BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Minutes of 25th Annual General Meeting held

on 25th June 2023 in Finzean Hall

Ordinary Members Present: *Aidan Bell, Alison Bell, Paul Chapman, Louise Counsell, Andrew Farquharson, Nicky Fyfe, Doug Grey, Guy Haslam, Dave Latham, Simon Lindsey, Sian Loftus, Rosemary Shand, Anneke Stolte (13)*

Proxies received: *Judy Baxter, Graham Davidson, Nancy Davidson, Dorothy Dinnie, Robert Dinnie, Richard Davidson, Alina Geike-Stevenson, Anne-Marie Littlejohn, Lewis MacLeod-Slater, Samantha MacLeod-Slater, Lucinda Rider, John Threlfal, Gareth Wright, Richard Wright (14)*

Associate Members Present: *Rick Paul (1)*

Others Present: *Toni Watt (1)*

Apologies from Ordinary Members *Calum Bell, Judy Baxter, Liz Bracegirdle, Jacqui Chapman, Margaret Chapman, Rex Chapman, Andrew Counsell, Graham Davidson, Nancy Davidson, Richard Davidson, Dorothy Dinnie, Robert Dinnie, Robert F Dinnie, Kate Farquharson, Alina Geike-Stevenson, Gill Gordon, Jim Gordon, Helen Jackson, Peter Jackson, Anne-Marie Littlejohn, Lewis MacLeod-Slater, Samantha MacLeod-Slater, Lucy Rider, John Threlfal, Benjamin Wright, Gareth Wright, Malcolm Wright, Richard Wright, Sarah Wright, David Younie, Patsy Younie (31)*

1. Welcome and Apologies.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair of BCT's Trustees, Alison Bell, welcomed everyone to BCT's 25th Annual General Meeting, and noted the apologies and the fourteen proxy voting forms received the requisite 48 hours before the meeting.

2. Minutes of 24th Annual General Meeting held on the 28th August 2022.

Alison asked for approval of the Minutes of BCT's 24th AGM held on 28th August 2022. They were proposed by Dave Latham, seconded by Simon Lindsey, and approved by the members unopposed.

3. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising.

4. Trustees' Report for the Year to 31st December 2022.

Alison introduced the Trustees' Report as printed in BCT's Annual Report. This report covers all BCT's activity during 2022. It was proposed by Louise Counsell, seconded by Aneka Stolte, and approved by the members unopposed.

5. Approval of the Accounts for the Year to 31st December 2022.

Alison provided an overview of the Annual Accounts as printed in the Annual Report, covering the main items of income and expenditure in 2022. In answer to a question about the deficit, Alison explained that the Trust's administration is funded from the two forests, and there has been no felling for the last two years. However a significant felling is due in the Autumn which should balance the books. Alison agreed to provide a post meeting answer relating to the larger than usual operating loss. Concern was raised about funding The Old School Project and the Mills Project at the same time. Trustees were confident that both outcomes were achievable. The Accounts were proposed by Guy Haslam, seconded by Andrew Farquharson, and approved by the members unopposed.

6. Election of Trustees.

Alison informed the meeting that Nancy Davidson and Toby Rider were stepping down as Trustees at this AGM having completed their 5 year terms, but had both put in nominations to stand again as Trustees for second terms. As there were no other nominations, they were duly elected unopposed.

7. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner.

Alison confirmed that the Trustees are very satisfied with the way our current financial examiners handle BCT's accounts and proposed that they be re-appointed for this coming year. This was proposed by Aidan Bell, seconded by Paul Chapman, and approved by the members unopposed.

8. Fixing of Annual Subscription for Associate Members.

Alison explained that the Trustees recommend that the Annual Subscription for Associate Members should remain at £20 (UK) and £25 (Overseas). This was approved by the members unopposed.

There being no further formal business, Alison concluded the AGM

Patron

Following the AGM Alison noted that Jean McLeod was stepping down as Patron of BCT. Jean joined the Trust in 2008, was Chair from 2012-2017 and Patron from 2017-2023. All present joined in giving thanks to Jean for her long service and dedication to the Trust.

Talks

Following the AGM there were talks from Paul Chapman, Sian Loftus and Alison Bell:

Paul gave a presentation on BCT's 25 year involvement with the Community Pinewoods. He focussed on regeneration, diversification, and protection. Regeneration has been achieved in the main by the control of deer numbers, and the marked increase in woodland over the last 25 years is testament to the success of this approach. Diversification has been accomplished by planting thousands of broadleaves, notably on the south side of the Feugh thereby linking up old woodlands. Finally, protection involves constant vigilance due to the risk of fire. However, Paul noted that despite a major fire in 2002, the damaged area has vigorously regenerated and 20 years later looks strong and healthy.

Paul was thanked for his presentation.

Sian Loftus then described BCT's work on the mills complex. She noted that BCT had commissioned quinquennial condition surveys to ascertain remedial works which are urgent, necessary or desirable. BCT had received volunteer help from amongst others members of the community, SPAB, TotalEnergies and Branching Out Plus which had been invaluable in maintaining the various sites. Also, an oral history had been undertaken to understand the history of the Bucket Mill. This two day recording is currently awaiting editing. Finally, the Health and Safety report into the sawmill gives hope that one day the mill will be able to operate again.

Sian was thanked for her report.

Lastly, Alison updated those present on the Old School Project. The Trust is moving in the direction of Field Studies and Rural Skills to keep the connection with the river and forests. The Trust is keen to find a safe place for the parish archive and to build up a network of people who want to use the school by providing a base for activities which are presently not catered for by other local venues,.

Alison was thanked for her talk.

In Closing

Finally, Alison thanked all those who attended the AGM today before tea and biscuits were served.