

Sector: Education

Robertson businesses: Robertson Northern,
Robertson Timber Engineering

Client: The Highland Council

Value: £6.8m

Date of completion: July 2015

Location: Fort William



Gaelic School/Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, Fort William

Robertson Timber Engineering produced the frame for the single-storey school construction, with sister company Robertson Northern creating the accompanying two-storey, steel-framed multifunctional community hall. The roof and envelope are predominantly clad in stainless steel and timber cladding.

Our main focus was to get the building waterproof in time, and although the weather was a challenge, this was achieved through good teamwork and putting in extra hours.

Our construction team also installed a glazed system to the sports hall. This mitigated previous objections regarding the restriction of views from Ben Nevis, and helped win acceptance of the new facility among local residents.

The building incorporates a renewable energy system, comprising a 200kW biomass boiler for low-temperature hot water, which provides a 4000 litre thermal store. Natural ventilation complements this sustainable heating system.

This forms one of a number of renewable energy installations Robertson has completed for Highland Council, and creates a strong portfolio of properties delivering a steady cash flow for the local authority: The Council will receive Government-funded payments for 20 years through the Renewable Heat Initiative.

Sustainability initiatives

- 0.7 tonnes of subsoil were reused on site and incorporated into the landscaping
- 1.66 tonnes of construction waste were diverted from landfill and sent for recycling

Community benefits

The new building is now complete, and the client, wider local community, children and teachers love their new facility. It has become an important economic asset and part of the vital education infrastructure of Fort William and Lochaber.

Local employment

- Five local apprentices were employed as part of our employment skills plan. Apprentice trades included plumbing, scaffolding, electrical engineering and administration.

Community engagement

- Five engagement initiatives, which included site visits for nursery pupils and teachers, primary pupils and teachers, and college lecturers.
- Food hampers were gifted to elderly people in the local community.
- Weekly tours were provided for interested local residents.

Community sustainability initiatives

- Free timber and topsoil was made available to local residents.
- 20 tonnes of rubbish were removed for the residents.

Charity contributions

- Local charities were supported, with donations given to Fort William Football Club, Lochaber Pipe Band and Songs for Dawn.
- Lochaber Agricultural Show was also supported and given a donation.



“The development of the Gaelic language and culture will be greatly enhanced by this new Gaelic Primary School. Bilingual education has been widely acknowledged as having wider educational benefits, and this facility will also help to develop and sustain the Gaelic language among young people in the area.”

Councillor Drew Millar
Chairman of the Highland Council's Education, Children and Adult Services Committee,