

# **BIRSE TRADING COMPANY<sup>1</sup>**

## **Directors' Annual Report 2018**

### **Introduction**

The Birse Trading Company (BTCo) is a subsidiary company of Birse Community Trust (BCT). BTCo leases Slewdrum and Balfour Forests from BCT and manages the Forests to implement BCT's Forest Plans 2011-30 for each Forest. BTCo's current leases run until the end of 2022.

2018 was BTCo's eleventh year of operation. BTCo is managed by its Directors. During 2018, they were Paul Chapman (Chair), Doug Boyle and Jane Winton with Toby Rider joining the board of directors in the latter part of the year. The Directors are all local members of BCT and include a director who is also a BCT Trustee. Toby Rider took over this latter role from Doug Boyle during the year.

This report provides an account of BTCo's operations during 2018.

### **Forest Management**

In 2018, BTCo carried out a number of improvements in each forest. In Slewdrum, minimal management activities took place, while in Balfour, there was a significant thinning operation and the start of construction of a new track.

#### Slewdrum

BTCo liaised with contractors installing the new mobile phone mast next to the fishing track and carried out some small-scale tree felling to improve the signal to the mast.

BTCo continued to monitor the deer fence and tree growth in the new planting at Lower Kettock, and carried out removal of invasive Piri-Piri burr from tracksides throughout the forest in the latter part of the year.

The forest was used for fieldwork by a University of Glasgow/James Hutton Institute PhD student investigating the role of deer and small mammals in Lyme disease risk. A regional event organised by Mar Orienteering Club used the forest and adjoining parts of Blackhall Forest in February, attracting 98 competitors.

#### Balfour

During the year, BTCo carried out a scheduled commercial thinning of compartments 1a, 1b, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 2a1, 2e, 8a1 and 8a2 and repaired ditches and culverts along the main forest road after thinning work was completed.

Phase 1 of a new access track down the Baudylace burn was constructed, extending 400 metres downhill from the sharp bend in the main forest road. This will improve access for deer stalking as well as providing new walking and cycling routes. A new gate was installed where the coffin road crosses the forest boundary towards Carnferg.

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<sup>1</sup> The Birse Trading Company (BTCo) is a company limited by guarantee (SC327196) which was set up by Birse Community Trust (BCT) in 2007. The company is owned by BCT as the only shareholder and the appointment of the Directors who manage BTCo requires BCT's approval.

Small-scale environmental felling was carried out along the edge of the Foggage track and Christmas trees were provided to Ballogie Community Association.

The forest is well used by mountain bikers, with several well used routes established in the forest. BTCo engages positively with the mountain bike community to avoid any conflicts between downhill mountain biking and other forest activities. Balfour was also used by Mar Orienteering Club for a regional event in August which attracted 87 competitors.

### Both Forests

BTCo continued to maintain a high deer cull to try to reduce the numbers of red and roe deer and the level of damage by them to naturally regenerating and planted trees. In the 2017-18 season to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, the cull from the Forests was 32 red deer and 95 roe deer (2016-17: 32 red, 80 roe). BTCo was also actively involved with other local land owners in the Birse Parish Deer Management Group to try to improve deer control locally.

During the year, BTCo supplied approximately 14 tonnes of firewood from the Forests to 7 local households (2016-17, 18 tonnes, 9 households). This timber resulted from clearing windblown trees from tracks in the Forests and from other amenity felling.

### **Administration**

In 2018, BTCo Directors held three Board meetings, one of which followed BTCo's AGM on 21<sup>st</sup> March. The Directors also undertook a schedule of monthly monitoring visits to the Forests, with six to each Forest over the year.

BTCo maintained its established pattern of administration, including its Site Works Report and Annual Report on 2017 and its Site Work Proposals and Annual Plan for 2018, together with its Annual Accounts for 2017 and Annual Budget for 2018. BTCo continued to update its Tree Planting, Timber Harvesting, Firewood Distribution and other sets of records.

During the year, BTCo continued to retain Jane Winton as Administrator and RTS as forestry agent. RTS's main involvements were in connection with BTCo's timber harvesting and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Certification.

### **Finance**

In 2018, BTCo's total income was £71,022 and its total expenditure was £42,726, giving a net profit of £28,296.<sup>2</sup>

BTCo's total income in 2018 was from timber harvesting in Balfour.

BTCo's expenditure in 2018 included payment of £6,000 annual rent for the two Forests to BCT and also making donations totalling £20,000 to BCT. The remaining expenditure was £14,413 on managing and improving the Forests and £2,313 on administration and bank charges.

As a result of BTCo's net profit, the balance of funds held by BTCo increased over the year from ££56,243 to £84,539. The Directors consider that BTCo ended the year sufficiently well placed to take forward its responsibilities and plans in 2019.

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<sup>2</sup> BTCo's Annual Accounts are submitted to Companies House, reported in BCT's Annual Accounts and published on BCT's website.