



Lews Castle College

Creating the University of the Highlands and Islands

STRATEGIC PLAN

2009/2010 – 2011/2012

Revised: 1 September 2009

CONTENTS

	Page No.
1 INTRODUCTION	2
2 Our MISSION	3
3 Our STRATEGIC AIMS	3
4 Our VALUES	3
5 Our VISION FOR THE FUTURE	4-6
6 Our STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS	7-13
7 Our OPERATING ENVIRONMENT	14-23

ANNEXES

- 1 Performance Indicators
- 2 Enabling Plans
- 3 OHCPP – Single Outcome Agreement
- 4 Outer Hebrides Sustainable Population Enabling Plan
- 5 PowerPoint Visualisation for the Strategic Plan

1 INTRODUCTION

The College has developed a three year **Strategic Plan** for the years from 2009/10 to 2011/12, and an annual **Operational Plan** for the current year, 2009/10. We are also working to a number of action plans and enabling plans, which are listed at Annex 2.

In addition, each of the seven academic sections has a **Section Operational Plan**, linking the curriculum, target student numbers, staff development, and other performance indicator targets.

The College's **Strategic Plan** focuses primarily on meeting the needs of the communities of the Outer Hebrides for education and training and for research. It has been developed in the context of the UHI Strategic Plan and its wider regional and national role. We have also taken into account the Scottish Government's Economic and Skills strategies, the Corporate Plan of the Scottish Funding Council and the strategic aims of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, expressed in the Single Outcome Agreement, 2009.

This plan has been Equality Impact Assessed in line with our statutory Equalities Duties.

The **Review of 2008/09** can be found in the 2009/10 Operational Plan: it demonstrates considerable success, and progress against challenging targets.

The **Mission** and **Strategic Aims** of the college have been revised and re-defined, to articulate an increasing sense of confidence in our capacity for rejuvenating the Outer Hebrides, and our potential as an Academic Partner in UHI, to create important research, development and commercialisation opportunities and to attract learners, researchers and staff to work with us.

We have identified the core **Values** that inform our business.

In **Our Vision for the Future**, we provide for ourselves and our partners a challenging **vision** of what the students and customers of the future can expect of us as we redevelop our main Stornoway campus, and provide increasingly successful specialisms in art and music in North Uist and Benbecula. We are now able to offer student residential accommodation, we are designing our curriculum for the 21st century, and we are building on significant initiatives in research and commercialisation, especially in the fields of renewable energy and energy conservation.

In our **Strategic Objectives**, we focus on sustainability, partnership, continuing to learn as an organisation, and our increasingly significant role in research. We reinforce our continuing importance in, and responsibility for, Gaelic development, innovation, and support for the local economy.

The **Environmental and Stakeholder Analysis** provides an important contextual overview of the college, and identifies social, economic,

environmental and geographic factors that inform our decisions about our business. It also identifies key stakeholders, the partnerships essential to meeting the needs and aspirations of our students and other clients, and the opportunities presented by developments related to renewable energy, UHI, Gaelic language and culture, and the schools/college partnership.

2 Our MISSION is:

We strive for excellence in teaching, scholarship and research, to meet the needs of the communities of the Outer Hebrides, and to make an increasing impact, nationally and internationally.

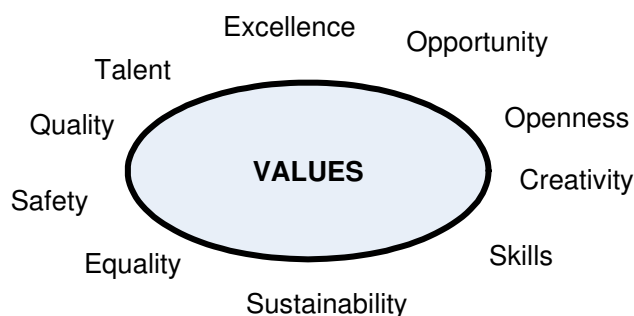
Tha sinn dealasach a chum a bhith a' tairgse sàr ìre ann an teagasg, sgoilearachd is rannsachadh, gus coinneachadh ri feumalachdan choimhearsnachdan nan Eilean Siar, agus gu bhith ag obair gu h-èifeachdach aig ìre nàiseanta is eadar-nàiseanta.

3 Our STRATEGIC AIMS are

to be:

- 1 **A Student/Customer Focused College**
- 2 **An Innovative Learning College**
- 3 **A Planned Business and a Target-Hitting College**
- 4 **A Partnership College**
- 5 **A College Committed to its Linguistic and Cultural Heritage**

4 Our VALUES:



5 Our VISION FOR THE FUTURE is:

To do more and more for the people of the Outer Hebrides and to become a major force for addressing concerns about demographic change. We will need to make best use of our human resources, natural, economic and cultural environment, our developing expertise in ICT and learning, our excellent estate, and our growing reputation for specialist courses. In doing so, we will retain more of our people in the islands, and bring increasing numbers of new people to the Outer Hebrides, to learn, to engage in research, and to develop new businesses that will benefit from co-location with innovative applied research.

