

Report on Initial Consultation 'Building a better Future Together', the proposed merger for Lews Castle College UHI, North Highland College UHI and West Highland College UHI

Aithisg mun Cho-chomhairleachadh Tùsail mu 'Togail Àm ri Teachd nas Fheàrr Còmhla', an co-aonadh a thathar a' moladh airson Colaiste Caisteal Leòdhais UHI, Colaiste Cheann a Tuath na Gàidhealtachd UHI agus Colaiste na Gàidhealtachd an Iar UHI

Consultation: 16 December 2021 – 15 February 2022

Co-chomhairleachadh: 16 Dùbhlachd 2021 – 15 Gearran 2022

March 2022

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1. Background to the consultation

Following receipt of a commissioned options appraisal report on future options for UHI's remote rural and island colleges in June 2021, the Boards of North Highland College UHI, Lews Castle College UHI and West Highland College UHI agreed to formally explore merger. Since then, a Partnership Board and an Executive Steering Group has been formed to oversee the formal process of examining how a merger could work and developing a full merger proposal and business case for consideration by individual College Boards in 2022.

The merger proposals have the potential to:

- Deliver a college that will build on the excellence and expertise of our three current colleges, creating a step-change for learning, skills, enterprise and innovation in our region
- Foster a college which can bring equity of opportunity and will make a real and positive impact to the lives and prosperity of our people in the most fragile rural and island communities of Scotland and the UK
- Give staff greater job security, deliver a more sustainable curriculum and offer promote career progression

In order to inform the development of the full merger proposal and business case, and in line with SFC guidance, an initial public consultation was undertaken on the strategic proposal to merge (outline business case). The consultation was launched on the 16th December 2021, and completed on 15 February 2022.

Raising awareness of the consultation was extensive and included the following:

- Key stakeholder engagement – emails with background to merger proposal and launch of consultation
- Staff and students within the three colleges and UHI – emails, newsletters and presentations held at staff and committee meetings
- Local politicians, councillors and community councils – emails with background to merger proposal and launch of consultation
- MSPs/MPs/Council CEOs – offer of briefing meetings with Principals/Chair of Partnership Board
- Press release and media engagement to mark the start of the consultation period in December 2021, as well as during the consultation period in early January 2022
- Social Media Campaign to raise awareness of scheduled consultation events

The feedback generated from this initial consultation will assist with the development of the detailed merger proposal and business case, which will be consulted on later in 2022 in line with statutory requirements.

1. Cùl-fhiosrachadh mun cho-chonaltradh

An dèidh an aithisg measaidh roghainnean choimiseanaichte fhaighinn a thaobh nan roghainnean a bha ann airson an ama ri teachd do na colaistean dùthchail agus eileanach aig UHI san Ògmhios 2021, dh'aontaich Bùird Colaiste Cheann a Tuath na Gàidhealtachd UHI, Colaiste Caisteal Leòdhais UHI agus Colaiste na Gàidhealtachd an Iar UHI gun dèanadh iad sgrùdadh foirmeil mu cho-aonadh. On àm sin tha Bòrd Com-pàirteachais agus Buidheann Stiùiridh Gnìomha air a bhith air an suidheachadh gus a bhith os cionn a' phròiseas foirmeil a bhith a' sgrùdadh mar a dh'obraicheadh co-aonadh agus a bhith a' leasachadh moladh airson làn cho-aonadh agus cùis-gnothachais air am beachdaicheadh Bùird nan Colaistean fa leth ann an 2022.

Tha an comas aig na molaidhean co-aonaidh a bhith:

- A' libhrigeadh colaiste a bhios a' togail air sàr-mhathas agus ealantas nan trì colaistean a tha ann an-dràsta, a' cruthachadh ceum-atharrachaidh a thaobh ionnsachadh, sgilean, iomairt agus ùr-ghnàthachas san roinn-dùthcha againn.
- Ag altram colaiste as urrainn co-ionannachd cothruim a thoirt agus a bheir buaidh chinnteach agus dheimhinneach air beatha agus soirbheachas ar daoine anns na coimhearsnachdan dùthchail agus eileanach as brisg ann an Alba agus san RA.
- A' toirt barrachd teàrainteachd nan obair do luchd-obrach, a' libhrigeadh curraicealam nas seasmaich agus nas fharsaing agus a' tabhann adhartas ann an dreuchd.

