

UHI Rural & Islands College Merger Proposal

Consultation Analysis

November 2023

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1. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides an analysis of responses to the Scottish Government's consultation on the "Rural and Islands College Merger Proposal" which ran from 24 February to 5 May 2023. The consultation paper can be accessed here:

[Rural and Islands College Merger proposal: consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-papers-and-responds/2023/02/24/rural-and-islands-college-merger-proposal-consultation-2023-02-24-2023-05-05/)

2. BACKGROUND

1. A proposal has been put forward, by the governing bodies of North Highland College (NHC), Lews Castle College(LCC) (also known as UHI Outer Hebrides) and West Highland College (WHC) to merge to form one single, incorporated college.
2. The merging parties have suggested a “host” model, whereby the LCC and WHC are closed and their property, rights, liabilities and obligations are transferred to NHC.
3. LCC is an incorporated college under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 (“the 1992 Act”) and as such requires a statutory instrument, made by the Scottish Ministers, in order to give effect to its closure and any consequential transfer of property, rights, liabilities and obligations. As WHC is not incorporated under the 1992 Act that college will be wound up through non-statutory means which does not require any Ministerial involvement.
4. A ten week Scottish Government consultation on the proposed merger was conducted. It ran from 24 February until 5 May. The consultation sought views on the merger proposals as a whole to inform the decision on whether to take forward a statutory instrument to close LCC and transfer the assets to NHC as the ‘host’ for the merger.
5. All responses to the consultation were analysed and themes identified, as presented in the analysis section of this report.

3. OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 21 written responses were received.

Eighteen of the responses were submitted to the consultation on Citizenspace. Three of the responses were received by email and were sent directly to the lead policy official. An elected representative, Kate Forbes – MSP for Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch, also wrote to the Minister, expressing strong support for the proposal. No responses were received by post.

Of the 21 total responses, 19 have been published on the Scottish Government website. Most respondents were happy to have their views, published, though 10 of the 13 individuals who responded wished their responses to be published anonymously. All responses have been included in this analysis. The published responses can be accessed here:

[Published responses for Rural and Islands College Merger proposal: Consultation - Scottish Government - Citizen Space](#)

The consultation has attracted 21 responses: 13 from individuals; and 8 from organisations.

A full list of organisations that responded can be found at Annex A.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar did not respond to the consultation. However, as the legislation requires consultation with the relevant education authority they were contacted, after the consultation closed, to ensure they had no comments. The council referred us to the letter they had submitted to the consultation, run by the merging colleges, which ran from August until October 2022. The points they made in this letter were, in the main, also raised by other consultation respondees. The only significant points that were made by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar that were not made by other respondees, were around the functional 15-24 Learner Journey and Progression Pathways/Assessment for Prior Learning. The full text of the letter, submitted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to the merging colleges' consultation can be found at Annex B.

The Gaelic Board submitted a response prior to the consultation closing on 5 May. They came back on 23rd May to indicate they wished to amend their response; it is now more strongly supportive of the proposal. This late response has been included at Annex C.

4. OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

4.1 Views on college merger (question 1)

- The following themes emerged from those who were supportive of the proposed merger: financial sustainability and resilience; course choice; benefits for students; benefits for rural areas; benefits for the new college; stakeholder relationships; and innovation.
- The following themes emerged from those who were against the proposed merger: a financial decision; concern around individual colleges; challenges of / for rural areas; and communications.

4.2 Views on impact of merger (question 2)

- Those citing a positive impact of the merger on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands noted: improving courses / wider curriculum offer; benefits for students; benefits for staff; efficiencies and financial sustainability; benefits for the Highlands; green skills; Gaelic education / Gaelic community; and provided some recommendations going forward.
- The following themes emerged from those who felt there would be a negative impact on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands region: bureaucracy; online delivery; reputation; and employers' / training needs.

4.3 Views on rationale of merger (question 3)

- 9 respondents strongly agreed with the rationale for the merger as set out for the Board, 5 agreed, 2 disagreed and 3 strongly disagreed. The remaining respondents did not answer the question or did not express a view.

4.4 Views on impact of merger on own organisations(question 4)

- Themes emerging with regards to a positive impact include: financial sustainability and efficiencies; benefits for staff; benefits for students; benefits for the community; benefits for the region; stakeholder relationships; and reputation.
- Points were also raised around a potential negative impact and some suggestions were provided.

