



# Commemorative Booklet for the Official Opening of **NEWLANDS CENTRE**

Officially opened by  
HRH Prince Edward, The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO  
on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2012



In November 2011, following eight years of fundraising and negotiation, Newlands Community Development Trust (NCDT) together with Scottish Borders Council (SBC), delivered a new sporting/leisure Centre for the community along with a newly refurbished Newlands Primary School, both received to great acclaim.

The next few pages tell the story of how the Newlands Centre came into being, following the hard work and dedication of a small number of people who had a vision for their community.

## Background to the formation of NCDT

The Parish of Newlands, Lamancha and Kirkurd lies in the North West of the Scottish Borders, approximately 20 miles south of Edinburgh. The community comprises a number of hamlets and settlements along the route of the A701, over approximately 10 miles. The parish is predominantly rural with many farms and small businesses, though a number of local residents commute to work in nearby towns and cities. The total population for the parish is in the region of 1200.



*The early Newlands Primary School, showing the headmasters house to the left of the main building.*

Newlands Primary School is the only school in this relatively isolated rural community and is situated in Romanno Bridge, a hamlet more-or-less at the centre of the community. It currently has a school roll of approximately 80 pupils. In October 2003, SBC announced a statutory consultation on the future of Newlands Primary School. The proposal included the potential relocation of its pupils to a new, larger school to be built at West Linton.

In February 2004 and in response to this threat of school closure, Newlands School Board published a report "Newlands Primary School at the Heart of the Community" detailing the results of its own initial consultation with parents and others.

Results included: parents 83% against the proposal, playgroup 96% against, mothers and toddlers group 100% against and the non-parents in the community 73% against.

The primary objection was that the loss of the school would have a detrimental effect on the community as a whole. Newlands School Board began a vigorous campaign to challenge SBC's position, by raising political support and the necessary funds to secure its long-term future. The report was circulated to all MSP's, local MP's and officials in February 2004.

The first success was the initiation of a debate in the Scottish parliament, in the spring of 2004. Scottish Members of Parliament discussed the effects of the closure of local schools on rural communities in a private members debate initiated by a Christine Grahame, then SNP MSP for our area. During the debate the report by the Newlands School Board was described as 'a compelling document' and received cross party support.

Newlands School Board then commissioned architects to determine if the site and school could be redeveloped in line with SBC's "School of the Future" model. On 31 May 2004 plans were submitted to SBC, clearly demonstrating that Newlands Primary School could be refurbished in line with future requirements for a 4 Classroom/100 pupil school, provide pre-school education and support the needs of the wider community generally.

On 15 February 2005, at the request of Newlands School Board, the SBC Education Executive gave approval for the withdrawal of Newlands Primary School from statutory consultation for a period of three years seven months to allow the Community a chance to raise the necessary funds for the new building. This was a landmark decision, the first time that such a decision had been taken by a Scottish Local Authority, and it received national media coverage with headlines such as "parents must raise £1million to save school". As one reporter commented: "that is a lot of coffee mornings".

#### IN THE MEDIA

## PARENTS IN £1M VOW TO SAVE SCHOOL

(BBC NEWS 18 FEBRUARY 2005)

Parents at a rural primary school have pledged to raise £1m over the next three years to save it from closure. Newlands Primary in Romannobridge, near Peebles, is short of space and in need of renovation. Scottish Borders Council wants to close the 96-pupil school and the nearby West Linton Primary and build one new school for the area. The school's board is looking into the possibility of applying for grants and subsidies in order to raise the money. The decision to close the school was taken by Scottish orders Council after reassessing funding and resource allocation.

### PORTABLE BUILDING

Councillor Leona Bendall said: "The school needs considerable investment. The pupils and the staff are working with facilities that are unfit for purpose." A portable building is currently being used as a classroom and books and sports equipment are being kept in the corridors. Councillor Bendall added: "We have another school a few miles away that's in the same position. "We wanted to explore building one new school for both of them to give them the facilities they deserve. We simply don't have the resources to do both at this time."

Feedback through consultation sessions (conducted initially by Newlands School Board and latterly by NCDT), highlighted the need for improved social and sporting facilities that could be easily accessible to the community. The approach with the greatest merit was considered to be the building of a community facility adjacent to the school.

