

Infrastructure Strategy 2023 - 2028



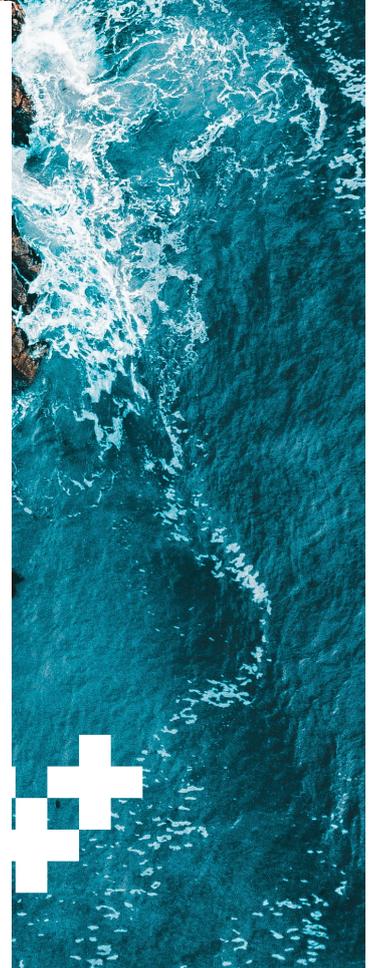
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Introduction

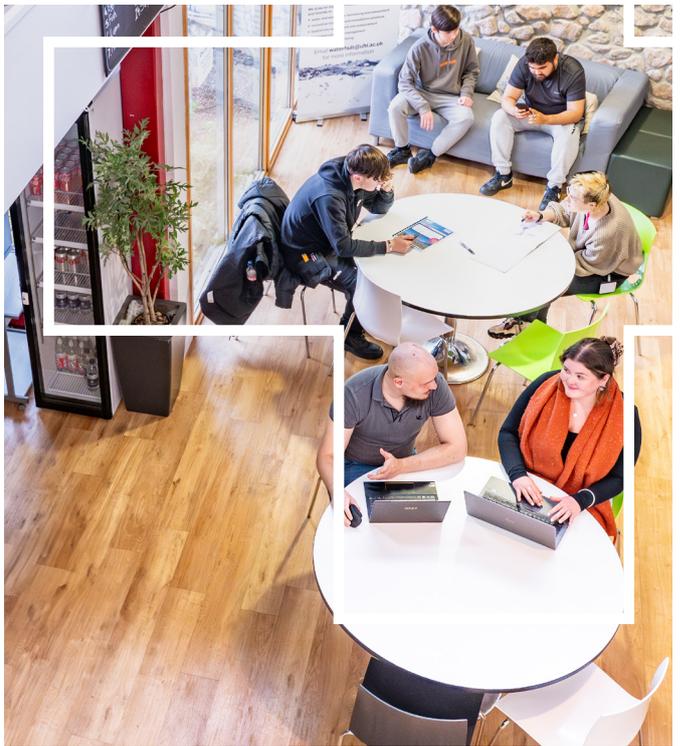
UHI North, West and Hebrides is Scotland's newest college, formed in August 2023 following the merger of UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland.

Proudly rooted in the culture and landscapes of the North and West Highlands, Skye and Outer Hebrides, UHI North, West and Hebrides provides relevant and distinctive learning, skills, research and innovation, shaped by the needs and ambitions of our communities, with a reach that extends locally, nationally and internationally.

As one of the largest partners within the University of the Highlands and Islands, we deliver flexible, supportive lifelong learning, from access level to PhD, to suit more people, at more levels, for more reasons.

We serve a diverse population, from school leavers to working adults, from career changers to those entering the workforce.

Through our range of senior phase, further education and higher education courses, world-class research, and flexible place-based, work-based and online study options, we're widening access to education in our rural and island communities, removing barriers to learning, providing relevant progression and career pathways for our students, and creating a personalised experience tailored to their needs.



We're delivering learning, skills, research and innovation to support a talent pipeline for the region's key growth sectors including energy, engineering and construction, net zero and sustainability, creative industries, food and drink, health and social care, land and sea-based industries, and Gaelic.

As an anchor institution in the region, our aim is to have a transformative impact on the people, communities and economies of our regions, by providing opportunities that enable people to live, work and study in the North and West Highlands, Skye and Outer Hebrides.

Strategic framework

A three-year strategic framework was set out in our business case for merger.

+ Our vision

To be an anchor institution for the region – a connected, flexible and sustainable learning organisation, opening doors to a world of opportunities.

+ Our mission

To connect rural and island Scotland, pioneering distinctive education and research opportunities to enable our students and communities to shape their future in a changing world.