4.5 Views on proposed name (question 5)

- The name was liked by some and not by others. Some suggested other names for consideration.

5. ANALYSIS

There were 5 questions in the consultation document which related to the proposal to merge Lews Castle College (UHI Outer Hebrides) and North Highland College (UHI North Highland). One question was closed (question 3) and also included an open response where respondents were asked to give a reason for their answer. The following analysis follows the layout of the consultation document.

5.1 Question 1

What are your views on the college merger proposal?

The following themes emerged from those who were supportive of the proposed merger: financial sustainability and resilience; course choice; benefits for students; benefits for rural areas; benefits for the new college; stakeholder relationships; and innovation.

A summary of the comments in each theme is presented below.

Financial sustainability and resilience

- Efficient way to save money and generate income
- It is essential / offers financial security
- Long-term sustainability of the 3 colleges
- Economies of scale / drive efficiencies / pool resources
- Help in challenging economic times
- Greater resilience
- Opportunity to strengthen resources
- Benefit from being part of UHI family
- 3 colleges no longer competing for funding

Course choice

- Grow curriculum / increase course viability
- Breadth of curriculum opportunities
- Broader range of courses / increased curriculum opportunities
- Opportunity to strengthen services
- Important to ensure accessible, diverse and relevant curriculum offer at a local level

Benefits for students

- Bigger choice for students
- Improve student experience / enhanced student experience

Benefits for rural areas

- Keep education in rural areas
- Improve employability / employment in local areas
- Retain all ages in rural areas
- Access to remote learning

- Profile across Scotland
- Opportunity for growth in the region
- Growing education, research, innovation and knowledge exchange
- Potential opportunities for the region
- Transformative
- Continuation of some local provision
- Align with employers and sustainable jobs

Benefits for the new college

- Agile organisation that responds to student and labour market needs
- Colleges complement one another
- Sustained provision of professional jobs
- An exciting opportunity

Stakeholder relationships

- Opportunity to learn from each other's experience
- Improve working relationships
- Collaboration
- Partnership and stakeholders working together
- Supported by stakeholders
- Deeper and wider collaboration around delivery of work-based learning
- Shared capacity
- Employer engagement / strengthen partnership working with local employers

Innovation

- Encourages innovation
- Blueprint to learn from

The following themes emerged from those who were against the proposed merger: a financial decision; concern around individual colleges; challenges of / for rural areas; and communications. Further detail is provided below.

A financial decision

- Cost-saving measure
- Seems strange when considering shared delivery
- Concern around a centralisation of funds

Concern around individual colleges

- Not a good idea
- Should not lead to closure of establishments
- Negative impact due to unique position of colleges to serve their individual locations and communities
- Not a proactive approach to provide targeted educational services to the local community
- Worried that it will worsen situation
- Avoid centralisation
- Staffing changes to be managed sensitively
- Preserve unique identities / histories of 3 colleges

- “Vanilla flavour” of education, fitting into traditional academic mould
- Concern around duplication of tasks
- Concern around reduction in staff numbers
- Concern around loss of experience, skills and knowledge in restructuring

Challenges of / for rural areas

- Challenges of colleges dispersed across rural areas
- Concern that island communities will lose out
- Importance of different local economies and different skills needs
- More coherent planning

Communications

- Need clear and honest communications

Some additional points that respondents highlighted include:

- Charity trustees to act with care and diligence in the interest of the charity
- Transfer of liabilities to North Highland College may be difficult to absorb
- Financial interest of the charity
- Commitment to no compulsory redundancies
- Principle at core of merger should be “education for education’s sake” / education to contribute to local community
- Clear remit required
- Importance of transparency, accountability and decision making
- Face to face learning and teaching to be a priority
- Ensure inclusive learning and teaching, e.g. for vulnerable or hard to reach students, students with additional support needs or disabilities

5.2 Question 2

How do you view the impact of the merger on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands region?

Views were expressed of a positive and negative impact, while some noted that they do not know how the merger will impact on delivery in the Highlands and Islands.

Those citing a positive impact of the merger on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands noted: improving courses / wider curriculum offer; benefits for students; benefits for staff; efficiencies and financial sustainability; benefits for the Highlands; green skills; Gaelic education / Gaelic community; and provided some recommendations going forward.

