

## **Birse Community Trust Core Values & Strategic Plan**

### **Core Values**

Stewardship  
Collaboration  
Inclusiveness  
Integrity

#### **Stewardship**

We actively manage all the natural, built and cultural assets in the care of the Trust, to the highest standards, to safeguard this important legacy for present and future generations.

#### **Collaboration**

We work collaboratively with our members, the local community, estates and landowners, and businesses, to achieve our shared objectives. We listen to others and where necessary look outside the parish for relevant expertise.

#### **Inclusiveness**

We will actively break down barriers to engage with our diverse community. We need to make sure we create a safe space for voices to be heard.

#### **Integrity**

We are transparent, honest and truthful and always act in good faith.

## **Strategic Plan 2021**

### **Vision Statement**

BCT will improve stewardship of our built and natural heritage assets, ensuring their conservation and economic sustainability. Whilst doing so, BCT will reconnect with the people in our community to strengthen their sense of ownership of and involvement in the Trust.

### **Built and Cultural Heritage**

Over a period of 20 years, BCT has acquired a portfolio of built and cultural heritage assets, to ensure their protection and conservation for future generations.

BCT will improve its role as steward of these assets on behalf of the community.

Specifically, we will:

- Implement a programme of surveys and proactive maintenance to ensure the protection of our built assets and their contents.
- Work with partners, funders and stakeholders to secure funding to develop and deliver the vision for the Old School site as a rural heritage and field studies centre, and the Soup Kitchen for retreats and residencies.

- Work with partners and stakeholders to support the continued operation and conservation of the Sawmill and Bucket Mill, including the continuity of knowledge in the operation and maintenance of the buildings and machinery.
- Actively seek to work with the owner of the Turning Mill and wider stakeholders to develop and deliver a shared vision for the future of the mill.
- Conserve and protect our archives and collections and better improve access to them to protect and share our cultural history.

### **Natural Heritage**

On behalf of the community, BCT manages native Caledonian pinewoods, community woods and the natural heritage at all our built properties, and through its subsidiary, BCo, owns and manages two commercial forests, Balfour and Slewdrum.

BCT will improve its role as steward of the natural heritage on behalf of the community. Specifically, we will:

- Actively seek to renew the North Hill Management Agreement, to continue the work that the Trust and partners began in the 1998-2023 Agreement. In doing so we will protect and enhance the nationally important pinewood habitat and continue to enhance and promote its biodiversity.
- Manage the Community Pinewoods and forest habitat with a light touch to maintain and conserve it in the most natural way possible.
- Work in collaboration with our partners to protect and promote the Community shared rights which we hold on behalf of the community.
- Work with BCo to manage our commercial forests in accordance with forestry best practice guidelines whilst ensuring the protection and enhancement of rare and protected species and habitats within their boundaries.
- Actively seek to renew leases for the management of the community paths and woods in Finzean and seek opportunities to extend and improve the path network across the parish. We will also continue to enhance and promote the biodiversity of the community woodlands.
- Work with partners to record and identify flora and fauna in our natural heritage and ensure the protection and enhancement of rare and protected species and habitats.
- Work towards reducing our carbon footprint and environmental impact in our operations in accordance with our environmental policy.

### **Community Engagement, Access and Enjoyment**

In its first two decades of operation, BCT has developed a reputation amongst development trusts as being ground-breaking and visionary. This reputation is not necessarily reflected in the awareness of the Trust and its work within the local community.

There is a need for improvement in promoting the work of the Trust within the community, to support increased awareness, membership and a greater sense of involvement. There is also scope for building on the reputation of the Trust out with the community, with visitors and communities of interest.

Specifically, we will:

- Develop and promote a programme of activities, events and volunteer opportunities to encourage increased involvement by the local community.
- Seek and develop new ways to engage with the community beyond the parish of Birse, promoting specialist interest groups, academic research and understanding and increasing online engagement.
- Build on and develop our partnership working with Finzean Primary School and Ballogie Nursery to fully engage the children of Birse in their natural and cultural heritage.
- Improve access to our sites, archives and collections, to support people in their knowledge and enjoyment of them.
- Listen to needs and fully consider future projects and initiatives raised by our local community.
- Promote and develop our network of paths to promote access, education and enjoyment of our forests and woodlands.

### **Financial Sustainability and Governance**

Over 20 years, BCT has developed a resilient financial model, through the strategic acquisition of two commercial forests. These support the core activities of the Trust, including the management of regionally and nationally important heritage assets.

BCT will continue to meet our statutory, legal and other regulatory requirements and to strengthen the financial legacy of the last 20 years.

Specifically, we will:

- Maintain a prudent approach to our financial management to protect BCT's funds and ensure its financial stability.
- Continue to work with BCo in their management of Balfour and Slewdrum Forests, primarily as commercial forests to protect our financial sustainability for the long term, while respecting and enhancing natural biodiversity where compatible.
- Seek to have a board of trustees that is representative of the communities across the parish by gender, experience and geographic balance, and to increase the accessibility of the trustees and BCT's work.
- Develop and implement systems to ensure continuity of knowledge, training and induction amongst trustees, Manager, site managers, volunteers and other roles.
- Hold an AGM and produce an annual report which informs members of the Trust's finances and allows for scrutiny by members.

BCT

6<sup>th</sup> August 2021

BCT welcomes comments on the Strategic plan, please forward any comments in the first instance to [BCToffice@birsecommunitytrust.org.uk](mailto:BCToffice@birsecommunitytrust.org.uk) or contact a Trustee directly.