two historic Old School buildings when Aberdeenshire Council decided to sell the site on the open market.

Basis of Involvement: Twenty five year lease of the site from Aberdeenshire Council from 2001, until BCT purchased the site in December 2003 (c.0.3 ha).

Management in 2001-2023: The main building on the site was Finzean School from the 19th century until the Primary School opened on adjoining land in 1964. The other Old School building was the former soup kitchen and toilet block for the School, with parts of the building dating back to the original 18th century Bankhead School. BCT started major building works and other improvements to both buildings at the Old School when it became the owner. The development of the soup kitchen building as the Birse Parish Archive is described on the next page of this Schedule. The main building was re-wired and re-plumbed with the installation of kitchenettes for use with the offices and an additional toilet, as well as other improvements including the restoration of the pitch pine floors. After the improvements, BCT had its office in the main room and let out the other rooms to local businesses. However, the costs of heating the building adequately became an increasing problem for BCT and its tenants. BCT devoted substantial effort during 2008 and 2009 to developing plans to install a woodchip heating system in the BCT buildings that would also supply heat to the Primary School and former School House. However, the project did not happen as BCT's main funding application was unsuccessful in early 2010 at the final stage of the long process involved. BCT also had to carry out major repairs to the main building following a burst pipe in January 2010. Since then BCT has used the three rooms in the main building for its office, filing room and meetings room, including using the meeting room to display items from BCT's Parish Archive. Discussions started in 2011 both locally and between BCT and Aberdeenshire Council about BCT leasing the main Old School building to the Council to use instead of the Ballogie Nursery and BCT moving its offices to the current site of the nursery, Ballogie Old School. There was strong local support for this Old Schools proposal and the Council also supported it. However, while discussions continued into 2013, budget constraints have prevented the Council taking it forward. Over recent years, BCT has continued to carry out maintenance and further small scale improvements to both buildings and the site. This included repairs to the flashing in the gullies of the main building in 2014. Work began in 2022 to start sorting out the archive collection which BCT holds and this will continue into 2023.

Objectives of Management: To maintain and conserve the main Old School building and develop its use for BCT's offices, meeting space and other initiatives.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will continue on-going maintenance and repairs to the Old School building and its site, whilst investigating alternative uses for the building to make full use of this valuable asset. This investigation is currently in progress in the form of 'The Old School Project', to develop the Old School site as a rural heritage and field studies centre.

In 2022 funding was successfully applied for to take the Old School Project to the development stage, this will continue into 2023.

Local community use of the Old School continues to grow with well-established art classes and an art club meeting regularly, and Finzean Primary School has weekly visits to its library in the Old School.

9. BIRSE PARISH ARCHIVE BUILDING

Reason for Involvement: Local concern over the fate of the two Finzean Old School buildings when Aberdeenshire Council decided to sell the site on the open market.

Basis of Involvement: Twenty five year lease of the site from Aberdeenshire Council from 2001, until BCT purchased the site in December 2003 (c.0.3 ha).

Management in 2001-23 The development of the main Old School building as BCT's offices is described on the previous page of this Schedule. The other building on the site was the former soup kitchen and toilet block for the Old School, with parts of the building dating back to the original 18th century Bankhead School. The building was in very poor condition when BCT acquired the site. BCT carried out very extensive building work to repair and develop the building to house BCT's Birse Parish Archive, including converting the former toilet building into an environmentally controlled archive store. The front porch was subsequently added to the Archive building in 2005. Since then, BCT has continued to maintain the building in a good condition including maintenance repairs to the slating in 2014.

Objectives of Management: To maintain and conserve the Archive building to house the Birse Parish Archive collections in suitable conditions.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will continue to maintain the building and its associated land in good condition, and to manage the space in the Archive building to improve the storage and display of the Archive material, whilst considering the long term options as part of The Old School Project.

10. THE BALLOGIE SOUTAR'S SHOP

Reason for Involvement: Local concern to ensure that the building and its contents should be safeguard for local and wider public interest following their 'discovery' at the end of 1999. Subsequent research showed that this appears to be the only surviving 'in situ' traditional rural soutar's shop in the UK. The building is a Listed Historic Building category A.

Basis of Involvement: Ownership of the building and contents were donated to BCT, but not the land upon which it stands. The land is owned by Ballogie Estate and the arrangement between the Estate and BCT over the site is equivalent to an annual ground lease.

Management in 1999-2023: In the early years, BCT carried out extensive repairs to the building. BCT also sorted and catalogued its contents as part of BCT's Parish Archive Collection. BCT researched and published a booklet about the history and contents of the Soutar's Shop. BCT has continued to maintain the condition of the building and its contents and to provide guided visits to it.