Further themes within this are as follows.

Improving courses / wider curriculum offer

- Improve course / curriculum relevance
- Improve course / curriculum quality

- Improves services and courses offered
- Broader curriculum offer / increase course offer / wider curriculum choice
- More sustainable curriculum offer
- More opportunities for FE courses
- More digital delivery
- High quality hybrid learning models
- Online and blended delivery programmes

Benefits for students

- Meet needs of students and employers
- Strengthen student support teams
- Strengthen student experience
- Attract students / wider access to students
- Access to courses / enhanced delivery of courses
- High quality courses / greater research-led teaching
- Potentially create stronger pathways / create seamless post-school pathways to sustainable employment
- Improve graduate employment outcomes
- Opportunity to provide all-age qualifications / upskilling

Benefits for staff

- Increased personal and professional development opportunities
- Could expand the staff course Gaelic for Work Purposes
- Sharing of best practice and expertise

Efficiencies and financial sustainability

- Remove silos and duplication across the three colleges
- Avoids colleges going bankrupt / ensures financial viability
- Focus collective efforts to meet economic need
- More agile response to changing demand
- Avoids duplication
- May make some FE courses more sustainable by pooling resources
- More streamlined structure
- Effective pool of resources
- Positive impact on delivery of FE and HE in the Highlands and Islands
- Opportunity to combine student numbers
- Improve delivery / improved provision and delivery / sustainability for the three merged colleges
- Encourages partnership working - e.g. with UHI, SFC and SDS
- Benefits of integration across the wider UHI Partnership

Benefits for the Highlands

- Address demographic challenges / reverse depopulation trends, particularly among young people / avoids losing young population / increase number of people and young people choosing to live and work in region
- Boost Highland economy / supports and grows businesses and communities / greater opportunity to upskill workforce for relevant industries / opportunity to align with key and emerging sectors

- Innovation
- Highlights the importance of academia, education and skills as priority areas for growth
- Modern University for the whole region

Green skills

- Support green skills
- College of choice for renewables training
- Greater opportunity to respond to regional and national priorities such as net zero

Gaelic education / Gaelic community

- Merged college will support the development of Gaelic teacher education
- Community benefits – retainment of local identities and drive forward the revitalisation of Gaelic
- Access to Immersion in Gaelic, with school/college partnerships playing an important role in areas such as Health & Social Care, Childcare and Creative Digital Media.

Recommendations around the Gaelic language

- Build capacity to deliver such a range of subjects in the medium of Gaelic, in particular to support schools. This could include using college staff to deliver Senior Phase courses in either face-to-face or online settings.
- Undertake Islands Communities Impact Assessment which includes the impacts on the Gaelic language.

Other recommendations

- Ensure number of jobs is sufficient
- Ensure decent and secure terms and conditions for jobs
- Strengthen supportive and collaborative bonds across networks
- Seek commitment that Scottish Distant Islands Allowance is protected and continued in new college

The following themes emerged from those who felt there would be a negative impact on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands region: bureaucracy; online delivery; reputation; and employers' / training needs. Further detail is provided below.

Bureaucracy

- Additional bureaucracy / management layer

Online delivery

- Reduced face-to-face provision for FE
- Risk that too many courses will be delivered online

Reputation

- Reputation of college – not seen as a serious college

Employers' / training needs

- Reduces colleges' connection with local industry and their training needs

Other

- Won't improve situation
- It will make things worse
- Make things more complicated
- Reduce access for students in rural areas

Some respondents highlighted caveats that they felt were important to note, including:

- Need to increase number of students for positive benefits to be realised
- Should maintain skills to provide a local service / meet local needs
- Curriculum should be responsive to upcoming local developments – for example, Scotwind Offshore Wind Lease Sites, Pentland Floating Offshore Wind Farm, West of Orkney Wind Farm, Sutherland Spaceport.
- Needs investment in capability and capacity for local developments
- Merged college to meet development needs in the North Highlands
- Should learn from negative experience of previous mergers such as the North Atlantic Fisheries College

5.3 Question 3

To what extent do you agree with the rationale for merger as set out by the Board of Management of the three colleges?