We will continue to make the most of our resources and expertise to provide as good a service to our students and other customers as is possible. We will continue our good progress towards long-term financial stability and security, so that we can concentrate our energies on learning, teaching, scholarship, research and commercialisation of that research.

Underpinning our ambitions is our need to grow our staff. We will ensure that continuing professional development is funded and delivered so that we support and sustain the professional development of our staff, and by doing so, continue to offer good quality learning experiences to our students. As a fully-committed partner in UHI, we will develop our staff as appropriate so that they can contribute to the achievement of university title, and to the growth and development of the new university.

As the college of the Gaelic heartland, and an essential contributor to the re-generation of Gaelic, the college will drive forward the implementation of the Western Isles Language Plan, so that it supports and fosters the use of Gaelic in all aspects of its business, and becomes a centre for scholarship and research into Gaelic language, culture and heritage, and the Gaidhealtachd.

The further education curriculum will change over the coming years, reflecting the increased demand for specialist courses in, for example, engineering, maritime, construction and hairdressing, the place of the college in Gaelic development, the emerging opportunities in renewable energy and energy efficiency, changing demands for IT skills, and the very significant partnership between the college and schools. We will aim to keep more of our young people on the islands, to offer them real choice in education, training and careers, and routes to the achievement of the highest levels of qualification available to them, as well as to employment in the local economy.

As UHI matures into a university offering a wide range of learning opportunities to students through distributed learning, the college's investment in technology to support learning will continue to be considerable, and the annual review of how we deliver courses will take into account changing attitudes to learning spaces and the requirements of a technologically literate generation of students. Technology will also make learning more accessible, and will bring a wider range of students to the college.

The college will become a centre for learning, scholarship, research and commercialisation. Current and future research initiatives will produce a

community of scholars and researchers working alongside lecturers so that research informs teaching, and new opportunities are opened up to our students. A specialism in rural health and well-being, continuing developments in culture, heritage and language, expertise in distributed learning, and the research programme in renewable energy and energy efficiency will establish the college as a significant powerhouse of innovative solutions to islands problems.

Employers throughout the UK, and beyond, will send their workers to study in the Hydrogen lab and the associated micro-grid system, as well as to learn from the major infrastructure projects being developed throughout the islands, including the anaerobic digester in the Creed Business Park, the Siadar wave energy project, and the numerous community-led on-shore wind developments. They will be accommodated in the Bayhead Bridge Centre, and new purpose-built accessible student accommodation, benefiting from the highest quality student residential accommodation and from the growing cultural and social opportunities in Stornoway and more widely in the islands.

As a partner in a new university, the college will become a destination of choice for students wanting to study or conduct research in our environment, supported by good resources, and within a UHI partnership that brings benefits greater than the sum of its parts.

Future visitors to any of our campuses will see buildings and facilities that are modern, sustainable, and full of energetic people engaged in the business of a further education college that is brimming with ambition and innovative ideas.

Visitors to the Stornoway Campus will experience a tertiary institution in microcosm – there will be excellent educational facilities, a flourishing research and commercialisation programme, and business development spin-out companies operating on the campus. The student residential accommodation will provide harbour-side living for students from around the world, and the college's increasing international reputation will ensure that it is perceived as first choice for local people, and a unique experience for people from elsewhere.

Specialist facilities, including the waterside art studios at Taigh Chearsabhagh, Lochmaddy, and the music recording and performance facilities at Benbecula, will be augmented by other facilities, including student residential accommodation, more social facilities, and specialist courses to support the local economy, as well as to bring people to study unique courses in a unique environment. At Castlebay, the Barra Learning Centre will have expanded to include more options for students in both vocational further and higher education. Aspects of our increasing research programme in renewable energy will be established in the Uists, creating jobs and helping to build sustainability for all the communities of the Outer Hebrides.

Our partnerships with other organisations will have led to establishment of the college as the training partner for organisations within the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership. Community-based organisations will be partners in learning.

People who work in other organisations will want to work with us, because they will see opportunities for themselves and their communities, and they will appreciate the opportunities we have created from our unique environment and culture.

We intend to show that our islands are capable of developing confident and competent individuals, equipped to compete for any job and create new wealth through business development, and of absorbing from anywhere in the world creative learners, researchers, entrepreneurs and leaders.

6 Our STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES and CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (Performance Indicators for the Strategic Aims and Objectives are in Annex 1).