+ Our values

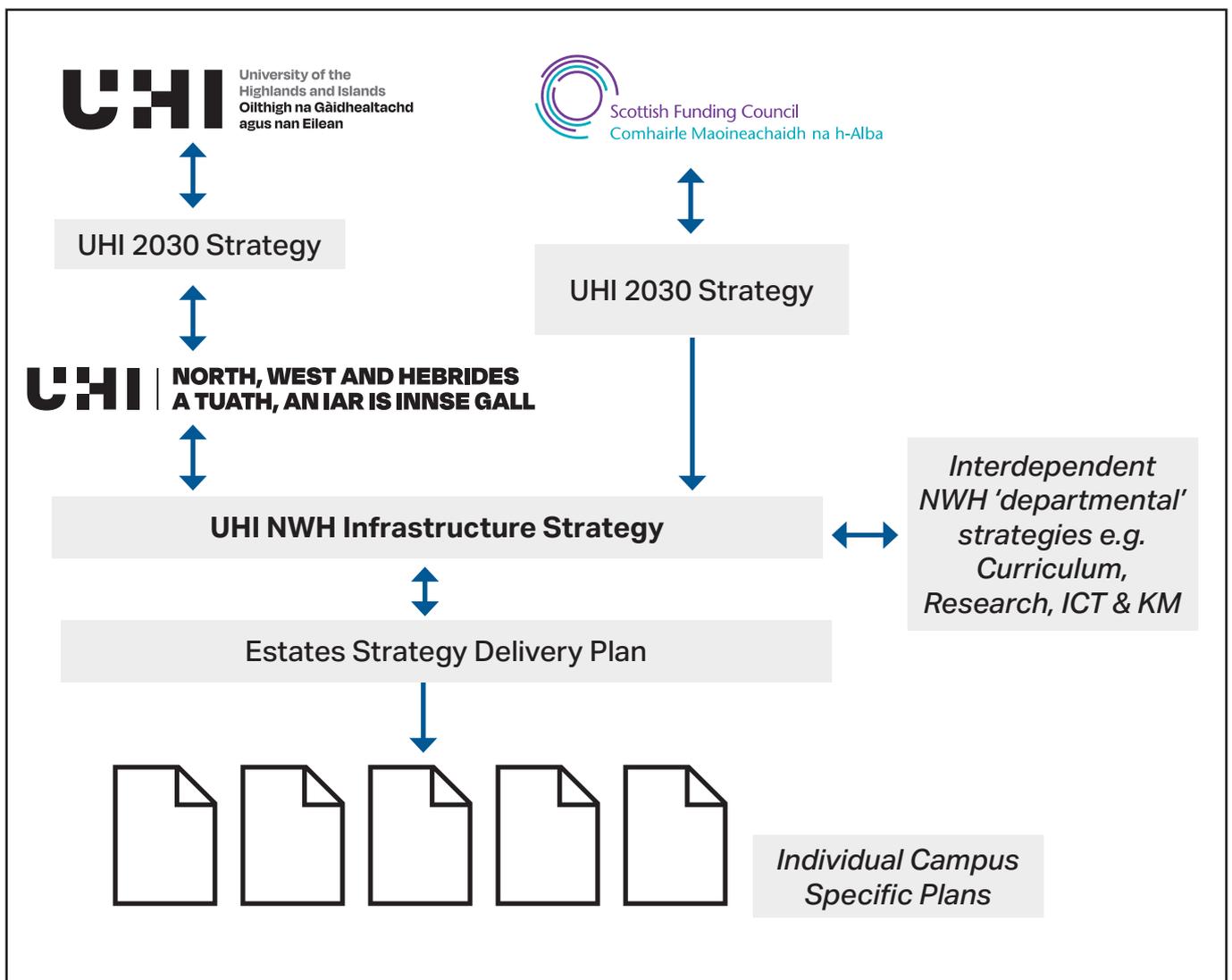
- + **Trust:** We take pride in our work and trusted by our students, staff and partners. We are recognised for our leadership and dedication to deliver more for everyone we serve.
- + **Integrity:** We take responsibility for our actions, ensuring transparency and accountability. People are at the heart of everything we do, and we operate in a culture of collaboration, openness, dignity and respect.
- + **Excellence:** We are ambitious for our learners, our staff, our college, and our communities. We drive innovation, aspire to be sector leaders, and measure our success against national and international benchmarks.

+ Our strategic goals

- + To become a financially sustainable joined-up organisation
- + To grow curriculum, particularly into key areas that link with our research and commercial opportunities
- + To grow research and knowledge exchange through connecting our current specialisms and developing them alongside our region's potential
- + To have cohesive and responsive business development teams who can respond effectively and purposefully to opportunities of scale
- + To enhance the student experience through connecting our sites, resources, communities, and multi-location programmes
- + To have resilient team structures and depth of resource to address changing priorities, opportunities, and economic difficulties.

Infrastructure Strategy: Introduction

This strategy describes UHI North, West and Hebrides' approach to the management of their owned & leased college estate, land, and other infrastructure. The principal plan supporting this strategy will be the UHI North, West and Hebrides Estates Strategy Delivery Plan. This plan will outline our main priorities for the coming year, and for each of our centres our current plans for investment, maintenance, collaboration and/or divestment, applying the seven principles outlined in this strategy.



+ Purpose:

This Infrastructure Strategy reflects UHI North, West and Hebrides ambitions and values and is aligned to support the implementation of the college's stated mission. This Infrastructure Strategy also reflects the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) College Infrastructure Strategy and has been developed in consultation with the SFC. As such, the Infrastructure Strategy recognises the seven key principles that align with the UHI North, West and Hebrides Merger Proposal and Business Case and the SFC's principles for infrastructure management. Our college infrastructure should:

1. **Be Fit for Purpose** – be safe and suitably equipped to enable our curriculum delivery plans, support our research agenda, and create a positive student experience.
2. **Increase accessibility** – provide greater opportunities across our region for students seeking to access further and higher education through campus presence in our communities and integration of distance learning technologies.
3. **Enable growth** – implement strategic investment where possible to support the evolving needs of the college and community.
4. **Enable partnership working** – provide opportunity for collaborations, such as with other college, schools, universities, local authorities, health care providers and local businesses.
5. **Improve environmental sustainability** – align investment to support college sustainability plans and our drive to net-zero.
6. **Be Financially Sustainable** – investment in our estate must be prioritised, strategic and contribute to the financial resiliency of the college.
7. **Be Governed responsibly** – be governed through clear, transparent, evidence-based decision-making processes and policies.