The community facility would be a standalone operation, completely owned, controlled and managed by the community itself - but its proximity to the school would mean that the school could be an "anchor tenant", with the community facility offering rentable space to SBC for the continuing delivery of primary education from the existing school building, at the same time as SBC providing a regular annual income that would help to financially sustain the facility in the longer term.

Newlands School Board then commenced extensive consultations with SBC about the proposed facility and options for the school. After overcoming many hurdles the parties reached agreement, in principle, to re-design and refurbish the school and establish a new community facility. Newlands School Board then re-engaged professional architects and property consultants, who worked on an 'at risk' basis, to carry out preliminary design and feasibility studies. These were shared with the community at public meetings and were met with broad approval and enthusiasm. Community priorities included a desire for a gym hall, kitchen, adult learning facility, outdoor and indoor sports, a library, and recycling and computing facilities, none of which were currently available.

SBC supported this proposed project 'in principle' and provided officer time and specialist support as the proposal developed. SBC considered this an

innovative opportunity to establish this way forward as a model of operation for sustainable rural communities which could ultimately set a benchmark for future similar developments in Scotland. In May 2006, SBC agreed to consider funding the school re-design and refurbishment, should the community aspects of the project secure external funding support. This was a further victory for Newlands School Board but it also presented a huge challenge for such a small group of people in a small community.

Newlands School Board then held a number of meetings with advisors from voluntary organisations to try and work out how to fund such a major construction project. It was decided that the best way to pursue funding for the facility was to establish a "community development trust", and then begin the task of applying for major grant funding via the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) and other funding bodies.

BIG had a funding programme called Investing in Communities - Growing Community Assets, a funding programme designed to give communities more control and influence over their own future through sustainable asset ownership. BIG seemed to provide the perfect vehicle for what the community wanted to try and do through the development of the school site. The funding relied on the community having ownership and control of the land and buildings it was trying to develop and thus agreement was needed from SBC to transfer legal ownership of the land to the rear of the school, including legal access rights over the remaining SBC land. Ownership of the school remains with SBC. A number of public meetings were held to gain further support at each stage of project development and to ensure the project continued to deliver the needs of the wider community.



In July 2007, "NCDT" was formed. Members included some of the original School Board campaigners, along with a number of other community members who offered their skills to help bring about this major development for their local community. NCDT decided that it needed an identity and a "brand" and so, because of the nature of the project being undertaken and its close association with the school, launched a competition amongst the children of Newlands Primary School to design a logo for the newly formed Trust. The NCDT Logo was chosen from dozens of submissions by the school children.

The first task for the newly formed NCDT was to seek advice on its approach to funding bodies. NCDT Directors then went back to the drawing board, with the architects/quantity surveyors, on an 'at risk' basis, to begin the process of actually coming up with a design for a community facility that would include, complement and sympathetically extend/refurbish the existing school building. The outline design was then used to submit proposals to major grant bodies to seek funding.

In 2007 NCDT submitted its application to BIG "Growing Community Assets", and kept its fingers crossed!

## IN THE MEDIA

# SCHOOL BUY-OUT BID HITS TROUBLE

(BBC NEWS 18 JANUARY 2008)

A community buy-out bid for a primary school in the Borders has hit problems on the eve of a vital funding decision. A trust was set up to raise £2m for rural Newlands Primary just over three years ago. However, difficulties surrounding the future ownership of the building must be resolved to allow plans to progress. A decision on a £1m bid for lottery funding has been deferred until the position on whether to lease or buy the property outright is clarified. Newlands Community Trust was created in 2005 when Scottish Borders Council threatened to close it and merge the 80-pupil school with West Linton Primary.

## REMAIN CONFIDENT

It has campaigned, raised funds and sought to build up a solid business case for the retention of the school and to turn it into a meeting place for the surrounding community. The funding bid was submitted to the Big Lottery Fund towards the end of last year - with a decision expected this month. However, that decision has been deferred until March because of problems over who would own the building. The idea was for the trust to take a 99-year lease on the current school and build a new hall on the back. It appears the lottery fund would prefer it to be owned outright. A meeting will be held next week between the trust and the council, but campaigners have said they are confident the difficulties can be overcome.



The early outline design used – as you can see it's not too far away from what we got built!