Strategic Aim 1 – A Student/Customer-Focused College

- i We will strive to be the first choice destination for education for as many people as possible, whether they come from the Outer Hebrides or from elsewhere.**
- ii We will develop and deliver our programmes both to meet the needs of local people and the local economy, and to appeal to those who wish to study in the unique environment of the Outer Hebrides.**
- iii We will improve the college's resources and the student experience so that we attract increasing numbers of students and other customers.**
- iv We will listen to the voices of our learners.**

Critical Success Factors

1. A range of full-time and part-time introductory courses for FE and HE for all ability levels.
2. A coherent offer to potential students in the Outer Hebrides, demonstrating strategic partnerships with agencies and providers.
3. New HE courses available by network learning. Extension to the further education curriculum of networked and online learning, to allow us to reach employers and more communities within the Highlands & Islands.
4. New courses in multi media and industry/vendor awards.
5. New fully-accessible student accommodation as part of the college's estates strategy, and completion of a review of further student accommodation needs.
6. Marketing and promotion of our courses and facilities to attract students from off island and build on the college's strengths to maintain and improve the proportion of local students choosing Lews Castle College rather than other colleges/universities.
7. A clear marketing strategy for both domestic and international recruitment, with detailed SMART objectives.
8. Improved student social spaces and activities and campus environment, both in Stornoway and in the Uists and Barra.
9. More access time to library and other key facilities, to ensure that learning can be accessed by all.
10. Flourishing relationship with arts and sports organisations.
11. More flexible delivery of courses, permitting part-time access.
12. Full Disclosure arrangements in place for all staff, with clear protocols.
13. Liaison officer in place with UHISA, election of Student Association and President early in each session and production of a student activities plan for each session.
14. Effective responses to student and employer feedback in the working of committees reporting to the Academic Board and Quality Assurance Committee.

Strategic Aim 2 – An Innovative Learning College

Learning and Teaching

- i We will strive for excellence in Learning, Teaching, and Student Support throughout the college.**
- ii To increase the flexibility, convenience, and quality of education for our learners, we will train all students in the use of technologies appropriate to their learning.**
- iii To place the college at the cutting edge of innovative learning technology we will implement a development programme for all staff that develops ICT skills in the design, development, and management of distributed learning and administrative solutions.**
- iv We will value staff development and training, and our commitment to investing in our people.**

Critical Success Factors

1. Monitoring and review of the impact of Access and Inclusion policies on learner access to college course provision.
2. Impact assessment of equality schemes (Disability, Gender, Race, or Single Equality Scheme, when introduced) on the college's business.
3. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation of curriculum design, delivery and review processes on an annual basis.
4. Citizenship, IT diagnostic evaluation for all learners and introduction to the College Centre for Enterprise included in all learner induction activity.
5. Monitoring and review of all Student Support Services include student evaluation from all modes of course delivery.
6. Percentage of lecturers with TQFE and with HEA membership increases each year through appropriate, targeted staff development expenditure.
7. Annual training programme in place to prioritise staff development opportunities in ICT in Learning and Teaching, Quality Improvement and Student Support.
8. Annual staff development programme, with outcomes and costs identified, published each year and monitored quarterly by the Staff Development Committee.
9. All staff engaged in teaching school classes have GTC registration by agreed date.
10. CPD Opportunities offered to all part-time lecturers to support the development of their teaching skills.
11. The Research & Scholarship Committee and the Learning & Teaching Committee identify areas of collaboration between current research activity and related potential course development.
12. Examples of good practice in learning and teaching submitted to the Learning & Teaching Committee, and disseminated more widely to effect change.
13. College programmes are planned in full knowledge of the impact of the *Curriculum for Excellence* and to maximise articulation and progression for all students.

14. The Board of Management is trained in key aspects of its role, members are clear about current legislation and governance requirements, and there is regular review of its strategic oversight of the college.

Business Processes

- i **We will ensure, through effective investment, process engineering and staff training, that business decisions are supported by accurate and up-to-date student, staff and finance information.**

Critical Success Factors

15. Incorporation in the annual professional review of focus on staff development that improves teaching, scholarship, and administration skills.
16. Improvement of the quality and quantity of data on and from learners by extending the availability of online enrolments and surveys, starting with induction questionnaires.
17. Improved information from previous institutions, especially local secondary schools.
18. Review and restructuring of college website as the main source of information for prospective learners, college staff, students, and Board members.

Research

- i **We will grow the research activity so that the college has a coherent and appropriate research portfolio, building on local opportunities and partnerships.**
- ii **We will become known for the quality of our research and subsequent commercialisation of our key initiatives in renewable energy, benefiting the college, strengthening the reputation of UHI, and providing research opportunities to attract young people to the islands.**
- iii **We will develop our own research, development and commercialisation programme, within the context of UHI, building on support from other organisations, and on our increasing reputation for ground-breaking applied research in renewable energy, energy conservation and efficiency, and the uses of technology to support learning.**

Critical Success Factors

19. We actively lead the research programme for the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, and adds value to the work of its individual organisations.

