BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Minutes of Board Meeting

22nd July 2025

Trustees Present: Nancy Davidson, Simon Lindsey, Liz Bracegirdle.

Apologies: Robert Dinnie, Alison Bell.

In Attendance: Owen Bushell, Toni Watt (Manager), Rick Paul (Secretary to the Board).

1. Introduction

1.1 Bucket Mill: Further to emails received from Owen Bushell to BCT, OB presented his proposals for the future of the bucket mill. He declined to be a BCT trustee, believing he would be better employed as a 'Mill Officer'. He suggested setting up a mills steering group with a BCT trustee on the CIC and setting up a partnership agreement. OB to produce drafts for discussion. OB reported that he had received two grant approvals from HES and AHF totalling £30k. OB also discussed investigating SLF Community Buyout grants. Trustees approved OB applying for two further RCCF grants from Aberdeenshire Council. Trustees were concerned about cash flow as BCT has limited money in its bank accounts. OB reassured trustees that he could find temporary funds to cover this. OB suggested that if sanctioned by trustees, the first thing to progress was the survey of the weir, covered by the HES grant. This would enable an application for listed building consent to be made. OB to be invited to the next meeting

1.2 Introduction. SL welcomed the Trustees and team to the meeting noting two apologies and two items for AOB.

2. Follow up from item 1.1

2.1 Trustees agreed to review OB's emails and the bucket mill lease before the next meeting.

3. Minutes of Previous Board Meetings

3.1 The minutes of meeting of 24th June 2025 were approved and signed.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Fire Safety: The smoke detector and emergency lighting checks were carried out for June 2025.

5. Finance

5.1 JR presented the qtr 2 accounts which on the face of it were satisfactory, but trustees questioned cash flow as project invoices have to be paid before grant money is claimed and received. A last resort would be to get an overdraft to cover this. The mobile mast rent is outstanding. JR to follow up.

6. Administration

6.1 Director Identification: Ongoing.

6.2 BPLG: SL reported that the meeting was well attended, and BCT explained its financial difficulties and the measures it is putting in place to rectify the position. SL to write a paragraph which can be circulated to the whole parish prior to the AGM.
6.3 AGM: The accounts should be back from the accountants in a week. The Annual Report is with Ellie Flather. SL to produce a presentation for the AGM. LB has a projector; the screen is at the Old School. The format of the AGM will be finalised at the next meeting.
6.4 The Ord: RD is meeting with Burnett and Reid next week.
6.5 Souter's Shop: Full funding has been achieved. The next step is getting the dates confirmed for the work. Trustees congratulated the team on reaching this major milestone.
6.6 Finzean Leases: Trustees confirmed that BCT's position has not changed. TW to inform Finzean Estate.
6.7 New Trustees: RD has spoken to a potential new trustee. Ongoing.
6.8 Doors Open: SL and LB to let TW know if they are available for tours, or TW can step in if required.
6.9 Fire Precautions: Volunteers are required to turn back cars at the sawmill should fire break out up the Commonty. To be discussed at the next meeting.
6.10 Old School: LB reported that there was insufficient interest in a primary school breakfast club and/or after school club.

7. Manager's Report

7.1 Strategic Plan: The Strategic Plan should be updated in 2026. To be reviewed at the October meeting.
7.2 Wood Ants: Jenni Stockan from the James Hutton Institute has requested to use the ants from the Forest of Birse as part of a European study into the ants and their associated co-dependant creatures. Trustees were happy to agree.

8. A.O.B.

8.1 Calendars: Trustees approved LB producing calendars and Christmas cards, hopefully in time for the AGM.
8.2 Art Exhibition: LB suggested that BCT hold an art exhibition at the Old School. Trustees asked LB to propose some dates.

9. Meetings

9.1 Trustees agreed to meet on:-

Tuesday 26th August 2025, Old School. 7:15pm, RD to chair. This meeting will concentrate on Owen Bushell's proposals, and the AGM arrangements.
and Tuesday 7th October 2025, Old School, 7:15pm, ND to chair.

Signed..... Date…….....