

West Whitlawburn Power to the people

Overview

Who? West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative

What? A biomass district heating system serving 543 homes.

Where? West Whitlawburn, Cambuslang, South Lanarkshire.

How much? £1.5 million (low interest unsecured loan).

Background

A housing co-operative in one of Scotland's poorest regions is investing £6.5 million in a scheme to boost almost 550 households out of fuel poverty.

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative – run by a volunteer board of 14 unpaid tenants – will connect 543 homes to a renewable biomass boiler through a district heating system. The project, part-funded with £1.5 million of Warm Homes Fund loan cash, will bring annual heat and hot water savings of around 20 per cent to tenants

On top of the monetary savings, the scheme will prevent 48,600 tonnes of CO₂ being released into the atmosphere over its 30-year lifetime. Paul Farrell, director at WWHC, said: "Whitlawburn is recognised in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations as falling within the five per cent most deprived data zones in Scotland, so we face some serious issues.



WWHC has already invested £22.4 million to improve the energy efficiency of these buildings – work which has included installing cladding, insulation and new windows and carrying out re-roofing works, as well as enclosing exposed balconies in six high-rise blocks.

Paul Farrell continued: "Energy efficiency upgrades, although valuable, are not a complete solution – and we had reached a point where we had done as much as we could."

“Almost one in seven households in South Lanarkshire are classed as being in extreme fuel poverty, and that’s a figure we’re committed to reducing.”

Paul Farrell, Director, WWHC



West Whitlawburn Power to the people (cont.)

Project details

The capital cost of the scheme is £6.5 million and will be funded by Energy Company Obligation funding, Scottish Government Warm Home Fund loan funding and European Regional Development grant funding.

The main boiler plant will consist of a 740kW (685kW continuous output) biomass boiler, which will operate in conjunction with a 50,000-litre water tank known as a thermal store. The boiler will heat the water in the tank which will then be circulated to the 543 homes through a network of pipes.

It will then heat radiators and a hot water tank in the homes using a heat exchanger, meaning the systems remain separate.

Biomass systems burn wood chips or pellets. The West Whitlawburn scheme will also use three gas boilers to provide top-up heat and resilience to the system, in case of problems with the single biomass boiler.

Paul Farrell added: “Because of the scale of the project, we have received funding from a number of sources, but our experience with the Warm Homes Fund has been a positive one. Large-scale projects like this will make a real difference to the West Whitlawburn community, and wouldn’t be possible without loans like this.”

Benefits of the projects

The WWHC anticipate average savings will be in the region of 20 per cent on heat and hot water costs, depending on levels of use. The project is also expected to make a significant contribution to carbon emission reduction targets which will count towards ECO, the Energy Company Obligation.

“The new biomass district heating scheme is a true community energy project. We will be building a new energy centre which will provide domestic heat and hot water to 543 local households, made up of 432 multi-storey flats in six tower blocks and 111 low rise flats in 14 tenement closes.”

Paul Farrell, Director, WWHC

For more information or to apply,
please contact
[warmhomesfund@est.org.uk/](mailto:warmhomesfund@est.org.uk)
or visit
www.est.org.uk/warmhomesfund