20. *Greenspace Research* has developed online EPC, has in place commercial agreements with a number of global software companies, and is a leader in research, and commercialisation related to energy performance and the built environment. It has enterprise level contracts with major facilities management companies, and a forward research programme that will sustain a team of research active staff.
21. *The Hydrogen Lab* is contributing to research in applications of renewable energy for storage, and to the strategic aims of the Hebridean Hydrogen Park.
22. We have an agreed research agenda with NHS Western Isles.
23. There is a programme of Arts/Culture/Language/Heritage/Research projects.
24. We have a coherent research and development plan for Distributed Learning and the Knowledge Economy, building on expertise in LCC/UHI.
25. We are increasingly involved in archaeology projects and in related taught programmes.

Strategic Aim 3 – A Planned Business and a Target-Hitting College

- i We will improve our planning processes, taking account of our environment, including the economy, demography and the diverse and scattered communities we serve.**
- ii We will retain our capacity and reputation for responsiveness, but will ensure that our business is planned in such a way as to present a consistent face to customers and partners.**
- iii We will plan to create an impact nationally and internationally in teaching and research.**
- iv We will plan to become a low carbon college.**
- v We will achieve targets in all areas of our business, including those targets set by SFC for FE student activity, and, through UHI, for HE FTES.**
- vi In addition, we will set our own targets for the generation of other income, and we will control costs according to the targets we set ourselves in our budgeting processes.**
- vii We will ensure that we set realistic and achievable targets, and that we achieve them.**

Critical Success Factors

1. Key partners understand and subscribe to our strategic and operational plans.
2. Changes to the college's curriculum, supported by market research and identification of new opportunities.
3. Clearly identified and promoted progression routes for lifelong learning.
4. Consolidation of research activity, operating to a clear and sustainable business plan.
5. A Sustainability Plan, and clear actions in delivering on our communities for carbon management and climate.
6. An Estates Plan, and college campuses that reflect our commitment to students and our awareness of our responsibilities for the environment and for accessibility.
7. Achievable student numbers targets, expressed in Weighted SUMS and/or FTEs, appropriate to the demands of local people and consistent with the requirements of the local economy.
8. The Board of Management sets the strategic direction of the college, effectively monitors its own performance and performance indicators for success, achievement of targets, management of risk, and financial health.
9. Maintenance of WSUMs achievement, growth in HE FTE numbers, year on year.
10. Increased number of students from outwith the Outer Hebrides on specialist programmes.
11. Significant growth in levels of EU funding to support research in particular.
12. Increase in income from contracts, including research contracts.
13. Reducing deficit on general reserve, and plan in place to eliminate deficit.
14. Increased income from college staff, facilities and commercial services.

Strategic Aim 4 – A Partnership College

- i With our main campus in Stornoway, major centres on Benbecula and Barra, and other facilities throughout the islands, we provide excellent resources and opportunities for the whole community. We will work in partnerships to ensure effective and inclusive education, training, scholarship and research, and the administrative and other services required to support these core activities.**

Critical Success Factors

1. Outcomes from consultations with key partners fed into strategic and operational plans.
2. Improved support services, including management information services, across UHI, to an agreed schedule.
3. College policies and related protocols reviewed to a published and monitored schedule.
4. A collaborative plan for local public services for service delivery.
5. Increased education, training and research programmes in partnership with NHS Western Isles and other local organisations.
6. Local learning plans for communities in the Outer Hebrides, and for key centres on Benbecula and Barra.
7. School/College partnership arrangements under the framework provided by *Lifelong Partners, May 2005*, ensuring appropriate and effective access to vocational education for school pupils.
8. Improved partnership programmes with CnES.
9. New businesses created from the *Greenspace Research* initiative.
10. Greater involvement of LCC staff in PGDE course delivery and other teacher training programmes.
11. Staff effectively deployed in employer engagement and knowledge exchange.

Strategic Aim 5 – A College Committed to its Linguistic and Cultural Heritage

- i As the college based in, and providing for, the communities of the Outer Hebrides, we take very seriously our responsibility for Gaelic development. We will develop and implement a comprehensive Gaelic language plan for the college, and we will continue our support for all aspects of Gaelic development in the Outer Hebrides and beyond.**

Critical Success Factors

1. Participation in the development of UHI's Gaelic Plan.
2. Development and implementation of our own formal Gaelic Plan.
3. Implementation of CPP partner Gaelic plans especially that of CnES.
4. Provision of Gaelic language, culture and heritage courses at various levels to meet Gaelic language learning, culture and heritage aspirations throughout the islands.
5. Participation in English medium courses about the culture and heritage of the Outer Hebrides such as the Literature Degree and Archaeological courses.
6. Development of a Gaelic heritage 'hub'.
7. Development of a programme to enhance the image of the Gaelic language and culture throughout the Outer Hebrides, including participation in the OH Cultural Strategy and Literature Strategy.
8. Delivery of translation services, corpus development and training and accreditation for simultaneous and written translations in Gaelic.
9. Participation in research and scholarship initiatives in Gaelic Language Heritage and Culture.
10. Marketing and publicity materials use Gaelic as appropriate.

