

ENDORSEMENTS of BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST 1999-2006

Introduction

Birse Community Trust (BCT) became formally constituted in August 1998 and fully operational from 1st January 1999. BCT then became very busy implementing a wide range of projects. During those early years, BCT was complimented for its approach and projects by a number of Government Ministers and other prominent public sector figures. Many of those endorsements were quoted in BCT's twice yearly Updates. Some were also useful to include in funding applications. In June 2006, BCT compiled the following list of the endorsements that it had received by then.

(i) Examples from Scottish Executive Ministers

- Jim Wallace, *then Deputy First Minister*, using BCT to launch the Scottish Executive Land Reform Policy Group's Report in Birse (1999);
- Frank McAvenny, *then Local Government Minister*, presenting BCT with Scottish Community Business of the Year Award (1999);
- John Hume Robertson, *then Scotland's Deputy Minister Rural Affairs*, quoted during visit to BCT "Birse Community Trust is to be congratulated on its innovative and imaginative approach" (1999)
- Ross Finnie, *Minister for Rural Affairs*, presenting BCT with Scotland's Finest Woodlands Award (2002)
- Rhona Brankin *then and now Scotland's Deputy Minister Rural Affairs* quoted on visit to BCT: "I congratulate the Trust for all that it has achieved so far in such a short time... a shining example of its kind from which other rural communities in Scotland could learn" (2001)
- Lewis MacDonald, *then Deputy Minister for Rural Affairs*, singling out BCT by name to acknowledge its contribution to the development of the National Forest Land Scheme at the launch of the consultation on the Scheme (2004).

(ii) Chairmen or Chief Executives of other Public Bodies

Professor Rowan Robertson *then Chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage's East Area Board*

"All the Board Members and staff were particularly impressed by BCT's integrated approach to community development in which caring for the natural heritage forms an important part."

Alan Campbell *Chief Executive, Aberdeenshire Council*

"BCT is exactly the type of local community initiative which Aberdeenshire Council wants to encourage more widely throughout our area. The Council congratulates the Trust for establishing a very successful track record as a pioneering local community business."

Lord Wilson *then Chairman of the National Museums of Scotland, Chancellor of Aberdeen University et al.*

"In only three years since the Trust started, it is quite remarkable what has been achieved. The way that BCT can operate as a local community business is now being recognised as a model for other rural communities. The fact that all this is being done by initiative and enthusiasm locally, rather than through top-down intervention from outside, is a huge credit to the many people involved".

Dr. Bob McIntosh *then Chief Executive, Forest Enterprise (now CE, Forestry Commission Scotland)*

“Forest Enterprise has a very positive and productive relationship with BCT, which has proved itself to be an innovative and successful community business”.

Ian Grant *then Chairman, Cairngorms Partnership (now Chairman of Crown Estate Commissioners)*

“BCT provides a model of the type of community enterprise and achievement that the Cairngorms Partnership wants to see throughout the Cairngorms”.

Prof. Brian Clark, *then Chairman, North of Scotland Board, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency*

“Members of the North regional Board of SEPA were very impressed by the range of innovative projects that BCT has implemented on behalf of the local community in such a short time. It is an outstanding example of a dynamic and highly successful community business and other communities in Scotland could learn a great deal from their pioneering approach.”

Stewart Fulton, *then Chief Executive, Cairngorms Partnership*

“BCT, by empowering local people to manage their own environment for the benefit of the community, catches the mood of the times and sets an important benchmark for others to follow.”

Other recent additions include John Graham, Chief Executive of Historic Scotland, on visit to BCT in 2005 and Willie Roe, Chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, on BCT’s ballot result in February 2006.

(iii) MP, MSP & LA Councillor

Sir Robert Smith, *MP for West Aberdeenshire & Kincardine*

“Birse Community Trust has developed an exciting and diverse range of projects for the benefit of local communities. I am impressed by the commitment of members of the Trust, and level of communication and involvement with residents. It is an excellent example of a rural community business, taking responsibility for local issues, and working successfully in partnership to deliver solutions.”

Mike Rumbles, *MSP for West Aberdeenshire*

“As a member of Birse Community Trust and a local resident, I am proud of what it has achieved. BCT is a fine example of a progressive organisation...it is in the vanguard of community participation in Scotland, and I would hold it up as such to the Parliament’s Rural Development Committee.”

Peter Argyle, *Aberdeenshire Councillor for Mid Deeside*

“I firmly believe that the Aberdeenshire approach to community economic development is correct, with communities themselves deciding how their Rural Partnerships should operate. Within this context BCT is widely regarded as an excellent model. Whilst core funding remains a major issue, BCT’s staff and Trustees should be proud of what they have achieved in sometimes difficult circumstances”