Gus innse mu leasachadh a' mholaidh airson làn cho-aonadh agus cùis-gnothachais, agus a rèir stiùireadh bho SFC, chaidh co-chomhairleachadh tùsail poblach a ghabhail os làimh mun mholadh ro-innleachdail gus a bhith a' co-aonadh (dreach chùis gnothachais). Chaidh an co-chomhairleachadh a chur air chois air 16 Dùbhlachd 2021, agus chrìochnaich e air 15 Gearran 2022.

Bha togail mothachadh air a dhèanamh gu farsaing mun cho-chomhairleachadh agus bha e a' gabhail a-steach nan nithean a leanas:

- Dol an sàs prìomh luchd-ùidh – puist-dealain mun mholadh co-aonaidh agus cur air bhog a' cho-chomhairleachaidh
- Luchd-obrach agus oileanaich sna trì colaistean agus UHI -puist-dealain, cuairt-litrichean agus taisbeanaidhean aig coinneamhan luchd-obrach agus comataidhean
- Luchd-poilitigs ionadail, comhairlichean agus comhairlean coimhearsnachd –puist-dealain le cùl-fhiosrachadh mun mholadh co-aonaidh agus cur air chois a' cho-chomhairleachaidh
- BPAan/BPan/CEOan Chomhairlean – tabhann coinneamhan fiosrachaidh le Prionnsabalan/Cathraiche a' Bhùird Com-pàirteachais
- Fios-naidheachd agus dol an sàs leis na meadhanan gus toiseach an ama co-chomhairleachaidh a chomharrachadh san Dùbhlachd 2021, cho math ris an àm co-chomhairleachaidh tràth san Fhaoilleach 2022.
- Iomairt Meadhanan Sòisealta gus mothachadh àrdachadh mu thachartasan co-chomhairleachaidh a bha air a' chlàr-ama

Bidh am fiosrachadh a thàinig às a' cho-chomhairleachadh tùsail seo feumail ann a bhith a' leasachadh moladh airson co-aonadh agus cùis-gnothachais, air am bi co-chomhairleachadh air a dhèanamh nas fhaide air adhart ann an 2022 a rèir nan riatanasan reachdail.

2. The Consultation Process

A public-facing website was created (www.rural-islands-merger.uhi.ac.uk), in English and Gaelic, providing:

- Background to the merger proposal
- Details of the Partnership Board
- Frequently asked questions for Students, Staff and Public
- A consultation document entitled 'Building a better future together', providing a strategic rationale for the merger, including vision and purpose as well as anticipated benefits of merger.
- An email facility (Merger Mailbox) to submit general enquiries or comments
- An online response form with 8 questions in relation to the consultation document

Responses were invited via the online response form.

In addition, 10 online stakeholder events were scheduled in January and February 2022, focused on students, staff and public engagement. Events were chaired by one of the three college principals and all events were attended by all three. Chairs, Board Members and senior managers were also encouraged to attend. Separate emails inviting key community stakeholders, councillors and politicians were also sent.

In total 139 people attended the online stakeholder events. The comments made by stakeholders attending the online stakeholder events were captured and are summarised in Appendix 1.

2. Am Pròiseas Co-chomhairleachaidh

Chaidh làrach-lìn poblach a chruthachadh (www.rural-islands-merger.uhi.ac.uk) sa Bheurla agus sa Ghàidhlig, a' tabhann:

- cùl-fhiosrachadh mun mholadh co-aonaidh
- mion-fhiosrachadh mun Bhòrd Com-pàirteachais
- ceistean a bha air an cur gu tric airson Oileanaich, Luchd-obrach agus am Poball
- aithisg co-chomhairleachaidh leis an tiotal 'Togail Àm ri Teachd nas Fheàrr Còmhla', a' tabhann feallsanachd airson a' cho-aonaidh, a' gabhail a-steach an lèirsinn agus an adhbhar cho math ris na buannachdan a thathar a' sùileachadh a thig an cois a' cho-aonaidh.
- goireas post-dealain (Bogsa-puist a' Cho-aonaidh) airson ceistean no beachdan
- foirm-freagairt air-loidhne le 8 ceistean a' buntainn ris an sgrìobhainn co-chomhairleachaidh

Chaidh cuireadh a thoirt airson freagairtean tron fhoirm freagairt air-loidhne.