7 Our OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

As a member of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, we are signatories to the Single Outcome Agreement,(SOA), and to the documents that provide detail and background to the SOA. The information in this section adds detail relevant to the college to supplement the area profile and other information provided in the SOA, which is appended to this Strategic Plan. This section correlates to the section of the OHCPP SOA entitled 'Reflection on the Outer Hebrides'. The paragraphs in that document on further education are drawn from this Strategic Plan.

We have committed to five major strategic initiatives, adopted by the OHCPP. They are:

- University/College Town, Stornoway
- Arts and music Centre of Excellence, Lochmaddy
- Research Hotel, Stornoway (developing specialist research facilities that will attract academic and industrial researchers for extended periods of time).
- Research and teaching priorities within a Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities: Renewable energy; Gaelic Language, culture and heritage, Health and Care, including telehealth; Knowledge economy/distributed learning; Archaeology
- New curriculum opportunities in critical areas for the Outer Hebrides

We subscribe to the seven local outcomes of the Single Outcome Agreement 2009, as they cross-refer to the National Outcomes for Scotland:

1. The populations of the Outer Hebrides are stable, with a better balance of age, gender and socio-economic groups.
2. The economy of the Outer Hebrides and the economies within the Outer Hebrides are thriving.
3. The people of the Outer Hebrides are well educated, well trained and well skilled.
4. The physical and mental health and wellbeing of the people throughout the Outer Hebrides is improved.
5. The communities of the Outer Hebrides are stronger and more able to identify, articulate and take action and responsibility regarding their needs and aspirations.
6. The people of the Outer Hebrides derive maximum benefit from the natural and cultural resources of the area, whilst at the same time safeguarding those resources to benefit future generations.
7. The services of the Outer Hebrides are of high quality, continuously improving and reflective of local needs.

We are fully committed to the five strategic objectives of the OHCPP Sustainable Population Enabling Plan:

Improving Perception
Supporting Growth
Integrating Communities
Promoting Inclusion
Building Capacity

(i) **Outer Hebrides Geography and Demography**

Lewis Castle College serves the whole of the Outer Hebrides, extending some 200 km from Vatersay and Barra in the south to Ness in the north of Lewis, with a land area of over 3,000 sq km. The population is currently estimated at 26,200, with 78% on Lewis and Harris, 18% in the Uists and on Benbecula, and 4% on Barra and Vatersay. The total population of these islands is estimated to have declined by around 10% between 1991 and the present.

Future projections suggest further decline. The numbers of young people are predicted to decline rapidly in future years. Between 2006 and 2031, the Outer Hebrides is projected to see a large decline in the key age groups of 0-15 (-25%) and those of working age, 16-64 years (-11%). By 2031 the total population of the Outer Hebrides is projected to fall to 24,892. By this date, 33% of the population is expected to be 65 years and over. The Scottish Executive publication, *All our futures: Planning for A Scotland with an Ageing Population*, has a special significance in the Outer Hebrides. We will of course exploit the potential for the ageing population to become an important market for the college.

Population density in the Outer Hebrides is 9 persons per sq km. This compares with Shetland (16 persons per sq km) and Orkney (20 persons per sq km). The college and its partners in economic and social development have a role in retaining the population and improving economic opportunities for businesses and individuals.

The recent Outer Hebrides Migration Study (Hall Aitken 2006), has identified a number of issues and drivers that are of significance to all major agencies and providers of services in the islands, including the college. The decline in numbers of young women, in particular, is an issue that the college is addressing in terms of course provision and development, and there are clear opportunities for the college to contribute to the strategies and initiatives required, including provision of courses and the creation of long term well-paid sustainable jobs in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors. The migrant worker population is significant, though not stable, and we will need to respond to the educational and training needs of such workers and their families.

The island location of the college has considerably influenced the development of our curriculum, ranging as it now does from short, vocational, non-certificate courses to the award of a doctorate by research. This extremely diverse curriculum reflects local demand, but is also a simple factor of the geography that the college serves. The result is that

the college delivers a much wider programme than most comparable mainland or other island colleges.

(ii) The Changing Environment

The college is sensitive to many changes taking place in its sectors of operation, and in the political and economic framework within which it operates.