In 2022 BCT engaged a consultant to carry out a quinquennial survey of the Soutar's Shop, leading to a prioritised list of work required to keep the building and contents safe. BCT also met with Aberdeenshire Council Museums Service for advice on the collection.

BCT volunteers cut back encroaching vegetation and dug out around the base of the Soutar's Shop to prevent damp and therefore rot getting into the external timbers.

Objectives of Management: To ensure the conservation of the building and its contents and their use for educational visits.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will safeguard the Shop and carry out maintenance work to the building as required. In 2022, BCT introduced a monthly recording process to monitor the condition of the building and its contents to guide future repair and remedial work on the building and the collection. BCT will continue to organise guided visits to the Shop for local residents and also encourage further educational visits to the Shop.

11. CORSEDARDAR

Reason for Involvement: The importance of the Birse Parish War Memorial to the community and local concern at derelict condition of the site, including the rutted parking area, rubbish and vehicle encroachment towards both the War Memorial and the Dardanus Standing Stone across the road. The War Memorial is a Listed Historic Building Category C. The Dardanus Stone is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Basis of Involvement: Twenty-five year lease of site on both sides of the road (c. 0.3 ha) from Donald Farquharson since 1999.

Management in 1999-2023: BCT carried out extensive work in 1999-2000 to improve the site including landscaping work, tarring the main parking area, dyke repairs, planting native trees, the provision of an information cairn and erection of the Birse Millennium Stone (and of the 'reserve' stone on the Tom's Cairn hill path). The work culminated in the event on 1st Jan.2000 to dedicate the Millennium Stone. BCT has built up a collection of material related to Corsedardar in BCT's Parish Archive and published a booklet about Corsedardar. BCT organises the annual Remembrance Service at the War Memorial each November and produced a Book of Remembrance about those listed on the Memorial. On 1st January 2010, BCT held a further event at the Millennium Stone to mark the tenth anniversary of the original event. The level of use of the site by passing traffic and by people use the path to Tom's Cairn has increased significantly over the years. BCT carries out a range of tasks each year to maintain the condition of the site, including removing rubbish, cutting the grass and tree maintenance.

A replacement interpretation panel was installed in 2020

Objectives of Management: To safeguard the stone monuments on the site and maintain the existing character of the site to a high standard of amenity that reflects its special importance to the inhabitants of Birse and its more general use by members of the public.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will continue to maintain the site, including the clearance of rubbish, grass cutting and tree maintenance. BCT will continue to organise the annual Remembrance Service at the War Memorial and to encourage local attendance at the occasion.

12. FINZEAN SCHOOL WOOD

Reason for Involvement: Local concern at the derelict condition of the former School Wood and the lapse of a connection between the Wood and the School from soon after the original trees were planted in 1973.

Basis of Involvement: Twenty five year lease of the original School Wood area and additional land (total c.0.3 ha) from Donald Farquharson since 1999. In 2007, the small area of addition of land across the Dalbing road was added to the lease. In 2011, these areas were incorporated into a new lease (still until 2024) that also includes a small additional area at the north end of the School Wood and the land occupied by the c.900ms of path that BCT constructed between the School Wood and the School in 2011 as part of the Finzean Community Path.

Management in 1999-2023: BCT started by enclosing the new School Wood area and improving the condition of the site by removing old fencing and other rubbish. BCT then held an inaugural planting event. BCT has since helped the School with further tree planting and other projects by pupils on the site. A particularly prominent project was the work involved as part of the School Wood being featured on the Beechgrove Garden TV Programme in 2004. Pupils carried out further tree planting on the additional areas added to the Wood in 2007, 2011, 2014 and 2016. BCT has carried out the on-going annual maintenance of the Wood, including cutting the grass and maintaining the fences, seats and trees, shrubs, and other vegetation on the site. In 2016, a stone seat was built in the Wood in memory of John Forster. In 2021 BCT and Finzean Primary School carried out a joint wildlife recording project focussed on School Wood.

Objectives of Management: To manage School Wood as a high amenity environment, and to encourage and assist the School with its continuing involvement with the Wood as an education resource for Finzean School pupils.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will continue to ensure the annual maintenance of the site and to assist the School where possible with its use of the Wood. BCT will liaise with the School staff, the Parents Council and others to continue the partnership over the Wood with the School, and will help seek funding that may be required for new projects involving the School and the Wood.

13. FINZEAN COMMUNITY WOODS

Reason for Involvement: Local concern at the lack of safeguards for long term community use of the Woods around Finzean Village and the need for day-to-day management to maintain a path around the Woods in usable condition.

Basis of Involvement: Two twenty-five year leases of the Woods (c.15 ha), one from Donald Farquharson (Knowes area)(c.1 ha) and one from Andrew Farquharson over the other areas (c.14 ha) since 1999. In 2011, the Knowes lease was replaced by a new lease (still until 2024). This includes both the land occupied by the Finzean Community Path from the Knowes area to the western end of Finzean Graveyard and the triangular area of woodland (c.1 ha) on Drumhead at the eastern end of the Graveyard.