These governing principles recognises that UHI North, West and Hebrides has a unique role within our local communities; being an institution that provides opportunities for students to gain access to high-quality further and higher education whilst living and working in the North, West and Hebridean communities of Scotland. UHI North, West and Hebrides generates and supports a much-needed skilled workforce for the expanding rural businesses alongside providing direct employment, local innovation, and research centres in our area. All of which continues to contribute to the vibrancy of our local communities attracting further inward migration and opportunities for young people.

At the same time, our college estate needs to be of an appropriate size, condition and fit-out to enable us to deliver our educational function whilst operating in a financially sustainable manner for the long-term. Our investment plans must be forward thinking, reflecting the future needs of our student body or partnership arrangements. In addition, our estate must enable us to deliver a multi-modal delivery model where learning ranges from online-asynchronous to on-campus, face-to-face delivery, and many variations in between. This will require on-going investment and maintenance of the digital infrastructure that enables distance learning.

Our buildings need to allow the college to meet its wider role and responsibility as a sustainable, safe and responsible organisation, particularly in our drive to meet our net-zero commitments. As such, much of our estate requires to be refurbished, renewed, or repurposed.

This strategy outlines the context from which strategic principles have been developed, presents those principles in more detail, and discusses how those principles affect how infrastructure planning and management shall be conducted. This strategy also outlines a framework, which shall be used as we plan for the future of our estate.

+ Scope:

The scope of this strategy includes Estates and Campus Services, two distinct but very interconnected functions college functions:

Estates

In this context 'Estates' is equivalent to 'Hard Facilities' within a typical facilities management (FM) framework, i.e.: the function seeks to ensure the physical requirements of the estate are met to enable operational availability and statutory compliance and to prevent deterioration of assets whilst enhancing their sustainability. This function includes:

- + Statutory compliance
- + Mechanical & Electrical Maintenance
- + Fabric Maintenance
- + Portable Appliance Testing
- + Forward Maintenance
- + Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment

In addition to this standard Hard FM list, the role includes planning and management of:

- + Capital Build and Projects
- + Asbestos Management
- + Procurement and Budget

Campus Services

In this context 'Campus Services (CS)' is equivalent to 'Soft Facilities Management' within a typical FM framework, i.e., the function seeks to ensure the smooth operation of our campuses with responsibility for:

- + Janitorial / Site Services Operative (SSO)
- + Cleaning staff
- + Supporting vehicle fleet management, e.g., through the holding or administering of vehicles as required by the vehicle fleet responsible person.
- + Catering & vending
- + Procurement and budget (Supplies and Consumables)

Information and Communications Technology

ICT is also included within the bounds of the infrastructure function of the college; however, ICT faces contextual constraints unique to that function and has its own set of unique aims, objectives and outcomes. This information shall be captured in full in the separate UHI North, West and Hebrides ICT and Knowledge Management Strategy (see Enabling Strategies).

+ Context:

This Infrastructure Strategy exists in interface with numerous internal and external facing strategic priorities, market conditions, company policies and commitments; the key ones of which are listed below:

Our college

UHI North, West and Hebrides formed in August 2023 with the merger of UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland. In coming together, the new college has created an anchor institution of scale and impact within UHI, and the region, supporting approximately 9000 students and 600 staff across 19 learning centres and campuses stretching across the North and West Highlands, Skye, and Outer Hebrides.

Since merging, the college has undertaken an organisational redesign and is working through a full curriculum review and consolidation process to ensure how we operate and what we deliver is aligned with our goal of creating a more sustainable organisation with combined capacity and resource to grow curriculum, research, and innovation; develop existing and new partnerships to support employers address skills gaps and retain, attract, and nurture talent; and become more responsive to the social, cultural, and economic opportunities in our regions.

To unlock these potential opportunities our estate and infrastructure must be of an appropriate scale, condition, and be configured for an appropriate use. Our investment plans must be forward thinking, reflecting the future needs of our student body or partnership arrangements and our estate must enable us to deliver a multi-modal delivery model where learning ranges from online-asynchronous to on-campus, face-to-face delivery, and many variations in between. This will require on-going investment and maintenance of the digital infrastructure that enables distance learning. In addition to this, management of, and strategic investment in our estate is a key essential to us meeting our decarbonisation commitments, discussed in more detail in the following section.

Financial landscape

In 2024/25, UHI North, West and Hebrides is operating in a very constrained financial landscape with many external factors impacting on our ability to invest and grow. These limitations inform all our estate management decisions and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

One of the primary considerations presented in the UHI North, West and Hebrides Merger Proposal and Business Case was that by coming together the merged college could realise cost savings: increasing financial resilience and reducing the inherited deficit. As we continue working towards this goal, opportunities for inward investment in our estate must be prioritised and be strategic. In parallel, we shall be searching for opportunities to improve the financial return on the investment in our estate, but must balance these against any social, functional, and strategic impact of changing our service provision in a specific location.

The availability of public funds—be they governmental, regional or via development organisations such as Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE)— are all facing significant financial pressure. This decreases our capability to access alternative sources to fund our aspirational projects. In addition, flat funding for SQA credit generation across education and skills development has resulted in an effective real terms reduction in grant income for the Scottish college sector.

Backlog maintenance burden

UHI North, West and Hebrides has inherited the backlog maintenance burden of all three of its legacy colleges. The latest consistently carried out assessment of the maintenance burden is a set of condition surveys conducted by Gardiner and Theobald LLP in 2017, which sought to provide a guide to the condition of the college estate, the general nature and scale of any works necessary to bring the building fabric into a well maintained condition (known as "Condition B", i.e., generally sound, wind and weathertight) and to a state whereby existing defects are not significantly worsening or compounding, components can deliver a normal life cycle appropriate to long-term use, and whereby operation or use of the premises is not being prevented.

