



FINZEAN ESTATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Finzean Estate has always maintained close links to the local community and has supported a wide variety of local projects. While the Estate is a business in its own right, managed and directly operated by members of the Farquharson family – as it has continuously for over 400 years - we believe that it is very important to maintain a positive relationship with the local community, through the employment we provide, support for our tenant farmers and through regular contact with both individuals and the bodies which represent the various elements of the community.

There are three main local organisations who represent the community. This document looks at each, outlining the completed projects and also planned future activities. It concludes with other initiatives, in which the Estate has been involved.

FINZEAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Finzean Community Association's main roles are to look after the Village Hall and organise local events. The Village Hall provides the venue for the vast majority of local events and activities and is used by over 200 people per week. It was originally built by the then Laird, Robert Farquharson, in 1927 and was subsequently gifted to the community in 2002 along with adjacent land.



The Estate also:

- Leases the land at Farquharson Park to the community free of charge. The park includes a football pitch, which is regularly used by Feughside team, and also has a set of swings and slides. The park is also used for outdoor community and charity events.
- The Estate has given a 99 year lease for the Finzean Graveyard which was created in 2009, through the work of over 80 members of the community.



- It allows the community to hold its annual bonfire and firework display in a field adjacent to the Village Hall.

Future plans

The Estate is in regular contact with the Community Association to discuss areas of common ground, in particular:

- The Association are looking to update the kitchen and tarmac the car park in 2020. The Estate intends to donate £2,000 towards the cost.
- There is a community project looking at building a sports pavilion next to the Football pitch. The Estate fully supports the idea and will release the ground required if the project comes to fruition.

FINZEAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Finzean Community Council deals with infrastructure issues within the valley, including roads, planning applications and other matters of community concern.

The Estate has a policy of selling of low-cost sites to young people, who have grown up in Finzean. This policy started in a modest way over 25 years ago and by 2020 over 30 houses have been built. It has enabled young people to continue to live in Finzean at a time of escalating house prices and consequently has been a key element in maintaining the roll of Finzean Primary School, which is in turn another key element of the local community.



The Estate intends putting in planning permission to convert the Dubston steading and the immediate surrounding land for houses. One site already has planning permission and will be sold as a low-cost site. The intention will be to have 5 houses overall, 2/3 of which will be low cost sites.

BIRSE COMMUNITY TRUST

Birse Community Trust (BCT) was formed in 1998, when various interested parties decided to gift the rights they held in the Forest of Birse to the Trust. The Trust's aim is to "improve the lives of the local residents" particularly focusing on local natural and cultural heritage. It now manages 13 sites in the area on behalf of the local communities of Finzean, Birse and Ballogie.

Finzean Estate has supported BCT by:

- Donating three historic water powered mills. These are maintained by the Trust and can be visited by appointment.

- Donating land for community woods and paths around Finzean. The community wood was the first of its kind in the North East of Scotland and has been a great success, with local residents regularly walking the paths around the village. The Estate will continue to work with the community to look at improvements to the local path network.



- Granting our ancient forestry rights over an area of the Forest of Birse to the Trust.
- Leasing the land surrounding the local War Memorial on top of Corsedarder to the Trust. This is the venue for an annual Remembrance service.

The Estate regularly meets with representatives of BCT to discuss local issues and explore ways in which we can work together for the benefit of the community. In particular, the Estate plans to renew the leases on the paths and wood, which are due for review in 2023.

OTHER ESTATE INITIATIVES

The Estate also:

- Established the first rural sheltered housing scheme in the North East of Scotland at Farquharson Court, Finzean. This allows local retired people the opportunity to remain in Finzean when they become less able to look after themselves.
- Opened Finzean Farm shop and Tearoom which supports local trade, artists, farmers and local residents, in selling a wide variety of products, such as fruit, vegetables, cheeses, honey, crafts and paintings. It employs 24 full or part time employees all who live within a 10 mile radius. Many local school children work at the shop at weekends and during the holidays.



- Created two miles of footpath linking the two watermills and also provided access to Peterhill.
- Created small woodlands and shelterbelts around Finzean to provide shelter to some of the 130 different species of birds, which have been recorded in the valley.
- Supports a variety of local groups and charities including Scotland’s Gardens Scheme, the Forget-me-not club for dementia, Church fetes and other Community events, such as the Jubilee Garden Party, the Year of the Homecoming, Burns Night Celebrations, lecture and concerts, hosted at Finzean House.
- Works with local groups (including The Duke of Edinburgh Award, the Cadets and Scouts, and the University OTC) which use Estate land for orienteering, biathlons, sponsored walks and camping.
- Donated land to the Church of Scotland to extend Birse and Feughside Church.
- Supporting local groups such as Portrait of our Time (POOT), which has organised theatrical events for the community.

The Estate is currently working with the Home office to provide emergency telephone coverage in the Forest of Birse area. If this came to fruition the future plan would be to allow commercial operators to link on to the mast to improve the very poor mobile signal in Finzean.

The Estate has always felt that sustainability means more than just financial viability and will continue to meet with representatives from the community and other groups to look at ways, in which we can work together to improve the life of the local community.

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