A thuilleadh air a sin, chaidh 10 tachartasan luchd-ùidh air-loidhne an cur air a' chlàr san Fhaoilleach agus sa Ghearran 2022, a' cuimseachadh air oileanaich, luchd-obrach agus am poball. Bha aon de phrionnsabalan nan trì colaistean sa chathair aig na tachartasan agus bha na trì an làthair aig na trì. Bha Cathraichean, Buill Bùird agus àrd mhanaidsearan cuideachd air am misneachadh a bhith an làthair. Chuireadh a-mach cuideachd puist-dealain fa leth a' toirt cuireadh do prìomh luchd-ùidh coimhearsnachd, comhairlichean agus luchd-poilitigs.

Fhrithheil 139 neach na tachartasan air-loidhne airson luchd-ùidh. Chaidh na beachdan a bha aig an luchd-ùidh a fhrithheil na tachartasan luchd-ùidh air-loidhne a chlàradh agus tha geàrr-chunntas mun deidhinn ann am Pàipear-taic 1.

3. Methodology

The consultation process was modelled on Scottish Government public consultations. Anyone who wished to do so could submit their responses to the consultation via the online form on the website, or where that was not possible, could use the enquiries email address to submit a response in an alternative format by email attachment. Following specific requests from staff, the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback was given specifically to the staff within the three college merger partners, by supplying printed copies available locally in each of the three colleges.

The online consultation form contained 8 questions. All questions invited open responses on the strategic proposal to merge, with Questions 1 and 2 also containing a closed question followed by an open response field for comments.

All responses were processed and imported into Excel and processed by the small merger communications team.

3. Modh-obrach

Bha am pròiseas co-chomhairleachaidh air a stèidheachadh air co-chomhairleachaidhean poblach Riaghaltas na h-Alba. Dh'fhaodadh neach sam bith a bha air a shon na freagairtean aca a thaobh a' cho-chomhairleachaidh a chur a-steach tron fhoirm air-loidhne air an làrach-lìn, no far nach robh sin comasach, dh'fhaodadh iad an seòladh post-dealain airson fiosrachadh a chleachdadh gus freagairt a chur a-steach ann an riochd eadar-dhealaichte mar faidhle an cois post-dealain. An dèidh iarrtasan sònraichte fhaighinn bho luchd-obrach, chaidh an cothrom fios air ais às aonais ainm a thoirt gu sònraichte do luchd-obrach sna trì colaistean sa cho-aonadh, le bhith a' toirt dhaibh lethbhreacan air an clò-bhualadh sna trì colaistean.

Bha 8 ceistean san fhoirm co-chomhairleachaidh air-loidhne. Bha na ceistean air fad a' toirt cothrom freagairtean a thoirt don mholadh co-aonaidh ro-innleachdail, le ceist dhùinte an cois Ceistean 1 agus 2 cuideachd agus an dèidh sin raon freagairt fosgailte airson beachdan.

Bha na freagairtean air am pròiseasadh agus air an toirt a-steach do Excel agus air am pròiseasadh le sgioba conaltraidh bheag a' cho-aonaidh.

4. Approach to Reporting and Evaluation of the Responses

The main purpose of consultation analysis is not to identify how many people held particular views, but to understand the full range of views expressed. For this reason, the analysis is primarily qualitative.

The consultation took the form of a public consultation where anyone was invited to express their views; however, it is recognised that individuals and organisations with specific interests are more likely to respond. This self-selection means that the views of the consultation respondents do not necessarily represent the views of all internal or external stakeholders affected by the proposals.

The analysis of this consultation exercise will therefore be an important point of reference for the development of the full merger proposal and business case, but will sit alongside the evidence gathered from a wide range of engagement activities with staff, students and stakeholders since September 2021.

