



# *Response to the Sustainable Education Review March 2014*

**Newmill Renewables Community Interest Company**

c/o: 35 Main Street, Newmill, Keith, Banffshire, AB55 6UR

Company No. 393203

Newmill Renewables is a Community Interest Company based in Newmill where we run a biomass boiler to provide heat and hot water to the local primary school and village hall. Our aim is to promote community owned renewable energy and to support the community of Newmill and the surrounding area. This is a locally led initiative, run by volunteers, and 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.

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.

**Economic sustainability** - 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.<sup>1</sup> The introduction of the boiler has made the school even cheaper to run.

Newmill Primary School is a relatively new building. Built in 1988 for the Local Authority it is one of the newest primary school buildings in Moray. The building scored well in the recent survey carried out on the condition and suitability of school buildings and is also one of the school buildings with the longest remaining life expectancy in Moray. It is the only building with an estimated useful life for depreciation over a period of 80 years.<sup>2</sup>

Newmill Primary School is a cheap school to run. 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.

It is unlikely that a new build school will be able to match this level of cost effectiveness as there appears to be no correlation between the age of a school building and its running costs. Indeed the new primary school buildings owned by The Moray Council appear more expensive to run and there are concerns about the running costs and energy use of the brand new primary school in Keith<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Figures from *School Estate Strategy and Management Plan*, The Moray Council 2004

<sup>2</sup> Figures from *School Estate Strategy and Management Plan*, The Moray Council 2004

<sup>3</sup> Figures from *Annual Report on Energy Strategy*, The Moray Council 2014

**Community sustainability** - There is a popular pre-school provider within the village which is closely linked to the primary School. If the school were to close, then it would be likely that the nursery would suffer. There is not sufficient pre-school capacity in Keith to absorb the pre-school numbers from Newmill.

The school uses around 90% of the heat generated by the biomass boiler at the hall. The hall has been recently renovated and used throughout the year by the school, Parent Council and Playgroup. Closing the school and the possible downgrading of the Playgroup would take virtually all revenue away from the hall and make the use of the biomass boiler unfeasible. Therefore, if the school closes the biomass project will not be viable and will have to close resulting in greater expense and fossil fuel use to maintain the village hall.

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.

**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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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 and the breakdown of the increased consumption at schools is detailed below<sup>4</sup>:-

	Electricity (kWh)	Gas (kWh)	Oil (kWh)	Heat (Biomass - kWh)
<b>Primary Schools</b>				
2011/12	3,026,226	4,745,415	2,870,558	50,220
2012/13	3,553,753	7,430,910	3,296,461	52,900
Increase	527,527	2,685,495	425,903	2,680
% Increase	+17.4%	+56.6%	+14.8	+5.3%
<b>Secondary Schools</b>				
2011/12	4,957,988	12,232,485	1,786,033	0
2012/13	5,130,330	14,316,604	1,908,099	0
Increase	172,342	2,084,119	122,066	0
% Increase	+3.5%	+17.0%	+6.8%	0%

<sup>4</sup> Figures and table from *Annual Report on Energy Strategy*, The Moray Council 2014 available at <http://www.moray.gov.uk/minutes/data/PR20140218/Item%208%20-%20Energy%20Report.pdf>

All of the CO<sub>2</sub> 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.** Please note that we were unable to do a comparison on a per head or £ per sq m. basis as we were unable to access the data – however we are convinced that Newmill school would be lower for these statistics as well.

**Educational sustainability** – As part of our community commitment Newmill Renewables are currently creating educational resources for the school and community to promote the concept of sustainability, community ownership, renewable energy and rural development.

Newmill Primary School has a viable school roll, a modern building, class numbers within the recommended levels as stipulated by the review and has had excellent inspection reports. It is economic, environmentally friendly, at the heart of a community hub and a model for rural development. The school is also an important element of allowing the Moray Council reach its CO<sub>2</sub> targets. Considering all of this we feel that it is not logical to consider closure as an option for Newmill School.