To ensure economic administration of any works over the life of the building, items have been prioritised and [2017] costs estimated, considering the specification and timing of short-term or partial repairs, risk of compounding of defects, and trade-off with complete longer-term renewal or refurbishment, including related enabling work requirements.

Since 2017, a portion of the backlog maintenance burden has been actioned either through internal works or through externally contracted works. A further piece of work is planned for 2024/25 to update the outstanding backlog maintenance burden for 2024/25 in a UHI North, West and Hebrides-wide consistent manner so as to gain greater understanding of the future needs of the college when delivering its emerging strategic aims.

SFC Infrastructure Strategy

The SFC published their revised Infrastructure Strategy in November 2022 describing the SFC's approach to determining future investment in Scotland's college estate and other college infrastructure.

In this strategy, SFC recognise that colleges have a significant role to play in the delivery of Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation and Scotland's just transition over the next decade and beyond, noting that they are vital to the achievement of a green recovery, the just transition and sustainable future.

The SFC identify six strategic principles that will guide investment decisions, noting that future investment should:

- + Deliver positive student experience and outcomes.
- + Provide equal access to suitable college infrastructure across Scotland, including use of digital.
- + Enable colleges to deliver their strategic plans.
- + Ensure that future capital investment responds to future needs, including digital delivery and does not only replace like for like.
- + Provide flexibility of funding to support a range of types and scale of capital projects.
- + Demonstrate collaboration, such as with other colleges, schools, universities, Local Authorities, health care providers and local businesses.
- + Provide a clear, transparent, evidence-based decision-making process.

An overarching principle is being able to access digital infrastructure. Digital technology dates quickly. Consideration needs to be given as to how the digital infrastructure lifecycle is funded alongside resilience, security, and other aspects of digital investment.

‘Brick-and-mortar’ presence and physical branding

Our estate directly contributes to the UHI brand and identity and is a significant factor in creating the student experience. The estate should be clean, safe, suitably equipped, and welcoming; helping to create the sense of place and ownership that adds a positive aspect to the memories of student life.

Additionally, the estate has the capability to act a touchpoint within our local communities often with a long-standing history of being a locus for social engagement. This may take many forms but will include direct experience of study, attendance at hosted events and through our business partnerships. The presence of a UHI North, West and Hebrides facility or campus within a community has the capability to enrich the local social life in that area. To be successful UHI North, West and Hebrides needs to lean into these historic links, being an active participant in supporting and enriching these communities. Undoubtedly it is also true that it is through these local relationships and from within these connected communities that a sustainable core of our future student body will emerge.

Curriculum delivery

In 2023/24, UHI North, West and Hebrides conducted its first curriculum review process as a merged entity. The curriculum review streamlined and strengthened our tertiary education offer by consolidating our curriculum offer across our region. Our new curriculum harnesses digital technology to widen access for more learners in our rural and island communities, and helps ensure the viability of important practical, on-campus delivery.

Whilst it’s understood that our curriculum offer will continue to evolve and grow year-on-year in response to emerging needs in our student body workforce demands, it is essential that our facilities are suitably outfitted to enable delivery of our planned curriculum. A continuous needs assessment mechanism exists through UniDesk, and a specific digital learning technology needs assessment should also be conducted to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose.

Research at UHI North, West and Hebrides

Our research portfolio and knowledge exchange positively impact our local communities and supports understanding of the key challenges and opportunities facing people in the Highlands and Islands. Our researchers have been delivering world-class research across a wide range of disciplines including the environment, tourism, and education. Our researchers work across teams, networks, and locations regionally, nationally and internationally.

Nearly three-quarters of UHI research submitted to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) was rated as ‘world leading’ or ‘internationally excellent’, continuing to grow UHI North, West and Hebrides research standing and establish a strong platform for future research development.

Our Estate must provide the necessary high-quality facilities that enable our on-going research agenda and continuous needs assessment should be conducted in collaboration with our research teams to ensure that our estate is an enabler of future research.

Net-Zero commitments

Our UHI North, West and Hebrides Merger Proposal and Business Case sets out our Net-zero agenda as:

"To adopt policies and investment to facilitate carbon reduction moving to a net-zero position in an appropriate timescale. The merged college will take opportunities, where [it] can, such as engaging with the Scottish Government's Heat in Buildings Strategy (HIBS) to implement these changes. This will require an audit of the current estate to identify the opportunities and investment required to deliver against this objective and this will be the starting point for this work. In addition, transport modal shifts for both students and staff accessing the facilities will contribute to this objective."

The Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan (2020) sets a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Decarbonisation of heat in public buildings (including colleges) is targeted for 2038 with interim targets being produced by 2024. In relation to the funding of refurbishment projects, the Scottish Government states that:

"For larger public sector estates, a whole estates assessment of costs and timescales to develop a pathway to meet net zero targets is needed. This should highlight options for integrating net-zero carbon and adaptation measures at an estate and individual building level... include an assessment of the current and future heat and power demands and adopt a fabric first approach to reduce the heat demand across the estate with particular focus on the buildings with the highest heat demand and suitability for deep energy retrofitting."

The SFC are committed to support colleges to progress their Net-zero ambitions recognising that investment will be required in estates which are carbon neutral, and which can flex to cope with the climate emergency.