Not everyone who responded to the online consultation answered every question. Of those who provided answers, not all gave permission to publish their response; or, if giving permission to publish their response, did not give permission to have their name included. This means the base number of responses shown in this report varies by question, and that percentages cannot be compared across questions. Because of this, the quantitative results for questions show individual responses received and number published only.

To summarise the qualitative comments, a basic methodology common in most evaluations has been used as follows:

- The most common theme / the most prevalent theme in responses (and second most common) i.e., the most frequently identified
- 'Many' respondents/ another prevalent theme
- 'A small number' of respondents; a less common theme
- 'One or two respondents'; a singular comment or view expressed

4. Modh-obrach a thaobh Clàradh agus Luachadh nam Freagairtean

Chan e prìomh adhbhar sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air a' cho-chomhairleachadh a bhith a' comharrachadh co-mheud neach aig an robh beachdan sònraichte, ach a bhith a' tuigsinn an làn raon de bheachdan a chaidh a thoirt seachad. Airson an adhbhar sin tha an anailis gu ìre mhòr càileachdail.

Bha an co-chomhairleachadh ann an riochd co-chomhairleachadh poblach far an robh a h-uile neach air an cuireadh am beachdan a thoirt seachad; ach thathar ag aithneachadh gu bheil daoine agus buidhnean le ùidhean sònraichte nas coltaiche freagairt a thoirt. Tha am fèin-thaghadh seo a' ciallachadh gur dòcha nach eil beachdan an luchd-co-chomhairleachaidh dha-rìribh a' riochdachadh bheachdan an luchd-ùidh air fad air an taobh a-staigh no air an taobh a-muigh air an toir na molaidhean buaidh.

Bidh an anailis den eacarsaich co-chomhairleachaidh seo mar sin na phuing fiosrachaidh airson a bhith a' leasachadh a' mholaidh airson làn cho-aonadh agus cùis-gnothachais, ach suidhidh e ri taobh an fhianais a chaidh a thogail bho raon farsaing de dhol an sàs le luchd-obrach, oileanaich agus luchd-ùidh bhon t-Sultain 2021.

Cha do fhreagair a h-uile neach a chur fios air ais mun cho-chomhairleachadh air-loidhne a h-uile ceist. A thaobh cuid den fheadhainn a thug freagairtean seachad, cha tug iad uile cead am freagairt fhoillseachadh, air neo, ma thug iad cead am freagairt fhoillseachadh, cha robh iad airson an ainm a bhith air fhoillseachadh. Tha seo a' ciallachadh gu bheil na h-àireamhan a tha san aithisg seo ag atharrachadh a rèir na ceist, agus nach urrainnear ceudadan a choimeasadh thar nan ceistean. Mar thoradh air sin, tha na toraidhean uimhireil airson nan ceistean a' comharrachadh nam freagairtean fa leth a fhuaras agus dìreach an àireamh a chaidh fhoillseachadh.

Gus geàrr-chunntas a thoirt mu na beachdan càileachdail, chaidh modh-obrach a tha cumanta sa mhòr chuid de luachaidhean a chleachdadh mar a leanas:

- An cuspair as cumanta/an cuspair as trice a tha a' nochdadh sna freagairtean (agus an dàrna fear as cumanta) i.e, as trice air a chomharrachadh.
- 'Mòran' luchd-freagairt/cuspair cumanta eile.
- 'àireamh bheag de luchd-freagairt'; cuspair nach eil cho cumanta.
- 'Aon no dà neach-freagairt'; aon bheachd no shealladh air a thoirt

5. Responses to the Online Consultation Document 'Building a Better Future Together'

There were 34 written responses received via the online consultation response form.

Of the 34 responses, 8 represented either staff groups, trade unions or regional stakeholder groups.

5. Freagairtean chun Sgrìobhainn Co-chomhairleachaidh Air-loidhne 'Togail Àm ri Teachd nas Fheàrr Còmhla'

Chaidh 34 freagairtean fhaighinn ann an sgrìobhadh tron fhoirm freagairt a' cho-chomhairleachaidh air-loidhne.

De na 34 freagairtean, bha 8 a' riochdachadh buidhnean luchd-obrach, aonaidhean-ciùird no buidhnean luchd-ùidh roinneil.