*The initial group of NCDT Directors plus our long suffering partners!*

In January 2008, SBC Executive agreed in principle to transfer the ownership of part of the school site for a nominal sum to enable NCDT to meet the ownership requirements of the Growing Community Assets funding programme. This was converted to actual approval of the transfer in September, 2009 following Scottish Government approval.

In May 2008, after many meetings and consultations, NCDT was finally awarded £999,363 from BIG – 50% of the project budget, the maximum available. This was a major boost for NCDT after clearing so many hurdles.

At around the same time Scottish Government launched the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and NCDT saw this as a prime opportunity to seek a key match funder for the BIG award.

NCDT submitted an application to SRDP in October 2008. In Feb 2009, after a rigorous assessment process NCDT were awarded £858,000 from Scottish Government. This took NCDT's project fund 'pot' to a total of £1.857million, and meant that there was sufficient money pledged to begin the process of bringing the designs to life!

#### IN THE MEDIA

## VILLAGE 'HUB' GETS LOTTERY BOOST

(BBC NEWS 10 JUNE 2008)



Plans to create a community "hub" for a string of small villages in the Borders have secured a £1m lottery grant. Newlands Community Development Trust wants to build a £1.9m community centre attached to Newlands Primary at Romanno Bridge near Peebles. Residents in nearby villages will also benefit from the centre including a sports hall, nursery and IT facilities. The site would be leased by the school and ensure its long-term future after previously being earmarked for closure. NCDT was created in 2005 when Scottish Borders Council threatened to shut the 80-pupil school and merge it with West Linton Primary. That recommendation was subsequently withdrawn but the campaign has continued to turn the school into a meeting place for the surrounding community. The grant is the largest ever awarded in the Scottish Borders by the Big Lottery Fund. Campaigners have said it is a major step towards their target but work remains to be done.

#### IN THE MEDIA

## SCHOOL'S SALVATION PLANS COMPLETE

(BBC NEWS 9 SEPT 2009)

A school which once faced being merged with another primary has secured £800,000 towards a major upgrade. In 2003 it was proposed that Newlands Primary at Romanno Bridge in the Borders be closed and its pupils transferred to West Linton Primary. But campaigners raised funds to save the school and create a new community facility on a site nearby. Scottish Borders Council has now agreed to transfer the land to a community trust and support the school overhaul. In 2005, Scottish Borders Council agreed to postpone that closure while fund-raising started for the new community facility. Last year the project secured £1m from the Big Lottery Fund - its biggest ever award in the Borders. Earlier this year it gained more than £800,000 from the Scottish Rural Development Priorities Scheme. Now SBC has agreed to transfer land next to the school to the Newlands Community Development Trust to allow the project to proceed. It has also found funding to support a major upgrade of the school. SBC executive member for education, Catriona Bhatia, said she was delighted the authority had backed the plans. She said: "In 2005, we gave the Newlands community a challenge that they have more than risen to. "This is a pioneering project, which I am sure will be copied by rural communities across the Borders and Scotland."

SBC then agreed to provide a Project Team to manage the SBC element - the redesign and refurbishment of the existing school - and a Project Co-ordinator to interface with the NCDT board. This team would support the legal work for the land transfer and access rights from SBC to NCDT and seek SBC Council approval for a range of support to NCDT including approval of the budget required for the refurbishment of the School.

Once these agreements were in place NCDT could at last begin to start the building project. It was necessary to go through a formal Public Procurement process to tender and appoint a professional team before commissioning a final design for the whole project, to meet funding outcomes, NCDT/community desires and SBC requirements, and to keep within the budget available.

That procurement process was completed in March 2010 and "Cooper Cromar" were appointed as the project architects for both NCDT and SBC, under a joint agreement. They assembled a team of other professionals required to fully flesh out the full design and fit out for the buildings and the landscaping. Plans were submitted to SBC Planning Department for consideration in June 2010 and planning permission was granted in August 2010.



The agreed plans would then be used to conduct another tender to find a building contractor who could build the community vision and refurbish the school in accordance with the design and, most importantly, within the finite budget. The tender was put out in the early autumn with a view to the successful company being appointed and starting work by Christmas 2010. It was a nerve wracking time for NCDT – it had taken so long to get to this point and there were worries that the increasing costs, fuelled by the worsening economic conditions, would mean that NCDT might not be able to build the community facility as planned with the money we had available. Some concessions had to be made on the design. Fortunately, the revisions made to the design, coupled with the fact that the building industry was suffering due to the recession, meant that most of the bids submitted were affordable.