Question 3 was a closed question asking the extent to which respondents agreed with the rationale for the merger as set out for the Board. Options provided were strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Results are provided in table 1.

Table 1: extent to which respondents agree with the rationale for the merger	
Answer	Number of respondents
Strongly Agree	9
Agree	5
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	3
Not answered / no view expressed	3
Notes: total number of respondents = 22*	

*Includes view of Kate Forbes MSP

Respondents were then asked to give a reason for their answer.

Themes for those agreeing include: more / better courses; financial sustainability and effectiveness; stakeholder relationships; Highland communities; benefits for

students; and comment on the rationale. Further detail for each theme is provided below.

More / better courses

- To offer more courses and more reliable courses
- Merger provides a wider educational offer
- Courses deliverable at scale
- Expands provision
- Opportunity to access wider skills, training and facilities
- Currently overlapping and competing curriculums

Financial sustainability and effectiveness

- To save money
- Long-term viability / sustainability / survival of colleges / creates a more robust organisation
- Long-term effectiveness
- Provide greater opportunity for growth
- Support improved governance and financial sustainability
- Combined capacity to do more
- Individual colleges facing financial challenges
- Financial challenges best addressed by a merger / driven by real-term funding cuts
- Streamlined background services allows more focus on frontline delivery
- Affordable courses
- Allows colleges to develop and adapt

Stakeholder relationships

- Add strength and balance to UHI Partnership
- Stakeholder momentum and support throughout the process

Highland communities

- Opportunities for Highland communities / captures opportunities as well as mitigating challenges
- Opportunity to tie in with other initiatives – e.g. ScotWind, the Cromarty Freeport and the Island Deals
- Focus on key areas of need / meets rapidly evolving needs, e.g. net zero
- Sense of place
- Driven by small declining youth population
- Current lack of capacity to respond to regional opportunities

Benefits for students

- Ensure quality of student experience

Comment on the rationale

- Rationale based on experience
- Sound rationale
- Logical
- Rationale justified and reasonable
- Rationale addresses risk faced by the 3 colleges

- Rationale is aspirational
- Model has scope for change across partnership
- Supports remain local rationale

The following themes emerged for those disagreeing with the rationale for the merger.

- Colleges out of touch with local demands
- Centralised management as a bad idea
- Disappointing that merger is needed for villages to survive
- UHI leadership is empire building
- Concerned about the financial rationale used to explain the merger proposal
- Hollowing out of 3 colleges to make merger more palatable
- Concern about need to show college is making money rather than addressing local need
- Concern about competition with other UHI colleges for funding

One other comment was that the new merged college may continue to face financial challenges.

5.4 Question 4

What impact, if any, will the merger have on your own organisation, and your service users, staff and potential employees?

Those responding to question 4, which asked about the impact that the merger will have on their own organisation, service users, staff and potential employees, cited both positive and negative impacts. Some also said that they could not tell what the impact will be, or it is not known.

Themes emerging with regards to a positive impact include: financial sustainability and efficiencies; benefits for staff; benefits for students; benefits for the community; benefits for the region; stakeholder relationships; and reputation. Further detail is as follows.

Financial sustainability and efficiencies

- Avoids duplication
- Financial sustainability and economies of scale
- Brings 3 local teams into one team

Benefits for staff

- Frees up staff time to deliver
- Avoids competition
- Increased resilience for staff and the organisation
- Opportunities for staff / more career opportunities for staff
- Staff engaged in workstreams and sense need for change
- Will offer employment in a sustainable, innovative institution
- Offer well-paid employment in rural Scotland

- Opportunity to spread pressures on current small teams
- Attract highly qualified staff
- Share expertise
- Attractive place for staff and their families
- Opportunity for collaborative working
- Development and sharing of specialisms

Benefits for students

- Increased and sustainable provision for students
- More courses in rural areas
- Growth in student numbers in growth sectors

Benefits for the community

- A strong employer in fragile economic areas
- Improved capacity for development
- Community investment
- Community partnership

Benefits for region

- Potential opportunities for the region
- Partnership working
- Industry / employer engagement
- Quick response to local needs
- Attract and train workforce / attract people to region
- Training, research and innovation benefits
- Expand Apprenticeship provision / maximise work-based learning offer / build larger cohorts of Apprenticeships
- More agile support for upskilling and reskilling

Stakeholder relationships

- Strengthen stakeholder relationships
- Local engagement
- Collaborative working
- Develop areas of good practice
- Regular and effective communication and engagement
- Partnership working to raise awareness

Reputation

- Enhance reputation

Where a negative impact was foreseen, the following points were noted:

- Complicates delivery, assessment and communications
- Reduced local presence
- Reduced understanding of localised training needs

It was also noted that impact will be measured by the effectiveness of college partnerships with others.