5.1 Respondent Profile

Respondent	Number of Responses Received
Student	2
HISA	1
Staff (internal LCC/NHC/WHC)	10
Staff (other UHI)	3
Trade Union (local branch LCC/NHC/WHC)	1
Trade Union (regional/national)	1
Agency	1
Employer/stakeholder	9
Anonymous individual	6
Total	34

5.1 Pròifil an Neach-freagairt

Neach-freagairt	Àireamh de Fhreagairtean a fhuaradh
Oileanach	2
HISA	1
Luchd-obrach (taobh a-staigh LCC/NHC/WHC)	10
Luchd-obrach (eile UHI)	3
Aonadh-ciùird (meur ionadail LCC/NHC/WHC)	1
Aonadh-ciùird (roinneil/nàiseanta)	1
Buidheann	1
Neach-fastaidh/Neach-ùidh	9
Gun urra	6
Uile	34

5.2 Responses – Number of Responses Received in Total

Agreed to publish response without name	18
Agreed to publish response with name	11
No consent to publish response	5
All 34 submitted responses were reflected in the summary for each question	

5.2 Freagairtean – Àireamh nam Freagairtean a Fhuaradh air Fad

Aontachadh an fhreagairt fhoillseachadh às aonais ainm	18
Aontachadh an fhreagairt fhoillseachadh leis an ainm	11
Gun chead an fhreagairt fhoillseachadh	5
Bha na 34 freagairtean a fhuaras air an gabhail a-steach sa gheàrr-chunntas airson gach ceist.	

5.3 Responses Received by Question

Question	Question Response	Agreed to publish response	Did not agree to publish response
1 a)	33	28	5
1 b)	34	29	5
2 a)	24	20	4
2 b)	22	20	2
3	27	23	4
4	21	18	3
5	20	19	1
6	21	18	3
7	18	17	1
8	14	13	1

5.3 Freagairtean a Fhuaras airson Gach Ceist

Ceist	Ceist- Freagairt	Aonta am freagairt fhoillseachadh	Cha deach aontachadh am freagairt fhoillseachadh
1 a)	33	28	5
1 b)	34	29	5
2 a)	24	20	4
2 b)	22	20	2
3	27	23	4
4	21	18	3
5	20	19	1
6	21	18	3
7	18	17	1
8	14	13	1

6. Consistent Themes Raised during the Consultation Process

Overall, those engaging with the consultation process was to raise questions with specific concerns, but with a view to seek more specific information. Where information could be provided immediately either within a consultation meeting or via an email response or 'frequently asked question', most respondents were satisfied with answers given at this stage of the merger development process. However, many are looking for more detailed answers to their queries in the next consultation stage on the full merger proposal and business case.

The main areas raised during the consultation events were as follows:

- Must avoid centralisation
- Job security/staff wellbeing
- Gaelic
- Opportunity to develop curriculum/improve student experience
- Funding/Finance - is this driven by need to cost save?
- Support for single identity/name
- What is UHI's position?

In terms of the online responses, support for the merger proposal and rationale was high, with 68% of respondents in favour of the proposed merger rationale and 75% agreeing with the proposed Purpose and Vision Statement for the new college.

However, almost all respondent offered qualifying comments. Detail of these comments is captured under each question.

The qualifying comments echo the themes and concerns raised in the consultation meetings, including the desire for further engagement – in particular from trade unions and industry/employer representatives - and detailed proposals in the next consultation.

Support for the proposed merger may therefore be described as ‘cautiously positive’ at this stage.

6. Cuspairean a chaidh a Thogail gu Cunbhalach tron Phròiseas Co-Chomhairleachaidh

San fharsaingeachd, bha an fheadhainn a bha an sàs sa phròiseas co- chomhairleachaidh a’ togail cheistean mu uallaichean sònraichte ach le beachd a bhith a’ sireadh fiosrachadh nas mionaidich. Far am b’ urrainn fiosrachadh a bhith air a thoirt seachad anns a’ bhad, taobh a-staigh coinneamh co-chomhairleachaidh no mar fhreagairt post-dealain no ‘ceist a bha air a cur gu tric’, bha a’ mhòr chuid de luchd-freagairt toilichte leis na freagairtean a chaidh an toirt seachad aig an ìre seo de phròiseas leasachaidh a’ cho-aonaidh.