In particular, we acknowledge the strategic direction of the Scottish Government, with its focus on Skills and Economic Strategies, its commitment to creating single outcome agreements with local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships, and its focus on national priorities delivered and measured by local and regional bodies through local performance indicators. The changing structure and responsibilities of the enterprise network, especially Highlands & Islands Enterprise, is having an effect on the college, as is the establishment of Skills Development Scotland. As these new or reformed bodies develop their strategic plans and direction, the college will need to adjust to changing demands and opportunities.

A major drive towards sustainability in all its manifestations will provide an agenda for the college, in terms of its taught and research programmes, its plans for its estate, and all aspects of recycling, energy use and conservation, and transport.

(iii) Education and the Outer Hebrides

Education has always been highly valued in the Outer Hebrides. No part of Scotland has a higher staying-on rate and Careers Scotland statistics for 2007 indicate that 94% of pupils leaving school 'enter a positive outcome', that is, enter employment, training and/or further/higher education. This is considerably higher than the Scottish Government's national target of 87%. The demand for education has in the past been met by a significant migration of young people to the major Scottish cities and centres of higher education. Many do not return to their home islands after higher education, and their skills and earning power are thus lost to the local communities. The range of provision offered by the college throughout the Outer Hebrides is designed in large part to retain young people, with their skills and earning power, in the community and thus address depopulation issues. It also serves to ensure that adults are able to take up opportunities for education and training, either to prepare them for employment, or as continuing professional development.

(iv) Outer Hebrides Economy and Employment

The college faces considerable challenges, which include the demographic changes signalled in the Outer Hebrides Migration Study,

and elsewhere, the weakness of the local economy, and very limited opportunities for generating income other than grant.

The Outer Hebrides has for some time shown the lowest gross domestic product per worker in Scotland, and the third lowest economic activity rate. A 'Wealth of the Nation' report in 2003 showed the Outer Hebrides average income to be ranked 3rd lowest out of 121 UK postcodes, and the second lowest of Scotland's postcodes.

Unemployment in the Outer Hebrides has been significantly higher than national rates and other island communities. It stood at 4.0% in April 2009, greater than the Scottish Average. The trend for the Outer Hebrides is erratic, consistent with an economy where there is a higher than average prevalence of seasonal and part-time work.

Employment opportunities within the islands are constrained by the size of local companies and the relative stability of the workforce. The economy of the Outer Hebrides is dominated by small and micro enterprises, with a significant number having fewer than 5 employees, and firms of 50+ employees accounting for a smaller proportion of employment than in the rest of the Highlands & Islands area.

43% of employees are in the public sector (local government, health and education). The next largest sector (distribution, hotels and restaurants) accounts for 24% and is subject to the vagaries of seasonal employment. The fisheries sector is also a significant employer in the Outer Hebrides and accounts for up to 16% of GDP. There is strong gender segregation in many of these occupations, and the college seeks to create change and more choice. There are more women in paid work in the public sector and hospitality, and more men in paid work in distribution, fisheries and construction.

The college plans its programmes in the context of local labour market information, and tries to balance its provision to meet the needs and aspirations of both individuals and employers. However, local demand is often not sufficient for viable numbers of students/trainees on courses that the college and its partners would wish to provide.

The college functions as a significant economic driver within the region, securing a high level of commitment from staff and students to improving education, qualifications and the quality of life locally, and acting as a catalyst for a range of development initiatives throughout the region. Without the college, the local economy would be seriously affected, and its current difficulties even more acute. SFEFC's Area Mapping exercise in 2001 demonstrated that the college is perceived to be successful in meeting many of the needs of the local economy; this was more recently reinforced by the HMI Review of the college in March 2006.

To continue to provide for essential industries, the college has constantly to work with small numbers of trainees and students and to cope with problems of distance. Class sizes rarely achieve the numbers that would

be regarded as minima in mainland provision. A clear message from the Outer Hebrides Migration Study, 2006, is that in spite of diseconomies of scale, the college can play a greater part in the retention of young people if it can find ways of delivering courses to small groups of students in particular disciplines. Those who go away tend to stay away.

The current economic recession, as at June 2009, will inevitably create difficulties for the further and higher education sectors throughout the country. There will be increased numbers of young people leaving school and others seeking employment, for whom the college will provide an opportunity to acquire skills and qualifications at a time when unemployment will be high. However, the total number of such people in the islands does not allow for the exponential growth in demand that is being experienced in other parts of Scotland.

At the same time, opportunities for diversifying income streams through engagement with business and industry will become fewer, as all businesses, including public bodies are likely to find trading circumstances very difficult.

It is likely, and signalled already by the Scottish Government, that public spending will be reduced in the years from 2010/11, for some years. We will need to be aware of this, and to plan accordingly.