A lot of time was spent reviewing the quality aspects of the building contractors that wanted to do the work, along with their credentials for building similar facilities. "McLaughlin & Harvey" won that tender process with a combination of



good quality approach and demonstrable prior project delivery and a reasonable price.

So, after a very long journey for all concerned, the work finally started on site on 24th January 2011. This was commemorated by a 'ground-breaking' ceremony which saw, with much community celebration, an elder member of the community, Peggy Wills, and one of the school pupils, Belinda Hamelink, 'officially' dig the first sod. The spade used for that ceremony is now on display in the facility.

## Ground Breaking Ceremony 24 Jan 2011

Behind the scenes there has been a lot of work done by NCDT and SBC to protect both parties in law, and to protect the land that was transferred to NCDT ownership – just in case anything went wrong in the future...which it won't – not with the support of you all in using the wonderful new facilities that Newlands Centre has to offer us all now and for many years to come!



*Mrs Peggy Wills and Belinda Hamelink dig the first turf*



*Reverend Burt said a prayer*



## What does the Centre offer the school & the community?

One of NCDT's key aims was to have a full kitchen provision to enable school meals to be cooked from scratch on the premises rather than being brought in from West Linton school and re-heated. Now pupils are enjoying proper meals cooked by their own school cook. The full kitchen also allows NCDT to hire it out during the hours that the school don't need it, for parties and other events that require catering.

The pre-school and after school clubs have now relocated to the purpose built Nursery Suite bringing wrap around children's services together on to one site for the first time and helping to support families and children through the provision of high quality services and facilities.

The whole facility is fully DDA access compliant, wired for sound and built to be environmentally sustainable and now boasts a full array of solar panels generating electricity and funds for the Centre/community.

The primary school is flourishing, has been redesigned and refurbished into a four classroom school and the unsightly temporary unity has been removed – and the primary education service has been preserved within the community for years to come.

There is also an outdoor playing field. Due to the extent of the new building work at the back of the school NCDT had to buy land towards the rear of the site to ensure that the school and the community still had enough room to play football and other sports.

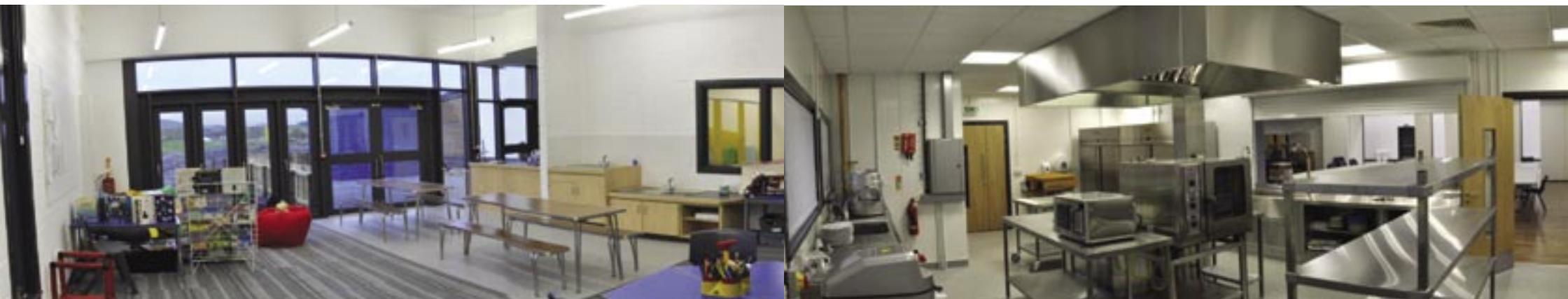
Since completing the building of the Newlands Centre NCDT has already met a number of its outcomes/ milestones; two full time jobs have been created along with a number of voluntary positions. (The Centre Manager and a Maintenance Officer – one part funded by BIG and the other part funded by the Robertson Trust.)

We are well on our way to meeting more of our outcomes having provided the Nursery facility, and having the school dinners cooked on site. There are also a number of new groups and organisations who are now

using the Centre on a regular basis and the local uniformed groups such as the Brownies and Guides are also enjoying what the new building has to offer.