The strategic objectives of the UHI North, West and Hebrides merger

Our UHI North, West and Hebrides Merger Proposal and Business Case sets out the college's vision, mission, and strategic framework as presented above. In addition, the business case lists strategic objectives specific to certain operational areas of the organisation, including the estate. The key strategic objectives for the estate were outlined under the following themes:

- + Pedagogical, Curriculum Development and Student Experience** - ensure that the estate meets the requirements of curriculum delivery as it develops and changes over time.
- + Student and Staff Accommodation** - seek investment for student accommodation to support curriculum plans for attracting & retaining students.
- + Net-zero Agenda** - develop policies and plan investment to facilitate carbon reduction to support our drive to meet our net-zero commitments.
- + Procurement** - develop sustainable and local procurement policies of goods and services for estates and facilities as part of the wider economic benefit to the local communities.
- + Community Contribution** - continue to support the local communities through sustainable purchasing and taking opportunities to improve its utilisation and provision of estate.

+ Our Governing Principles:

The governing principles set out in the following section have been initially developed to align with the principles of the SFC's College Infrastructure Strategy and applied to our specific college: in its specific locations; serving a unique role in our communities; and aligned with our own Vision, Mission, and Values.

The principles have been reviewed internally by:

- + our experienced **Estates, Campus Services, and ICT** teams in Sept 2024.
- + our **Transition Board** containing representatives of Finance, Supporting Services, Student Services, Curriculum, Research & Operations, as dated on Page 2.

Principle 1: Fit for Purpose

Our estate should provide spaces that meet our planned curriculum, research agenda and support service requirements, recognising the benefits of flexibility and agility when fulfilling our current but continuously evolving need. Spaces should be suitably equipped with the necessary technology to help generate engaging, exciting, and innovative learning opportunities and should be of a suitable condition and décor to create a positive student/staff experience. Our spaces must be compliant with all relevant building codes, health & safety, asbestos management plans, and fire safety requirements. Finally, our spaces should be efficiently used, with high utilisation and proper use-of-space.

Principle 2: Increase Accessibility

The majority of our non-practical HE programme provision is delivered using an online or blended learning approach. However, a large portion of our FE provision is 'traditional' in nature involving face-to-face delivery in a traditional classroom, lab, or workshop to a fixed timetable and with limited use of online resources other than for reference material. This limits accessibility to learning opportunities for people who are unable to attend College centres on fixed days or times, which can be problematic for those who are in partial employment, who do not live local to a college learning centre or who have other constraints, such as childcare. It can also be problematic for businesses who may have difficulty releasing staff to attend College on fixed days or who are based far from one of our campuses. These constraints limit the College's potential market and reduces our capability to support the SFC's goal of providing equal access to suitable college infrastructure across all of Scotland.

Investment in digital infrastructure—technologies that enable and improve distance-learning modalities—will be a key component of estate investment decision-making. However, in addition to this, spaces must be suitable for the facilitating pastoral student support that is necessary to support an online curriculum and enhance student experience.





Principle 3: Enable Growth

Effective estate management is fundamentally a forward-looking endeavour. Whether considering new investments, maintaining existing assets, or repurposing space to meet evolving demands, decisions must be guided by a clear understanding of the college's long-term priorities and growth potential. Active management of the physical environment is essential to ensuring that it remains fit for purpose and responsive to the changing needs of students, staff, and external partners.

This includes planning for growth into new curriculum areas, developing facilities that support emerging research themes, and ensuring flexibility to accommodate future strategic partnerships. The estate must be adaptable, sustainable, and aligned with the college's wider vision, supporting innovation in teaching, learning, and collaboration.

The Estates Team plays a critical role in this process. Beyond the operational management of buildings and infrastructure, the team must be actively engaging with academic departments, professional services, student representatives, and external stakeholders. Such engagement ensures that estate planning is informed by a comprehensive understanding of institutional direction and sector-specific opportunities.

By remaining attuned to wider trends, such as shifts in pedagogy, sustainability requirements and digital infrastructure needs this strategy looks to anticipate future demands and to position the college to respond proactively.

Principle 4: Enable Partnership Working

In the future, as the nature of our student body changes and their mode of study evolves, we shall be seeking a greater degree of partnership working with various bodies in our community. These may be commercial lease opportunities; collaborations with other universities, colleges, and schools; partnership working on regional or national projects; or work with other local authorities and public sector bodies.

The opportunities should be pursued strategically, enhancing the wider college's aims rather than conflicting with them. Such an example could be the provision of office space to external staff who are working on a shared project with UHI North, West and Hebrides staff. Our college estate should be managed in such a way to support these opportunities as they arise, which will require flexibility and agility in repurposing spaces as is needed.

Principle 5: Improve Environmental Sustainability

To ensure we achieve our Net-zero commitments, estate management decisions will prioritise those that contribute to improving the environmental performance of our estate. We shall be pursuing a fabrics-first approach, prioritising improving our building's envelopes (walls, roof, windows, and floors) to ensure building integrity, maximize energy efficiency and minimize unwanted heat loss or gain. This approach aims to reduce energy demand before relying on improving heating or cooling systems whilst contributing to the overall energy efficiency and sustainability of our estate. We shall also be secondarily pursuing alternative sources of heat generation such as air and ground source heat pumps replacing aging boiler systems and renewables such as solar or small-scale wind.

The areas that will be of key importance in taking forward our commitment to sustainability and carbon reduction are energy efficiency, waste management, water and sewerage, fleet transport, ICT, renewable energy, HVAC, business travel and student travel for study.

Finally, we shall also benefit from better data collection and data analysis of the environmental impact, ensuring that investment decisions are evidence-based, and carbon savings are quantifiable.

