Birse Trading Company Annual Reports 2022-24

Background

The Birse Trading Company (BTCo) was set up by Birse Community Trust (BCT) as a subsidiary company in 2007 to manage Slewdrum Forest, after BCT acquired the Forest in 2006. BTCo also became responsible for the management of Balfour Forest after BCT bought it in 2010.

BTCo then published a two page Annual Report in each of the eleven years 2011-2021. The reports, which summarised BTCo's forest management and finances each year, were published on BCT's website.

In the three years 2022-24, the only published reports on BTCo's management of the Forests each year were some paragraphs in BCT's Annual Reports. BTCo then resumed producing its own Annual Reports in 2025.

Below are the paragraphs about BTCo's management of the Forests that were included in BCT's Annual Reports 2022-24.

BCT Annual Report 2022 *(extract)*

Birse Trading Company (BTCo)

2022 saw the completion and issuing of the revised Long Term Forest Plans which set out the management agenda for the next 10 years. These being in place we can now proceed with certification of the forests and felling operations in 2023. This will once again generate the required income to support BCT.

We continued routine management of the forests with deer control, access maintenance and clearance, and invasive species reduction. The storms of early 2022 resulted in more wind blow and whilst we have cleared most of these trees from paths and tracks, a section of Slewdrum remains blocked near the Kettock. These trees are too large to move by hand, but the cost of bringing a machine to site outside of felling operations is prohibitive so the decision was taken to leave them until planned felling in 2023.

We continue to work with the mountain biking community to manage the tracks in Balfour. We have focused on ensuring the forest remains available to all types of user and have implemented improvements where this has not been the case. We will continue to be proactive in this area.

BTCo is a wholly owned subsidiary of Birse Community Trust. The Trust leases the management of its commercial forests, Balfour and Slewdrum, to BTCo.

BCT Annual Report 2023 *(extract)*

Birse Trading Company (BTCo)

Certification was secured for the forests in 2023 and we are finally ready for felling operations to begin in Slewdrum. The world of forestry is slow moving and we are a small player in a very big pond drawing on the machines and contractors who can carry out the work. Planned felling of the Muckle Ord will take place in late 2024 or early 2025.

As you will have read in the Chair’s report, the income from felling is no longer forecast to be at the levels BCT has enjoyed. Managing forests costs money and if we are to secure the best prices for

timber, we need to put in place forest certification and closely manage how the forests are used and maintained.

However, the directors continue to make sure only the necessary task are carried out and to use local, good value contractors where we can.

07In Balfour we have continued to work with the mountain biking community. Safety of all forest users remains the priority and adjustments to tracks to ensure safe out runs from tracks were implemented. BTCo is a wholly owned subsidiary of Birse Community Trust. The Trust leases the management of its commercial forests, Balfour and Slewdrum, to BTCo.

BCT Annual Report 2024 *(extract)*

BTCo Forest Operations

Felling operations were carried out to clear fell the Muckle Ord in Slewdrum during 2024. This included clearance of wind-blow left over from Storm Arwen. The timber was sold standing for this operation and road improvements were carried out to facilitate extraction by timber lorries. The felled timber was sent to Cordiners in Banchory and was split between different uses with a majority going to chip wood. BTCo worked with the forest managers to maximise prices where the market demand is higher.

Thinning operations have continued in Balfour with timber extraction continuing into 2025. Revenue from felling operations has allowed BTCo to pay rent arrears to BCT. Until final harvest payments are received and 5-year budgets updated, additional donations to BCT remain unknown.

BTCo continued to work closely with the local mountain bike community through the recognised Aberdeenshire Trails Association. Their partnership allows BCT to maintain the existing bike tracks in a safe and user-friendly manner for the benefit of all forest users. Working with BCT, BTCo keep use of the tracks under review to ensure they remain of net benefit to the community.

BTCo continued to work with other community organisations to facilitate events in the forests for the benefit of the wider community, including orienteering, running races, cycle events, forest education and scientific research.