

Newmill Renewables is a Community Interest Company which runs a biomass boiler to provide heat to the local primary school and village hall. We are a voluntary organisation with the aim of promoting community energy and supporting the community of Newmill.

Newmill is currently the only primary school in Moray heated by renewable energy and we believe is the only school heated by a community owned district heating system in Scotland. Choosing to take this away flies in the face of Scottish Government and Moray Council climate change obligations and Scottish Government Greener Schools Strategy

If Newmill Primary closes, the community biomass district heating scheme will not be viable and closure is likely. This will see the loss of over £150,000 of local investment and the loss of a working sustainable community hub. The school, community hall, pre-school and community boiler are linked and if one goes, the viability of all are under threat. Newmill Renewables are concerned that the current sustainable review being undertaken for the Moray Council did not take into account the financial, environmental or community costs of each building or the carbon footprint of Moray councils building stock as a whole.

Newmill is one of the cheapest schools to run in Moray. Newmill runs at 78% lower heating costs that the expected average for a primary school in Moray.

At the last round of proposed closures, Newmill was proven to be one of the most economical schools in Moray, with low future maintenance requirements.¹ The introduction of the boiler has made the school even cheaper to run.

Newmill Primary School is a one of the newest primary school buildings in Moray and is the only building with an estimated useful life for depreciation over a period of 80 years.² In the 2004 review Newmill was the cheapest school in £ per sq m of all schools which are not connected to mains gas – indeed out of forty five primary schools in Moray there are only nine which are cheaper to run than Newmill. As the Guidance from the Scottish Government states relevant factors to cover in the educational benefits statement “include ... the condition and suitability of the school buildings and facilities”³.

A 3-18 Campus in Keith would close the Newmill Preschool and put the future of the village hall in jeopardy. This would be a consideration under the Schools(Consultation)

¹ Figures from *School Estate Strategy and Management Plan*, The Moray Council 2004

² Figures from *School Estate Strategy and Management Plan*, The Moray Council 2004

³ Statutory Guidance of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

(Scotland) Act 2010 and would question the wisdom of spending £100,000 of LEADER money on the hall recently.

There is a popular pre-school provider within the village which is closely linked to the primary School. A 3-18 campus in Keith would necessitate the closure of the nursery.

The school uses around 90% of the heat generated by the biomass boiler. The hall has been recently renovated with a £100,000 grant from LEADER. Closing the school and Pre-school would make the use of the biomass boiler unfeasible and future of the hall untenable. This would call in to question the decision to use LEADER finances on the hall if the Moray Council then decided to effectively close it down.

The linking together of the village public facilities through community owned renewable energy resources is a model for rural development in the face of shrinking resources and rural depopulation. This is a model that should be celebrated and promoted – not threatened. This is the model that should have been picked up in a sustainable education review – not ignored.

Scottish Government Greener Schools Strategy states that “A sustainable school estate whose design, construction and operation is environmentally and energy efficient; contributes directly to delivering the year-on-year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions introduced by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, which is resilient to the impact of climate change and which leads by example in matters of environmental performance.”⁴

Environmental sustainability - The Community Planning Partnership’s “*Moray 2023 - A Plan for the Future*” states that the Council will show leadership with regard to sustainability and climate change by reducing energy consumption and CO₂ from its use of buildings over the next 10 years by 20%.

Schools account for approximately 69% of the Council’s total energy consumption at non domestic buildings. All of the CO₂ neutral biomass heating for Moray’s school buildings is generated by Newmill Renewables CiC and used by Newmill primary school.

The figures show that the 45 primary schools in Moray consumed 10,780,271 kWh for heating (gas, oil, biomass) in 2012/13. The average primary school uses 239,562 kWh with Newmill using just 52,900 kWh. **Therefore, Newmill runs at 78% lower heating costs than the expected average for a primary school in Moray.** .

⁴ Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland’s Future Scottish Government 2009