Some suggestions were provided which include:

- Need for the merged college to pay particular attention to population and talent attraction, finances and sustainability and college status such as being incorporated or unincorporated to ensure the necessary levels of flexibility are in place to secure external funds.
- Need for local advisory boards
- Request for sustainable permanent hours / no reduction in teaching hours
- Request for the best possible voluntary redundancy package
- Request for adequate investment in lecturing staff
- Request that best practice is prioritised
- Request that good industrial relations and negotiations continue

5.5 Question 5

Do you have any views on the proposed new name of the merged college?

The final question in the consultation asked respondents whether they had any views on the proposed name of the merged college.

Those who liked the name noted that:

- Name is functional
- Name shows it is a joint college
- Name reflects location of new college
- Fair reflection of the parties involved
- Retains former identities
- Local identity and part of wider brand important
- Allows reference to three colleges as a single entity at regional and national level
- Content with new name

Those who did not like the name noted that:

- Name is lacking imagination and ambition / unimaginative
- Name is too long / prefer a simpler name
- Name is not future-proof / not future proof – possible future mergers
- Name is inaccurate
- Outer Hebrides should be in English version of name
- Confusing name / poor branding
- New combined colleges' identity could diminish rather than re-enforce the developing local economic brand
- Will be shortened to UHI NWH which is unpronounceable and meaningless
- Not particularly exciting or prestigious

Other points of note include:

- Logos and other visual identities of a merged College to, at least, be bilingual and thus include Gaelic, giving equal prominence to the language
- Name should not be similar to original colleges names
- Could be known by acronym as name is long
- Spoken name suggests focus on North West and the Hebrides
- College is a charity that requires OSCR's consent to change name
- Name should align with UHI brand
- Name is important for a sense of place and ownership

Suggested names included:

- Highlands College or Highlands & Hebrides College
- UHI West, North and Hebrides

6. NEXT STEPS

This analysis will be submitted to the Minister for Higher Education & Further Education; and Minister for Veterans, along with the Ministerial Submission, in order to help him make his decision about whether or not to agree to the proposal to close Lews Castle College and merge it with North Highland College.

7. ANNEX A – LIST OF ORGANISATIONS THAT RESPONDED

- Gaelic Board
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Highlands & Islands Student Association
- Focus North
- Dounreay
- EIS-FELA
- Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator
- Skills Development Scotland

Response from Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar – Late Response

The Comhairle would like to thank officers of UHI for taking the time to meet both elected Members and Officers and taking the time to answer questions.

It is recognised that in these challenging times all organisations are obliged to consider changes which ensures that current and future needs of communities are met.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar approaches the Consultation from this perspective:

Educational Needs of our Communities: UHI in the Outer Hebrides must, first of all, provide a service that meets the needs of the Islands. Educational provision should be determined by the learning needs of those who live in the community. Working in partnership with the Comhairle and other key partners such as Skills Development Scotland can provide the data and needs analysis of the community and support focused service development.

Islands Impact Assessment: it is essential that an Islands Impact Assessment is carried out as any change in the delivery plans of local services affects people across our Islands. A well-researched and prepared Islands Impact Assessment should provide strong evidence that consideration has been given to island communities.

Shared Resources: with the merger of all support services including Finance/IT/HR/Legal, the Comhairle is seeking evidence and assurance that these and other similar functions and posts will be allocated in a fair and equitable manner across the three areas, not just in the short term but also in the long-term. It is vitally important to our community that there remains access to high quality jobs in these sectors. The recent advertisement of a shared Director-level post for Finance & Resources with a requirement that the post be based at the Fort William college centre is not encouraging. There are reports that the senior IT post will be based at North Highland College. Surely all posts should be advertised on a location-neutral basis, or, if there is an intention to spread Director-level posts among the three Colleges, why has this strategy not been communicated to partners and local authorities? Clarity on these issues is urgently required.