Ach, tha mòran a’ sireadh fhreagairtean nas mionaidich do na ceistean aca san ath ìre den cho-chomhairleachadh den làn phròiseas co-aonaidh agus cùis gnothachais.

B’ e na prìomh raointean a chaidh an togail aig na tachartasan co-chomhairleachaidh na leanas:

- Feumar meadhanachadh a sheachnadh
- Tèarainteachd obrach/sunnd luchd-obrach
- A’ Ghàidhlig
- Cothrom an curraicealam a leasachadh/fèin-fhiosrachadh oileanach a leasachadh
- Maoineachadh/Airgead - a bheil seo air a stiùireadh ri linn sàbhaladh air cosgaisean?
- Taic airson dearbh-aithne/ainm singilte
- Dè an suidheachadh a tha aig UHI?

A thaobh nam freagairtean air-loidhne, bha an taic airson moladh agus feallsanachd a’ cho-aonaidh àrd, le 68% den luchd-freagairt airson feallsanachd a’ cho-aonaidh a bhathar a’ moladh agus 75% ag aontachadh ris an Aithris airson Adhbhar agus Lèirsinn a’ cholaiste ùir. Ach, cha mhòr nach tug a h-uile neach-freagairt am beachdan leasachail fhèin seachad. Tha mion-fhiosrachadh mu na beachdan sin air an toirt fo gach ceist.

Tha na beachdan leasachail sin a rèir nam beachdan agus na h-uallaichean a chaidh a thogail aig na coinneamhan co-chomhairleachaidh, a’ gabhail a-steach an rùin airson tuilleadh dol an sàs – gu sònraichte bho aonaidhean-ciùird agus riochdairean gnìomhachais/luchd-fastaidh – agus a’ sireadh mholaidhean nas mionaidich san ath cho-chomhairleachadh.

Dh’fhaodadh mar sin an taic airson a’ cho-aonaidh a tha air a mholadh a bhith air a mhìneachadh mar ‘deimhinneach gu ìre’ aig an ìre seo.

7. Consultation Analysis – Online Response by Question

7. Anailis den Cho-chomhairleachadh - Freagairt ceist air-loidhne

Question 1. Are you supportive of the rationale of proposed merger of Lews Castle College UHI, North Highland College UHI and West Highland College UHI outlined in this consultation, including the proposed benefits for students, staff and communities?

	Number	yes	no	Additional Comments
Responses received	34	22	11	32
Responses published	29			
Summary of responses	<p>68% of respondents were in favour of the rationale for the proposed merger, with 32% opposed.</p> <p>However, almost all respondents offered qualified comments in addition to their ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response.</p> <p>Key Themes in comments from those in favour of the offered merger rationale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear rationale and benefits for merger offered • Strong focus and advocacy for rural and island perspective in tertiary education • A stronger more unified approach to engagement with industry sectors and relevant tertiary offer • A wider and more sustainable curriculum offer • An enhanced and more equitable student experience • Estates improvements, including improved spaces for learning and student social spaces • A bigger voice and influence within UHI • A bigger voice representing rural and island issues within UHI and beyond • Better partnership working with industry • Better alignment within UHI, simplifying governance • More coherent provision within the regional area of the three colleges, with distinct USPs recognised within UHI and beyond • Less competition by three UHI partners coming together 			

- Greater impact on communities and green and just economy due to bigger organisational scale and capacity
- Ability to address, and possibly reverse, population loss and skills drain

Key themes in comments from those against the offered merger rationale:

- Concern that the hidden but real driver for merger is cost-cutting and purely financial
- Mergers are high risk, time-consuming and intended outcomes do not always come to fruition, yet entangle their constituent colleges irreversibly
- Merger may lead to fewer jobs, despite assurance of no compulsory redundancies
- Potential loss of smaller rural centres
- Need more detail/evidence (including benchmarking) on how the merger and proposed benefits will be achieved, including risk analysis
- Need for more consultation in approach to proposed changes affecting staff, as well as working practices, terms and conditions
- Need for significant initial investment; it's not clear where this will come from
- Absence of evidence of realistic prospect of financial sustainability, specifically given island and rural context
- Threat of proliferation of top level management posts
- Threat of centralisation, loss of local provision, student facing services
- Not clear how such a large distributed operations will be connected into a coherent organisation
- Question if the merger will only deliver for all three partners equally or benefit some more than others
- Alignment benefits of merging three UHI partners insufficient to achieve the real change required for all of UHI; all UHI partner colleges should merge
- Rationale provided is overly optimistic; consequences of not merging not spelled out
- Educational rationale should not be expressed only by reference to employers' needs, but based on students' desire to learn (committing to education for education's sake)