Management in 1999-2022: BCT's early improvements included the construction of 900 ms of surfaced path, work on the surface and drainage of the rest of the circular path, the removal of old fencing and other rubbish, fencing parts of the outer boundaries of the Woods, netting bridge surfaces, adding a new bridge to the southern most part of the Woods, adding some waymark posts and benches, the erection of safety barriers at road crossings and the provision of an information cairn. BCT has also planted additional native trees, created a pond and carried out wildlife surveys. In 2001, BCT's management of the Woods won the Scotland's Finest Woodlands Award for woodlands under 150 hectares. BCT has continued to carry out annual maintenance work around the Woods, including the grass cutting and management of the trees. Since 2011, the path around the Community Woods has been part of the Finzean Community Path created by BCT between the Woods and Finzean School. During 2012-15, BCT removed the redundant rabbit netted fences from around the three parts of the Community Woods that had been planted in 1994. BCT also started managing the trees within those areas by thinning and pruning for general amenity and for light around some gardens in the Nether Boghead area.

In 2022 BCT carried out thinning work in the Community Wood in the dense stands of Scots pine and around some of the residences in the Boghead area.

Volunteer work parties replaced dead planted trees in the southern Community woods.

Objectives of Management: To manage Finzean Community Woods as a high amenity environment for their continued use and enjoyment by local residents.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will maintain the circular path through the Woods around the Village in a safe and satisfactory condition, while also continuing to manage the woodlands to high standards. This will include further thinning and brashing in the areas planted in 1994. BCT will seek ways to secure funding to carry out the necessary annual maintenance and other works in the Community Woods. BCT will produce an annual Site Works Lists for the management of the Community Woods. BCT will continue to liaise with Finzean Community Association and Finzean Estate, and to organise an annual 'consultation walk' around the Community Woods each autumn with the Community Association to discuss any points about the management of the Woods and Path.

14. FINZEAN COMMUNITY PATH

Reason for Involvement: Local concern to have a safer route than the public road for walking and cycling between Finzean Village, Finzean Church and Graveyard, the School Wood, Farmshop, Primary School and Old School.

Basis of Involvement: In 2011, two of BCT's existing leases from Donald Farquharson were replaced to include the land needed for the route of the Path. The School Wood lease was expanded to include the c.900m route between the Wood and the School. The Knowes leases was expanded to include the c.1,250ms route from the Knowes area to the western end of Finzean Graveyard and also the triangular area of woodland (c.1 ha) on Drumhead at the eastern end of the Graveyard. Both the 25 year leases from 1999 retained their end date of 2024.

Management in 2011-2023: BCT constructed the Path in 2011 as two separate projects with different grant funding, starting with the School / School Wood section and then completing the Knowes / Graveyard section. A successful community event was held to open the Path. The full length of the Community Path including the path around Finzean Community Woods, is nearly 4 kilometres. Since the Path opened, BCT has carried out the annual grass cutting and associated maintenance along the Path. Other work has included some spraying of the path surface, tree pruning, cutting back broom, fence repairs, tree planting and other amenity improvements in the triangular wood. Donated benches have been placed at view points on the route, dog waste bins added at key points and road safety signs erected where the route crosses the public road at Drumhead.

The path was sprayed and scraped in 2021. This led to questions about the use of chemicals on the path which BCT will endeavour to reduce in the future.

Yellow rattle seed was sown along a section of the path between School Wood and the Farm Shop in 2021 by BCT and Finzean Primary School pupils as an experiment to see if we can reduce the vigour of the grasses to reduce the need for regular cutting and enable the wildflowers a chance to grow to increase biodiversity. This was repeated with more yellow rattle seed being planted by Finzean Primary School pupils in 2022.

Signs were erected on the path near the school, in 2021, to commemorate the Aye it was Aabody project between BCT and Finzean Primary School.

Volunteers cut back gorse and broom off the path edges all around the path. Some patch surfacing was carried out.

Objectives of Management: To maintain the Finzean Community Path in a good and safe condition for its continued use and enjoyment of local residents.

Management Proposals 2023-: BCT will maintain the surface of the path, making repairs as necessary. BCT will carry out the annual grass cutting along the Community Path, and prune or cut bushes and trees on the route as necessary. BCT will, only if necessary, carry out some limited chemical spraying to keep some parts of the path surface free of grass for safety reasons. BCT will monitor the route for dog fouling and consider improved signs, more bins or other initiatives if necessary. BCT will continue to manage and improve the triangular wood as an amenity environment. BCT will liaise with Finzean Community Council, Finzean Community Association and Finzean Estate over any issues that might arise related to the Community Path.