Governance Structure and Local Advisory Board: it is essential to the Comhairle as a key partner that clarity on the proposed Leadership and Governance Structure is provided, and additional information on the development of Local Advisory Boards is required quickly. It has been acknowledged by UHI that there will be a focus in the early years post-merger on ensuring equity across all three communities, which is to be commended. It is only with a strong Local Advisory Board (LAB) that the long term aims of communities will be fully understood. We emphasise that retaining a clear understanding and responding to the needs of the communities must be core to this process. With this in mind, a strong partnership relationship going forward but also a seat around the table alongside local businesses through the DYW Board will be

essential. What will the LAB's reporting lines be to the new College Board and what account will the new Board be required to take of its recommendations?

Gàidhlig: the Comhairle promotes wherever possible a policy of 'Gaelic First' and seeks assurance as to how the Gaelic identity of UHI in both Further and Higher Education in the Outer Hebrides will be continued and promoted in the context of a merged College.

Identity/Branding: the Comhairle understands from recent discussion that another rebranding exercise is proposed should the merger go ahead. The Comhairle wishes to express its concern that any further rebranding is likely to cause further distancing of the identity of local campuses from their Island roots and local identity.

Equity of Provision: the Comhairle would welcome the wider and more sustainable curriculum offer that is being proposed by the merger. Having a curriculum based on equity and specifically regional equity of access, Personalisation and Choice, Parity of Esteem, which is driven by data, evidence and the Scottish Government 15-24 Learner Journey is a welcome baseline for all delivery.

The functional 15-24 Learner Journey (particularly senior phase design) requires collaboration across education providers in the development, delivery and review of provision ensuring that progression pathways and transition arrangements between providers are clear and well supported. This will require to:

- be accessible and understandable to learners and parents and signpost the offer that is actually available to them in their area individually and as families
- support all young people to participate in education, employment and training
- increase personalisation and choice – putting learners in control of what and how they learn
- enable regional equity of access
- promote parity of esteem, using the SCQF to set out all types of learning on offer, without hierarchies
- support growth of provision, increasing the range of learning options available to young people
- be data/evidence driven
- be future-focused and promote different flexible approaches to learning – physical, digital and shared across education providers '

School Timetables: it is acknowledged that not all schools across the three regions will be on a harmonised timetable and will have varying holiday allocations. The Comhairle would welcome additional information regarding proposed plans to meet the needs of all schools.

'Remote Rural' Offer: all local learning centres in the Outer Hebrides provide vital resources to the local community but there is concern, particularly for smaller centres such as the learning centres in Uist and Barra. While there was recognition at the meetings with UHI representatives as to the vital nature of these centres, the Comhairle seeks further reassurance that the offer available through these centres will continue to grow and how that will be taken forward. Also, there is an opportunity and

need to address the provision of accommodation for students and the thus far under-developed concept of university communities or of Stornoway as a university town.

Progression Pathways/Assessment for Prior Learning: the Comhairle recognises the costs associated with university education and with young people leaving the Island to attend university. During the consultation discussions held there was discussion of increased curriculum choice which is welcome. The Comhairle would welcome a detailed educational rationale mapping out potential pathways, such as an HNC/D pathway locally which still provides options for a final year at a mainland city campus.

The Comhairle wishes to thank UHI for the opportunity to submit a response and looks forward to further and early engagement on the matters set out above.

Malcolm Burr
Chief Executive,
on behalf of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