Principle 6: Financially Sustainable

All estate management decisions must be strategic and justified on the basis that they support the College's need to be financially sustainable in the long-term. As outlined in the context section, UHI North, West and Hebrides is operating in a very constrained financial landscape striving to realise significant cost savings in an environment of diminishing public sector funding and increasing costs for works. It is necessary that the college search for potential cost savings through our estate and must balance these against any social, functional, and strategic impact of changing our service provision in a specific location.

The capital programme of works will be managed efficiently to ensure that replacement or refurbishment works are prioritised and works include development projects which enhance the teaching and research capability of the college. The planned and budgeted maintenance programme will be actioned in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Procurement arrangements will be consolidated to ensure that the college achieves optimal value for money in the equipment or services that are procured externally.

Principle 7: Governed Responsibly

In infrastructure planning and management, a fundamental commitment is being made to embrace a clear, transparent, and evidence-based decision-making process. This approach ensures that every decision taken is grounded in solid data and rigorous analysis where available, fostering accountability and trust among stakeholders. The degree of stakeholder engagement with our estate management team will be increased, with key stakeholders including our staff, student body, partners, Executive Leadership Team, the Scottish Government and SFC.

By maintaining responsible governance, all parties affected will be able to understand the rationale behind decisions, building trust in our estate management. This commitment not only enhances the quality of outcomes but also cultivates a culture of openness and collaboration.

+ Strategic Aims, Objectives and Outcomes:

The following aims have been identified as high-priority items to be implemented by the infrastructure team in 2024-25.

- + Develop and implement a clear decision-making framework for understanding and communicating the needs/opportunities of our estate.
- + Implement an efficient, consistent and reliable facilities management system.
- + Demonstrate statutory compliance for maintenance and inspection of our assets in a consistent manner across our estate.
- + Efficiently implement the programme of approved capital works and projects for 2024-25.

+ Strategic aim one: Decision Making Framework

Principles of the Framework

Our college infrastructure strategy will guide decision making, so that for each campus, building or asset, the college has clear visibility of the needs/opportunities for investment, maintenance, collaboration and/or divestment.



Invest

Capture what investment is required or what opportunities there are for investment in the future shape and size and use of the estate to meet current and future demand for physical, hybrid and digital teaching, research, etc.

Maintain

Understand that the current asset is fit-for-purpose and suitable for its planned use. Have clear visibility of the anticipated maintenance burden that would be required in order sustain the asset in its current condition.

Collaborate

Identify assets which could be shared between different public bodies and partners to increase use and income. Other forms of collaboration may include strategic partnerships, hosting stakeholder events, and external leases for generating commercial income. UHI NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES may also consider collaborating by making use of available spaces within partners buildings, potentially divesting in our fixed asset in those areas.

Divest

Understand that the asset is under-performing in its function or is uneconomic. In this scenario, the college may determine that its right to divest itself of the asset (or partially divest, i.e., reduce current footprint), whilst assessing the impact that any divestment may have on college operations, our staff, learners, or local communities.

Note regarding Disposal of College Assets

The process governing disposal of College Assets is set out in the Further and higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 by College of Further Education and clarified in a letter from the Minister for Higher and Further Education to College Principals dated 28 Jan 2025, titled Disposal of Property under section 18 of the Further and higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 by College of Further Education. This letter sets out a revised approach to Ministerial consent under section 18 and the intended approach for allocation of proceeds of disposals. UHI North, West and Hebrides shall follow the process and terms and conditions as outlined under section 18 and amended in the latest formal guidance set out by Scottish Ministers.

In the latest guidance, Scottish Ministers' consent is given, under section 18(1) of the 1992 Act, to the disposal of any property to which that provision applies and which is reasonably anticipated to have a net value of £1,000,000 or less. That guidance also clarifies that it will be for the board of management of the college to determine the appropriate use of the proceeds or value of consideration of the disposal. The guidance sets out further information on the Scottish Ministers' intended approach to the process of ministerial consent and allocation of proceeds for assets that have a reasonably expected net value of over £1,000,000.

We will achieve this by:

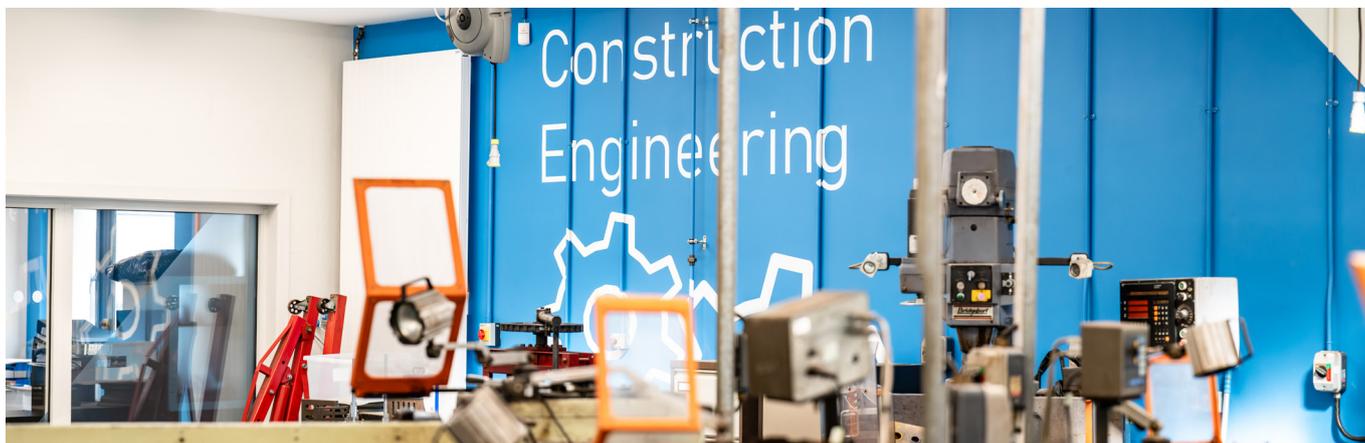
- + Undertaking assessments of our current estate that will consider:
 - + The strategic value of the asset, considering how well the building and land supports the wider College strategy; how it links to our Vision, Mission and Values.
 - + The financial value of the asset, considering associated income streams, operating costs and value.
 - + The operational value of the asset, considering how the building and land supports our curriculum plan and research agenda.
 - + The future value of the asset, considering how it supports the College's strategic growth plans.