As an active partner in the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, the college, through its Board of Management and senior management team, seeks to align its strategic and operational plans with, for example, *Creating Communities of the Future*, the Scottish Government's Economic and Skills strategies, UHI's Strategic Plan and the Funding Councils' Joint Corporate Plan. College Management Team members are well-briefed on such initiatives and strategic documents, and also play well informed and important roles in driving UHI forward towards university title.

(v) Renewable Energy: A Major Opportunity

A major development in the economic opportunities of the islands, especially Lewis and Harris, relates to renewable energy. Some of the planned projects are large-scale electricity generation schemes to supply the national grid. Others are smaller, community-based projects for local application. In addition, the comprehensive programme of hydrogen-related training, research and development in partnership with the local authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, is very significant for economic development, job opportunities and training. Renewable energy is regarded as a possible driver for gender diversity, in terms of creating opportunity.

The implementation of a plan to create a Hebridean Hydrogen Park and hydrogen economy, and the activity of the *Greenspace Research* programmes, with combined research and development and economic

and policy teams, will create jobs, opportunities for economic and community development, and a blueprint for low carbon communities in the Highlands & Islands.

The former oil industry fabrication yard at Arnish, outside Stornoway, has recently been re-opened by BiFab, a company specialising in the building of off-shore and renewables infrastructure. The local authority has opened its large-scale anaerobic digester on the Creed Business Park, and the first small wind farm opened in 2007. Community land owning Trusts in Harris and Lewis are currently planning renewable energy projects, and *NPower* is developing a major pilot of wave energy at Siadar on the west coast of Lewis.

At a time when planning decisions about large scale wind farms are in the balance, there is nevertheless significant activity that encourages the college to continue to develop its expertise in renewable energy and in the development of a programme including research and product development for energy conservation and efficiency in the built environment.

The foresightedness of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in its involvement in major projects, such as the current Framework 7 SusPlan project, provide a base for the college to become involved with universities and commercial enterprises throughout Europe.

The college's key role in these developments will be a very significant driver for curriculum change in the engineering and construction areas, and will place the college at the forefront of national developments.

There is a major driver for our focus on energy, which is that the Outer Hebrides has the highest level of fuel poverty across all of Scotland, with 44% of households spending more than 10% of their household income on fuel costs (Scottish Average: 19%).

(vi) Transport and Other Infrastructure Issues

Against a background of high transport costs, making travel between islands and to the mainland extremely expensive, the college gives high priority to maintaining communication with its network of learning centres and with the mainstream of Scottish further and higher education. Recent changes to the costs of air travel for island residents, and the increasing frequency of flights to four mainland destinations, have improved this aspect of the college's environment.

The Air Discount Scheme that came into being in May 2006 is providing evidence, anecdotal so far, of changes in perceptions and behaviour, particularly of young people, so that those who go away to study or to work retain their island links through more frequent visits home, and those who remain do not feel so remote from the opportunities afforded by city life, because they are able to visit mainland cities more cheaply, and therefore more frequently, than before.

Similarly, the road equivalent tariff scheme for ferry transport to the mainland, introduced in 2008, appears at this early stage to demonstrate that reduced costs of travel to and from the islands have an effect on tourism and on other travel activity.

Public transport, and access to college campuses by rural populations remains a difficulty, and we are actively seeking ways to provide equality of access to all.

Continuing demand for domestic building, a major PPP for schools in the Outer Hebrides and a programme for building and refurbishment under the Hebridean Housing Partnership are expected to secure construction-related jobs for a number of years, though there will be inevitable troughs as well as peaks of activity. In particular, there will be recruitment problems in the latter part of 2009 and early 2010 in the construction industry, as there will be a hiatus between recently completed major works and the next major projects.

(vii) UHI and Opportunities for the College

UHI is a major stakeholder in the college. As the UHI academic partnership matures, its importance in the region increases, and the expectations from other stakeholders become greater. During the planning period, UHI intends to achieve university title. This is extremely ambitious, but the college is working with UHI and the other academic partners towards this goal.

The networking of UHI's programmes, and the establishment of horizontal support and management structures, particularly focused on teaching and research, provide opportunities for the college to benefit from the partnership of UHI. We are prepared and have the capacity for providing services to the rest of the Highlands & Islands, and beyond, and will position ourselves to maximise the local benefit from regional initiatives.

Increasingly, the college is working to align its structures and processes with those of the UHI partnership, so that management information systems and financial processes work with those of other academic partners. Dialogue about sharing expertise, rationalising services, and bringing together human resource expertise and policies is continuing and progressing.

The college has to strike a balance between expectations relating to the university sector and those more relevant to further education, in terms of student services, library and learning resources, staff deployment and conditions of service. Additionally, the college works with agencies in the Outer Hebrides on Efficient Government initiatives, designed to reduce costs and duplication, and provide effective local services, and through the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership to make best use of shared resources.