8 November 2022

9. ANNEX C – Gaelic Board – Late Response (Received 23 May).



<p>Tairgse Co-Aonadh nan Colaistean Dùthchail is Eileanach: co-chomhairle</p> <p>Freagairt Bhòrd na Gàidhlig</p> <p>04 An Cèitean 2023</p>	<p>Rural and Islands College Merger proposal: consultation</p> <p>Bòrd na Gàidhlig Response</p> <p>04 May 2023</p>
<p>Ceist 1</p> <p>Dè ur beachd air tairgse co-aonadh nan colaistean?</p> <p>Tha co-aonadh nan trì colaistean a’ cruthachadh cothrom gus eòlas air a’ Ghàidhlig agus a cultar a bhith air a sgaoileadh thar nan trì colaistean agus do na h-ionadan ionnsachaidh uile a tha an lùib na buidhne aonaichte agus barrachd mothachaidh, ionnsachadh agus cleachdadh na Gàidhlig a bhith ann.</p> <p>Ceist 2</p> <p>Dè ur beachd a thaobh buaidh a’ cho-aonaidh air solar is libhrigeadh foghlaim adhartach is àrd-ìre ann an roinn na Gàidhealtachd is nan Eilean?</p>	<p>Question 1</p> <p>What are your views on the college merger proposal?</p> <p>The merger of the three colleges creates an opportunity for the expertise in Gaelic language and culture to be disseminated across the three colleges and for all learning centres involved in the merged body to have increased awareness, learning and use of Gaelic.</p> <p>Question 2</p> <p>How do you view the impact of the merger on further and higher education provision and delivery in the Highlands and Islands region?</p>

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a’ cur fàilte gu h-àraidh air na prìomh-chuspairean is buannachdan a leanas air a bheilear a’ toirt iomradh sa Phàipear Co-chomhairleachaidh.

Prìomh-chuspairean (t-d10)

A’ sgaoileadh cultar na roinne tro Ghàidhlig, dualchainntean sgìreil, is cultaran Lochlannach: leanaidh a’ cholaiste cho-aonaichte oirre ag obair le buidhnean nàiseanta na Gàidhlig gus taic nas treasa a thabhann do leasachadh foghlam tidsearan na Gàidhlig agus le dealbhadh prògraman libhrigidh air-loidhne is cothlamte, bho chùrsaichean goirid gu làn-cheum oilthighe air-loidhne.

Prìomh-bhuannachdan do choimhearsnachdan (td11)

A’ cur prosbaig air cultar, traidisean is cànan mar thaic airson a bhith a’ gleidheadh aithne ionadail air feadh na Gàidhealtachd, an Eilein Sgitheanaich ’s na h-Eileanan, nam measg, rùn gun tèid ath-bheothachadh na Gàidhlig a sparradh air adhart.

Prìomh-bhuannachdan do dh’oileanaich (t-d10)

Meudachadh stuth-teagaisg nan cùrsaichean air-loidhne airson ionnsachadh cunbhalach, sàrmhath fhaighinn ge brith càit an roghnaich thu bhith nad oileanach.

Dh’fhaodadh cùrsaichean measgaichte/air-loidhne/aghaidh ri aghaidh cothrom a thoirt air cùrsaichean far nach fheumar an t-àite-fuirich atharrachadh.

Prìomh-bhuannachdan do luchd-obrach (t-d11)

Barrachd chothroman air leasachadh pearsanta is proifeiseanta, nam measg, adhartas, fo-fhastaidhean agus speisealachdan.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig particularly welcome the following key themes and benefits that are referred to in the Consultation Paper.

Key themes (p10)

Enabling the region’s culture through Gaelic language, regional dialects, and Nordic cultures: the merged college will continue to work with national Gaelic agencies to take a stronger role in supporting the development of Gaelic teacher education and through development of online and blended delivery programmes ranging from short courses to full online degree.

Key benefits for communities (p11)

Proactively focusing on culture, tradition and language to support the retainment of local identities across the Highlands, Skye and Western Isles, including a commitment to drive forward the revitalisation of Gaelic.

Key benefits for students (p10)

Enhanced online course content ensuring consistent, high-quality learning, wherever you choose to study.

Delivery of hybrid/online/face-to-face courses could have the potential to allow access to courses without having to relocate.

Key benefits for staff (p11)

Increased personal and professional development opportunities including progression, secondments and specialisms.

The current offer of Gaelic for Work Purposes course to staff at UHI Outer

Dh'fhaodar an cùrsa Gàidhlig airson Adhbharan Obrach a th' air a tabhann an-dràsta do luchd-obrach aig OGE Innse Gall, OGE na Gàidhealtachd a Tuath is OGE na Gàidhealtachd an Iar a leudachadh fhathast.

Tha e cudromach gu bheil cothrom ann air Bogadh sa Ghàidhlig gus an cùm daoine ann am foghlam Gàidhlig orra a' togail a' chànain taobh a-muigh suidheachadh sgoile, le pàirt chudromach aig co-bhannan sgoile/colaiste ann an raointean leithid Cùram Slàinte is Sòisealta, Cùram-cloinne agus Meadhanan Didseatach Cruthachail.