The outcomes of this assessment will be communicated in accordance with the decision making framework process.

Success criteria:

- + This decision making framework will be used through the UHI North, West and Hebrides Estates Strategy Delivery Plan, in which the opportunities & needs specific to each campus will be considered and communicated in a clear, consistent manner.





+ Strategic aim two: Facilities Management System

An efficient and reliable facilities management system is an essential tool for an estates team as it centralises facilities management data, streamlining the management of buildings, assets, and maintenance schedules. The system also enables more robust planning of preventative maintenance reducing the risk of statutory non-compliance, or asset degradation. In general, such systems can be used to optimise team resource allocation and building space utilisation, leading to more efficient use of staff, energy and space.

In 2023-24, the team have been using a variety of generic software tools, such as MS excel worksheets and UniDesk task ticketing to accept, manage plan and implement estates tasks. These tools are not designed specifically of estate management and bring inherent inefficiencies. A single dedicated computer aided facilities management (CAFM) tool, brings all functions into one system, enabling efficient functioning of the team, better use of resources and provides a reporting function that would give greater oversight of the department. An example of the benefits of such reporting can be demonstrated in the reporting of statutory compliance, discussed in the following section.

We will achieve this by:

- +** Completing the onboarding process for the newly procured facilities management software package for a planned 'go-live' date in March 2025.
- +** Ensuring that all Estates and Campus Services staff are adequately trained at admin or operator level depending on their role within the team.
- +** Ensuring that all UHI North, West and Hebrides are inducted into the use of the CAFM incident reporting system.
- +** Implementing all statutorily required regular building checks across the estate using CAFM forms.

Success criteria:

- +** CAFM system planned 'go-live' date in March 2025 is achieved.
- +** Estates and Campus Services staff complete training.
- +** Incident reporting induction provided to all UHI North, West and Hebrides staff and help documentation produced.
- +** A complete record of monthly reporting of statutory building checks are available by summer 2025.

+ Strategic aim three: Statutory Compliance for Maintenance and Inspection of Assets

There is a range of legislation that govern the use, occupation and maintenance of land and buildings for academic institutions in Scotland. As a college, we need assurance that we comply with the extensive legislative requirements, protecting the building fabric, systems and users. This is often referred to as statutory compliance in buildings and ensuring compliance protects the institution legally, whilst also providing greater assurance of business continuity.

The college needs to be able to demonstrate compliance with health and safety legislation along with legislation governing the inspection and maintenance of an extensive list of assets or systems. Including but not limited to:

- + Asbestos management
- + Electrical testing / PAT / fixed wire testing
- + Emergency lighting
- + HVAC systems
- + Various fire safety systems
- + Water hygiene and legionella
- + Various others.

This information is currently held in various legacy data management systems and is only partially digitised. A key priority for our Estates team in 2024-25 is to collate all compliance records into a single digital system, our CAFM system, that is consistently applied across our estate. This system should allow records to be readily interrogated and compliance should be reportable to college management or external assessors.

We will achieve this by:

- + Completing the onboarding and training requirements as detailed in Strategic Aim 2.
- + Inputting all statutory compliance governed pre-planned maintenance into the CAFM software, including details of works requirement, contract status, completion status, frequency and due date.

Success criteria:

- + Monthly reporting of statutory PPM status will be available by summer 2025.





+ Strategic aim four: Implement Programme of Approved Capital Works

The programme of approved capital works are those major projects required to sustain the safe and efficient operation of our estate. It is essential that such works be implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner and with appropriate governance and oversight of college management. Failing to maintain the college estate and undertake essential works in a timely manner has a range of consequences, affecting the college staff, the student body and other users. These include but are not limited to:

- + Safety risks associated with structural issues
- + Increasing costs of deferred works due to developing issues
- + Deferred costs being unaffordable at a future date alongside newly emerging works
- + Estates team being understaffed to manage deferred works programmes.
- + Energy inefficiency of outdated systems
- + Aesthetic degradation of buildings and eventual loss of functionality
- + Reputational damage where deterioration is visible

We will achieve this by:

- + Presenting a planned set of capital works to the relevant board
- + Providing quarterly updates to the relevant board on project progression.
- + Working with APUC to procure a capital works in a compliant manner.
- + Delivering completion of planned works and invoicing

Success criteria:

- + An initial planned set of capital works shall be presented to the F&GP Board in Sept for approval.
- + All capital projects shall be procured using APUC in accordance with all relevant procurement regulations.
- + Works will be planned and completed in a timely manner to cost, quality and programme expectations.

+ Operational Plans

The Infrastructure Strategy is supported by the following plans and processes.

UHI North, West and Hebrides Estates Strategy Delivery Plan

To be presented for approval by Board in June 2025

The principal plan supporting this strategy will be the UHI NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES Estates Strategy Delivery Plan. This plan will outline our main priorities for the coming year, and for each of our centres our current plans for investment, maintenance, collaboration and/or divestment, applying the seven principles outlined in this strategy.

The delivery plan shall be a live document, updated to reflect the current condition, and plans. The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Executive Leadership Team at the start of each academic year.