As the only further and higher education provider in the Outer Hebrides, the college is committed to providing a very wide range of educational services and to meeting the needs of all interest groups, from S3 school pupils to postgraduate research activity and scholarship. Consequently, the demands on college staff at all levels are considerable, and stretch the human and other resources of a small college in a challenging environment.

(viii) The Funding Environment

UHI, and this college, are committed to growth in student numbers over a ten year period. For this to be achieved, there will need to be sufficient funding over and above the current levels, and we will need to find ways to attract to our courses students from the rest of Europe and overseas.

Faced with the demographic and economic problems outlined above, the college is committed to flexibility in delivery of its educational and training programmes, and to maximising income from a variety of sources. European funding from ESF declined considerably over the lifetime of the recently completed Highlands & Islands Special Transitional Programme (HISTP), and the new 2007-2013 EU funding programme will limit the type of activity that can be funded through this source. UHI is now a Strategic Delivery Body (SDB) in its own right (one of only three such bodies in Scotland) and so is able to determine its own priorities for EU funding to a large extent (within standard EU rules), until 2013. A number of existing and forthcoming research and development projects related to renewable energy will be of importance in attracting new funding, but the levels of funding accessed under the HISTP programme for training and human resource development will no longer be available.

Some external sources of funding will be more difficult to achieve. However, the college will be able, through careful planning, to re-position itself to facilitate access to new grant and contract/consultancy funding, and develop other income generation activity to compensate for areas of decline.

The college is mindful of the cost of further and higher education to the students, and seeks, through ILA, Bursaries and EMA programmes to support those in most need. Equality of access to provision is vital for our communities.

(ix) Outer Hebrides Language, Culture and Heritage

The college strives to develop programmes that support, enhance and exploit the culture and heritage of the islands. It plays an increasingly important part in the strategic development of Gaelic in the Outer Hebrides, hosting a team dedicated to establishment and implementation of the Language Plan launched in April 2006, and providing through its

Translation and Cultural Services, Fosglan, an important service for many agencies.

Recent commitments by SFC to support the development of Gaelic at both FE and HE levels are providing the college with opportunities to work with partner colleges and universities across Scotland on a number of important initiatives.

As the college based in, and serving, the major Gaelic heartland of Scotland, there is a clear responsibility in relation to course development and implementation of the Western Isles Language Plan and the UHI Gaelic Policy. The siting of key elements of a Gaelic digital broadcasting channel in Stornoway, and other media-related developments, will provide new opportunities and challenges for the college, which has started a radical review of its entire Gaelic programme, in consultation with other local partners, especially Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

The college's increasingly important role in developing and delivering Gaelic education at all levels, including the ground-breaking Ulpan programme of immersion training, will be a very significant driver for the development of Gaelic in the community.

Our focus on indigenous culture has led, in particular, to distinctive programmes in the Uists, focused on arts, crafts, music and culture. Similar programmes are planned for Lewis and Harris. The flourishing *An Lanntair* arts centre in Stornoway offers partnership opportunities for the college related to arts development. Expansion of *Taigh Chearsabhagh*, the arts centre in Lochmaddy, North Uist, with its new teaching studios, offers further opportunity for the college to develop its unique art courses in partnership with other UHI academic partners, with a specialism in environmental art. Contribution to taught programmes and research projects in Archaeology will be a major focus for the future.

The natural heritage of the islands is a major resource and will provide opportunities for new provision and to attract new students.

(x) Vocational Education and the School/College Partnership

The range of courses available in partnership with the schools sector reflects the fact that we are the only major provider of vocational training in the Outer Hebrides and can offer pupils experience and vocational education in areas not available within the school curriculum. We are currently working within the framework of '*Lifelong Partners – The Scottish Executive's Strategy and guide for School and College Partnerships*' to develop the existing good practice and ensure that as many pupils as possible can benefit from vocational education from S3. The college has offered courses to school pupils for over 50 years and this provision is an integral part of the range of services the college offers. This provision has been largely delivered in Stornoway but the college is expanding the range

of courses available throughout the Outer Hebrides over the next few years in partnership with secondary schools and the local authority.

(xi) Conclusion

The college is fully aware of both the threats and the opportunities it faces in the future, as a significant player in the development of the islands, and as an organisation that is paid principally for the numbers of students it educates. We are fully aware of weaknesses inherent in the environment in which we operate. We have therefore laid out strategic steps to meet and overcome these challenges to fulfil our mission as a college dedicated to the quality of its education, training and research. We will achieve Our Vision For The Future by capitalising on and nurturing our quality staff and by strong teamwork. We will respond positively and innovatively to economic opportunities in the public, private or social enterprise sectors.

Sources for information include:

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Socio-Economic Review May 2009
Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
General Register Office for Scotland
CACI: Wealth of the Nation 2003 Report