The board of NCDT is always looking for new directors to keep new ideas coming in. Building the community facility was the first, and probably largest, project that NCDT will undertake but its constitutional set-up is designed to bring about any other projects for the general benefit of the community. Anyone locally with an interest in engaging with the community and being involved in charitable community activities would be very welcome to put themselves forward in an unofficial or official capacity via the Company Secretary [secretary@newlands-cdt.org.uk](mailto:secretary@newlands-cdt.org.uk)

The success of the community centre and NCDT depends, ultimately, on YOU!! Thank you for your support.



*The site now also boasts a fully equipped purpose-built nursery facility.*

*Our new Kitchen!*



*The facility also boasts a proper gymnasium, marked out for a number of sports including, football, netball, basketball, & badminton which attracts a number of local groups using it for practice and training sessions.*

*A well equipped conference room with a board room style table seating 16 plus a state of the art Smart board for a number of differing uses for community and business use alike.*

*There is also an IT suite with 8 PC's that can be used to deliver IT training or for other online training or gaming sessions.*



*The smaller hall (known as the Lesser Hall) is used for Brownies, Guides, table tennis and a whole range of other smaller groups including parties and meetings.*



## Newlands Primary School and its role in this project

The current Newlands Primary School is an amalgamation of three small primary schools serving a scattered community; one from Lamancha, Kirkurd and Newlands. The pupil count in those schools varied over the years until in 1984 both Lamancha and Kirkurd schools agreed the time was right to amalgamate with the Newlands School in Romanno Bridge. The 3 schools came together in August 1985 - and at Easter 1986 all the pupils were decanted to Kirkurd school while the Newlands School was being extended to cater for the increased headcount. The works endeavoured to keep as many of the original features of the school to preserve the character and continuity whilst at the same time providing facilities that would prove valuable for many years to come, not only to the pupils and staff but also to the community.

A school is so much more than a building, it is also about the relationships between the children, teachers, parents and the community; their aspirations, achievements and on-going development...all the things Newlands Primary School currently has in place.

Newlands School has test results in mathematics, writing and reading that are above the National and Scottish Borders average. Attendance figures are better than the National and Scottish Borders average.

The HM Inspectors of Schools report from 1999 described the 'Key Strengths' of Newlands Primary school as "courteous polite and well behaved pupils, very good relationships between staff and pupils, hardworking and committed class and visiting teachers and support staff and good standards of attainment in listening, reading, in mathematics at P3 and pupils knowledge in environmental studies"

It also mentioned that the hall and cloakrooms were cramped...not anymore! Thanks to the efforts and genuine partnership spirit between NCDT and SBC, Newlands Primary School enters a new phase of its existence.

By the end of 2011 the staff and pupils were able to enjoy a spacious hall in which to meet and play and they have spacious cloakrooms and toilets. The food provided at lunchtimes is now cooked on the premises and not transported in containers to be reheated and served out of at the school. The hard working staff has quality accommodation for the first time that includes a head teacher's office, medical facilities and pleasant reception area. There is also a safer drop off area for pupils with a proper car park for school staff.

Although there wasn't a physical extension to the school building there were many changes/improvements made to the school including; re-decoration and extensive re-fitting and colour-coding of all classrooms, new toilet facilities with a new disabled toilet. The temporary classroom unit was removed from the playground and the old General Purpose hall was transformed into a new classroom. The exterior element of the school was also given a new coat of paint and clad with natural looking wood panels.

The school staff and school children have been hugely supportive of the whole project providing encouragement and support throughout. Due credit has to be given to the staff, pupils (and the builders) for managing to keep the school on as close to a normal timetable as possible given the extent of the works that were going on around them. The children wanted to commemorate the building of the new facility and changes to the school and so came up with the idea of buying a time capsule in the ground works of the new building. One time capsule was buried during construction works.

On 14th November 2011 a second time capsule was buried. Derek Harkins, ex Depute head teacher (retired) helped dig a hole for the burial and pupils wrote a speech. At the beginning of December Mr Harkins had been appointed as the Development Manager for the new Centre



On the day the capsule was buried a 4 tonne boulder, locally sourced and gifted to the Centre was lifted into place over the hole where it lay. The plan is for it to be removed in 25 years time.

A plaque has now been placed on the boulder in commemoration of the event.



The school children re-wrote the classic "Twelve Days of Christmas" in the theme of the school refurbishment and performed it at the Annual Christmas Concert to parents.