Mholamaid gun tèid planaichean a dheasachadh ann am pàirt dhen tairgse co-aonaidh gus am bithear comasach air raon de chuspairean a libhrigeadh tron Ghàidhlig, gu h-àraidh mar chulaidh-taice do sgoiltean. Le seo, dh'fhaodar luchd-obrach nan colaistean a chleachdadh gus cùrsaichean Ìre as Àirde a libhrigeadh, an dàrna cuid aghaidh ri aghaidh air neo air-loidhne.

Bhiomaid an dùil gun deigheadh Measadh Buaidh air Coimhearsnachdan Eileanach a dhèanamh mar phàirt de phròiseas a' cho-aonaidh. Feumaidh seo buaidhean air a' Ghàidhlig fhèin a ghabhail a-steach, mar a tha stiùireadh o Riaghaltas na h-Alba a' moladh.

Ceist 3

Dè cho mòr 's a dh'aontaicheadh sibh ri reusanachadh a' cho-aonaidh mar a chaidh a mhìneachadh le Bòrd Stiùiridh nan trì colaistean?

Ag aontachadh gu mòr

Ag aontachadh

Ag eas-aontachadh

Hebrides, UHI North Highland and UHI West Highland could be further expanded.

Ensuring access to Immersion in Gaelic is important to allow those in Gaelic-medium education to continue their exposure to the language beyond a school setting, with school/college partnerships playing an important role in areas such as Health & Social Care, Childcare and Creative Digital Media.

We would recommend that part of the merger proposals could include plans to build capacity to deliver such a range of subjects in the medium of Gaelic, in particular to support schools. This could include using college staff to deliver Senior Phase courses in either face-to-face or online settings.

We would expect that an Islands Communities Impact Assessment would be undertaken as part of the merger process. Reflecting Scottish Government guidance, this needs to include the impacts on the Gaelic language.

Question 3

To what extent do you agree with the rationale for merger as set out by the Board of

Management of the three colleges?

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Ag eas-aontachadh gu mòr

Thoiribh adhbharan airson ur freagairt.

Ceist 4:

Dè a’ bhuidheann, ma bhios gin ann, a bhios aig a’ cho-aonadh air a’ bhuidheann agaibh fhèin, agus air luchd-cleachdaidh sheirbheisean, luchd-obrach is luchd-cosnaidh a dh’fhaodadh a bhith agaibh san àm ri teachd?

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig, mar a’ prìomh bhuidheann phoblach ann an Alba airson na Gàidhlig, a’ co-obrachadh leis na trì colaistean seo mar-thà. Leis an aonachadh bidh cothrom ann buaidh nas motha, agus nas èifeachdaiche a bhith aig an obair seo.

Ceist 5:

A bheil beachd sam bith agaibh air an ainm ùr a thathar a’ moladh don cholaiste cho-aonaichte?

Bhìomaid am dùil gum biodh a’ cholaiste aonaichte a’ cur air adhart dearbh-aithne dhà-chànanach, agus mar sin a’ togail mothachadh agus a’ coileanadh nan dùilean gum bi a’ cholaiste ag obair air feadh nan coimhearsnachdan Gàidhlig traidiseanta agus a’ toirt seirbheis an dà chuid do luchd-labhairt agus luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig. Bhiodh seo an uair sin a’ stiùireadh mar a tha suaicheantasan agus dearbh-aithne lèirsinneach eile a’ toirt seachad dearbh-aithne dhà-chànanach, a’ toirt follaiseachd cho-ionann dhan Ghàidhlig.

Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 4

What impact, if any, will the merger have on your own organisation, and your service

users, staff and potential employees?

Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as the principal public body in Scotland for Gaelic, already collaborates to various extents with the three existing colleges. The merger will enable this work to have greater impact and be more efficient.

Question 5

Do you have any views on the proposed new name of the merged college?

We would expect the identity of the merged college to promote a bilingual identity, thereby raising awareness and satisfying expectations that the college will work across the traditional Gaelic-speaking communities and serve both existing speakers and learners of Gaelic. This would then steer how logos and other visual identities represent a bilingual identity, giving equal prominence to the Gaelic language.



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