Dependencies: Executive Leadership Team, Curriculum, Research

Net-Zero Investment Prioritisation Framework

To be developed 2025/26 – UHI North, West and Hebrides Infrastructure responsibility

Another priority is to ensure that our investment planning supports our decarbonisation commitments. Informed by Strategic Priority 5, a framework shall be established that sets out how our Estates team will prioritise investments taking cognisance of projected carbon costs or savings of the work into our existing prioritisation mechanisms.

It is anticipated that this framework will nudge higher prioritisation of works that deliver carbon efficiencies in all areas, particularly affecting energy use, waste management, water and sewerage, fleet transport, ICT, renewable energy, HVAC, business travel and student travel for study.

Note that delivery of the Net-zero agenda will be a college-wide undertaking with input from all aspects of college operations. This Net-zero Prioritisation Framework will be heavily informed by that work and shall bring to the fore specific capital works on our estate that are necessary to realise our wider net-zero aims.

Dependencies: College-wide

Capital Projects Investment Plan

Estates CAPEX Plan (annual) – Approved by Board 11th Sept 2024

The purpose of this plan is to present a prioritised list of capital projects planned to be undertaken in 2024-25. The projects presented are those major works required to sustain the safe and efficient operation of our estate. The projects are prioritised based on college needs and cost estimates are provided for each project. Capital projects are funded through the annual allocation of capital grant funding from SFC.

This Investment Plan will be informed by both the curriculum delivery needs and research agenda. The plan will bring together a summary of all information, detail interlinkages (e.g., partnership arrangements) and shall link to a consistent project management, reporting, and oversight procedure.

Dependencies: Curriculum Plan, Research Needs, Large and Complex Projects Governance Policy



CAPEX and Maintenance Management Processes

2024/25 – UHI North, West and Hebrides Estates responsibility

To effectively manage the college's annual capital expenditure programme of works several processes will be developed (or updated), in close collaboration with APUC (Advanced Procurement for Universities and Colleges):

- ✦ **A CAPEX Spend Management Calendar** – identifying key dates for project prioritisation, scoping, procurement, and implementation. This information already exists but will be presented in a clear and concise fashion to ensure consistency in the implementation of our CAPEX spend.
- ✦ **Backlog Maintenance re-baselining** – Backlog maintenance identification and prioritisation is largely based upon 2017 condition surveys. Our backlog maintenance plans will be consolidated and updated to reflect the current condition of our estate (with emerging issues and completed works captured). Once again, this information already exists but up to date information will be collated and presented to inform our investment planning.
- ✦ **A Computer-Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) Software** – replacing our legacy excel-based project prioritisation tools, a CAFM software package is required to efficiently manage our large and complex estate: tracking recurring inspection and maintenance tasks, logging and tracking reactive works, prioritising jobs, assigning jobs based on resource availability, managing works through compliant procurement processes and providing support when implementing works. The CAFM software package shall prioritise works using a risk-based prioritisation matrix whilst integrating the degree of alignment with college strategies, our Digital Infrastructure Plan, our Net-zero Investment Prioritisation Framework, and our backlog maintenance list. The CAFM Software Package is an enabling technology ensuring proper stewardship of our existing assets and ensuring financial prudence in investment planning.

+ Enabling strategies

The Infrastructure Strategy is supported by the following enabling strategies.

UHI North, West and Hebrides ICT & Knowledge Management Strategy

A priority within the SFC Infrastructure plan is for colleges to access their digital infrastructure needs and outline a digital infrastructure investment plan within a larger ICT & Knowledge Management Strategy. This will be informed by both the curriculum delivery needs and the IT investment planning. Digital technology dates quickly, and consideration needs to be given as to how the digital infrastructure lifecycle is funded alongside resilience, security, licencing, and other aspects of digital investment.

The ICT and Knowledge Management Strategy will also discuss AI; the threats and opportunities emerging from this rapidly developing sector and what UHI NORTH, WEST AND HEBRIDES is doing in response.

UHI North, West and Hebrides Tertiary Curriculum Strategy

The UHI North, West and Hebrides Tertiary Curriculum Strategy sets out the curriculum plans for our college. It's essential that our facilities are suitably outfitted and fit for purpose to enable delivery of our planned curriculum, and that they contribute positively to our student experience. The Curriculum Strategy is one of the key drivers of estates planning (alongside the Research Strategy), essentially shaping the requirements that are to be met by our estate in order to provide a positive experience of our current students and researchers and to enable future growth.

UHI North, West and Hebrides Research Strategy

The UHI North, West and Hebrides Research Strategy sets out the research agenda and plans for our college. Our Estate must provide the necessary high-quality facilities that enable our on-going research agenda and continuous needs assessment should be conducted in collaboration with our research teams to ensure that our estate is an enabler of future research. Our research activity helps to shape the areas in which our college specialises in and can be a significant indicator of where timely inward investment can future proof our facilities and position the college well to leverage future growth sectors.

References:

¹ <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/estates-infrastructure/>

² <https://www.nwh.uhi.ac.uk/en/t4-media/one-web/nwh/about-us/merger-background/RICM-Merger-Proposal-and-Business-Case-Nov-2022-FINAL-SUBMISSION.pdf>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/just-transition/>



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UHI North, West and Hebrides is a trading name of The Board of Management of UHI North, West and Hebrides which is a registered charity, number SC021215.

'S e UHI a Tuath, an Iar is Innse Gall an t-ainm malairt a th' air Bòrd Stiùiridh UHI a Tuath, an Iar is Innse Gall a tha na charthannas clàraichte, àireamh SC021215.