It's now known as the NCDT Christmas Song. Most amusing!



## NCDT Christmas Song

*On the first day of Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the second day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the third day of Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the fourth day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the fifth day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
5 inches of playground  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the sixth day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
6 builders bashing  
5 inches of playground  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the seventh day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
7 joiners banging  
6 builders bashing  
5 inches of playground  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the eighth day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
8 painters splashing  
7 joiners banging  
6 builders bashing  
5 inches of playground  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

*On the ninth day of  
Christmas  
NCDT gave to me  
9 plumbers plumbing  
8 painters splashing  
7 joiners banging  
6 builders bashing  
5 inches of playground  
4 drillers drilling  
3 diggers digging  
2 planners planning  
Blocked out windows so we  
couldn't even see*

Mrs Sharp, the current Head Teacher of Newlands Primary School wrote the following regarding the school involvement with this project;

"From the first time that the closure of Newlands Primary School was suggested, the School Board was keen to explore possibilities. Having surveyed the whole community, they presented their findings to the Director of Education for Scottish Borders Council. Having his support to try to raise the funding to secure the future of the school, the board set about working on proposals. Very quickly this resulted in the formation of Newlands Community Development Trust (NCDT) which took forward a project to provide a community facility at the same time as securing the future of the school.

Having secured hard fought funding, the partnership between NCDT and Scottish Borders Council became instrumental in taking the project of new building and school refurbishment forward. During the time funding was being sought, and the build-up to the start, NCDT involved staff and pupils by asking for opinions and suggestions. As Head Teacher I was invited to Directors' meeting so was always kept informed and involved in making suggestions where appropriate. We also had a staff member invited to meetings to represent the interests of the school eco-committee. Scottish Borders Council, through Jean Robertson worked with the Trust at a high level but school members were very much involved throughout the project.

Once the actual building work began, it was wonderful for the pupils to be able watch the progress so closely. I don't think we realised as a staff the upheaval we would go through packing up and moving out over holidays and unpacking and setting up with very little time to do so, but it was certainly worth the effort! Living, literally, in the middle of a building site for over nine months could have been a disaster, but whilst there were challenges, the staff and pupils were brilliant throughout and we build up a very good relationship with the builders who were amazed that the children did not attempt to venture on to the site! We enjoyed site visits and had our own 'Grand Design' project during the building so pupils were given a very hands on experience of building whilst losing most of their play areas in the process!

As a school we are very grateful to the Trust for all of their hard work, as they have, which along with Scottish Borders Council ensured that we have a bright and inviting building in which to work and learn. From a personal point of view, it has been a privilege to be part of such an innovative and exciting project which has enriched our school community."

On 24th May 2012 HRH Prince Edward, The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO, will officially open the Centre with all key NCDT, SBC and school dignitaries, funders and supporters present.

Once again the children of the School have risen to the occasion and composed a song to celebrate the occasion which will be sung to HRH Prince Edward at the official opening.

## A Song for Newlands

Verse 1:

*Learning new things and doing our best  
As we grow with each new day  
We are so proud of what we achieve together  
On our way*

*Newlands is not just a building as you see  
It is a real community  
Everyone together makes Newlands just a  
Great place to be*

Chorus:

*On this day a new beginning  
We all have a dream for tomorrow  
Standing together, helping each other to see  
What every one of us can be*

Verse 2:

*When the time comes and we have to move on  
We will never say goodbye  
We've grown so fond of these old brick walls  
And here's the reason why*

*For seven years we have come to this school  
And now our shadows will remain  
All of our hearts are linked together in the  
Newlands chain*

Chorus:

*On this day...*

Verse 3:

*Moving on up and starting High School  
Feels like such a massive leap  
But Newlands is always with us and our  
Memories we'll keep*

*We will look back at the good  
times we've had  
And on the friends we leave behind  
Then turn and face the future what new  
adventures  
Shall we find?*

Chorus:

*On this day...*

*Standing together helping each other to see  
What every one of us can be.*

## Supported and Funded by:



Our special thanks go to all who have contributed to the project in order to bring about this wonderful community facility and improved primary school function.

**THANK YOU** for reading this!

[WWW.NEWLANDSCENTRE.ORG.UK](http://WWW.NEWLANDSCENTRE.ORG.UK)

NEWLANDS  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
TRUST

