

UHI North, West and Hebrides – Outer Hebrides Local Advisory Committee Annual Update

1. What is Working Well

- **Constructive joint working across LACs**
The recent joint meetings of the North, West and Hebrides LACs have been constructive and useful for sharing perspectives across regions.
 - **Clear commitment to the merger evaluation process**
LAC members have engaged actively with the two-year post-merger evaluation. Attendance has been strong, and members have shown willingness to provide candid feedback to support improvement.
 - **Collaboration between college and community partners**
Work relating to Gaelic, cultural, digital innovation, and curriculum development—such as Gaelic micro-credentials, Cnoc Soilleir curriculum development, and augmented reality archaeology initiatives—has continued to progress positively
 - **Effective flow of communications and updates**
Regular updates from the Board Secretary (e.g., Spotlight communications, reminders, scheduling) help ensure local committees remain informed about college activity and sector achievements
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2. What Requires Development

Campus Redevelopment – STEM outreach

- Implement the outreach ambition highlighted in the Islands Deal business case by accelerating mobile learning facilities for Uist and Barra, improving access for remote learners.
- Expand STEM facilities and digital learning spaces as planned in the redevelopment.

Strengthen Curriculum Sustainability and Reach

The integration update acknowledges historic challenges with small class sizes and fragmented offers.

- Expand successful work-study and community impact models similar to the Horshader partnership.

- Prioritise courses aligned with local economic opportunity: energy, construction, digital, tourism, Gaelic culture, and creative industries.

Improve Community Reach Through Satellite Learning Centres

There is clear ambition to expand outreach via Uist and Barra learning centres.

- Boost frequency of **mobile and hybrid teaching provision** to these islands

Increase Support for Gaelic, Culture, and Heritage Assets

- Expanding Gaelic medium vocational programmes.
 - Developing micro-credentials in heritage management, digital interpretation, and tourism storytelling.
 - Leveraging immersive AR experiences at Barra and Harris archaeological sites as a teaching and tourism asset
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3. What Is Happening in the Community That the Board Should Be Aware Of

- **Evolving Gaelic and cultural education needs**

Strong local demand continues for Gaelic related qualifications, micro credentials, and cultural programmes. There is unmet demand in Gaelic national qualifications, and community partners such as Ceòlas are deeply engaged.

- **Economic development activity and major projects**

The emerging renewable energy sector in the Outer Hebrides will bring c£8Bn of investment into Lewis over the next decade. There will be demand for new skills and for the college to develop its offering to serve this new market. Although economic development will be dominated by the energy projects, significant investment continues across the Outer Hebrides, including Cnoc Soilleir Phase 2, digital innovation projects, and skills-linked activity around tourism and heritage.

4. What Needs the Board's Attention

- **Ensuring appropriate LAC composition**

Questions remain around whether committees have the right mix of experienced members, further discussion regarding recruitment will be required.

- **Strengthening the link between LAC insights and Board decision-making**
Members have emphasised the importance of ensuring significant issues raised locally are escalated appropriately to the Board for action. Additionally, members wish the opportunity to review and provide input to proposals ahead of the Board making key decisions.
 - **SFC-mandated post-merger review management**
As the formal evaluation progresses, Board oversight is required to ensure transparency, timely communication, and constructive engagement across all committees.
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5. Assessment of the College's Work in Relation to Its Community

- The profile of the college in the local community could be improved through better linkages and more engagement with local employers and secondary schools.
 - In Benbecula there is a community perception that the campus there is all but closed and young people have a lack of awareness of the course options available to them.
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6. Recommendations to Improve Board Effectiveness

1. **Mandate timely circulation of papers**
Require all strategic papers—especially those linked to SFC requirements—to be sent to LACs no later than one week prior to meetings.
2. **Strengthen committee membership and continuity**
Review LAC composition to ensure each committee has the necessary experience to maintain strategic focus—with specific attention to replacing departing or inactive members.
3. **Enhance visibility of college achievements and challenges**
Continue and expand Spotlight-type communications, ensuring LACs receive early visibility of major developments and emerging issues across the college.