No	Response to Question 1		Name	Organisation
1	No	I see benefits for the student experience in the consultation document. What I do see is a lot of management speak which has little or no direct relevance to the student. There are many ways I would like to change the system and effect the experience I am currently having with the UHI	Jamie Moloney	
2	Yes	I am yes - but with comments. I also would like to know how the rumoured SRUC merger with UHI plays out within all this? A Stronger unified sector approach - hopefully will happen to offer consistency across the region. Hospitality & Food & Drink as examples	John Murray	
3	No	I think this merger is an interesting but ultimately detrimental proposal and is very obviously nothing more than a cost cutting exercise... In fact I as a student am very sad they are even considering it.	Hector Malcolm	
4	Yes	We are keen to see this merger going forward and have advocated for this kind of activity within the UHI partnership for years. The merger will not just fix issues relating an unsustainable curriculum and poor student experience but also start fixing some of the wider UHI partnership issues in terms of governance. We hope that money saved by this merger is finally reinvested into the student experience and not taken up by backroom functions. We also hope to see improvements around the estates of the merging partners to create a better and more creative learning areas as well as social spaces for students.	Florence Jansen	HISA
5	Yes	"We met as a group and carried out a SWOT analysis. Here are our results: Strengths: Larger college\Greater Diversity of courses\Bigger buying power – SFC Sharing of resources\Bigger voice in UHI Opportunities: Joining of all depts. Staff threats despite no compulsory redundancies; What happens if we don't merge? More course range wider range of courses\Better staff development Weaknesses: If all services merged will they be too diluted? Job security \Unknown outcomes \Financial burden on us if other colleges are in the red\Dispersed college centres connectivity Threats: Other big organisations merging not always successful\Jobs security\Unknown outcomes Smaller centres may be squeezed out \World looking at more local way of living - is this a disadvantage for us?"	Learning Centre Managers	WHC

6	Yes	<p>CNSRP welcomes the opportunity to respond to the merger consultation and is supportive of the rationale and proposed benefits. The Better Future Together document presents a clear vision and benefits for student, staff and communities for the colleges which are pursuing merger options.</p> <p>We would anticipate a strong partnership between the leadership of any new merged colleges and CNSRP and continued commitment to local delivery in Caithness and North Sutherland</p>	Peter Faccenda	Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP)
7	No	<p>"We have responded 'no' to this question because a binary choice of answers was given. Having only a yes/no response to such a rich question is not a legitimate way to conduct a consultation. This is a biased approach to consultation which is not ethical.</p> <p>We are supportive of elements of the proposal with qualifications. The 'Benefits of Joining Together' section of the consultation document outlines the perceived rationale behind the merger. It is difficult to disagree with the proposed benefits outlined but the devil is in the detail. The 'how' 'who' and 'when' are not answered. For example 'increasing curriculum offering' may be a positive but there is no detail on how this would be done by who mode of teaching or impact this can have on workload. We would prefer to see a detailed educational rationale for the merger first and foremost. Making a statement such as 'delivering these benefits will improve the health and wellbeing of our staff' is relatively forthright when there is little evidence of how some aspects will be accomplished.</p> <p>Statements such as 'we will reduce the duplication of task and share workloads more effectively' sound positive but the flip side may be changes to staff working practices or redundancies. Aspects of the rationale will require to be further consulted on and negotiated by recognised trade unions who represent staff in the three impacted colleges.</p> <p>We believe that education should be for education's sake. Whilst the we understand the funding constraints in the Further Education sector education as a universal principle must be at the core of the merger. Statements such as 'we will be able to offer enhanced employability skills, ensuring access to a local workforce and skills pipeline matching local demand and need' and 'we will be able to offer more responsive sectoral provision specialist research and entrepreneurial opportunities creating new opportunities for inward investment opportunities into our rural and island areas' cause concern as we believe educational provision should not be determined only by employers' needs. The hope from this proposal would be a wider curriculum offer which also expresses students' (and prospective students') desire to learn; not only a desire to be employed locally.</p>	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch

		<p>There are potential benefits to bringing all tertiary education into one entity across the West and North Highlands and Western Isles. The merger could bring about more coherent planning of such provision across the area or may bring potential cost savings from economies of scale although redundancies will need to be avoided.</p> <p>Another element is around the potential financial impact of three colleges no longer 'competing' for funding from UHI/SFC. However this will only be beneficial if the finances are not diverted into a top-heavy management structure or otherwise reduced due to other rationalisations such as redundancies.</p> <p>Furthermore the ability for the new college to 'break-even' may remain challenging as evidenced by the fact that no other island-based college in Scotland makes a surplus. We don't think that Further Education colleges should make surpluses of any great extent as money should be invested back into teaching and learning. However it is likely that the new entity will continue to rely on the SFC via UHI for the majority of its funding. As such the new college may find itself competing with other UHI colleges for funding from SFC which could put pressure on other UHI colleges.</p> <p>There could be further benefits through an enhanced student experience particularly from a greater range of extra-curricular activities providing a more holistic educational experience. However any such benefits outlined in the consultation document will only be realised if adequate resources are dedicated towards investment. In short much more detail is needed around the 'who, what, when, where, why, how' of this merger project before any substantive points can be made as part of this consultation."</p>		
8	Yes	<p>We acknowledge that the status quo is not an option and that each college is committed and positive about what the merger can deliver for the communities within which the three colleges are based. We are supportive of a merger that ensures greater benefits for the local communities; strengthens the existing colleges creating a stronger partner within the UHI; aligns and meets the needs of businesses and communities (student and wider); delivers excellent curricula; has the capacity to work collaboratively with wider stakeholders tackling larger projects (including research and innovation) that are relevant locally regionally, nationally and internationally creating opportunities for sustainable economic development and a green and just transition.</p>	Morven Cameron	HIE
9	No	<p>"The EIS has responded 'no' to this question because a binary choice of answers was given. Having only a yes/no response to such a rich question is not a legitimate way to conduct a consultation.</p>	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA

	<p>The EIS is supportive of elements of the proposal, with qualifications. The “Benefits of Joining Together” section of the consultation document outlines the perceived rationale behind the merger. It is difficult to disagree with the proposed benefits outlined but the devil is in the detail. The “how’s, who’s and when’s” are not answered. For example, “increasing curriculum offering” may be a positive but there is no detail on how this would be done, by who, mode of teaching or impact this can have on workload. The EIS would prefer to see a detailed educational rationale for the merger first and foremost. Making a statement such as “delivering these benefits will improve the health and wellbeing of our staff” is relatively forthright when there is little evidence of how some aspects will be accomplished.</p> <p>Statements such as “we will reduce the duplication of task and share workloads more effectively” sound positive but the flip side may be changes to staff working practices or redundancies. Aspects of the rationale will require to be further consulted on, and negotiated by recognised trade unions who represent staff in the three impacted colleges.</p> <p>The EIS believe that education should be for education’s sake. Whilst the EIS understands the funding constraints in the Further Education sector, indeed across all of the public sector, education as a universal principle must be at the core of the merger. Statements such as “we will be able to offer enhanced employability skills, ensuring access to a local workforce and skills pipeline matching local demand and need” and “we will be able to offer more responsive sectoral provision, specialist research and entrepreneurial opportunities, creating new opportunities for inward investment opportunities into our rural and island areas” cause concern as the EIS believes educational provision should not be determined solely by employers’ needs. The hope from this proposal would be a wider curriculum offer which also expresses student’s (and prospective student’s) desire to learn; not only a desire to be employed locally</p> <p>There are potential benefits to bringing all tertiary education into one entity across the West and North Highlands and Western Isles. The merger could bring about more coherent planning of such provision across the area or may bring potential cost savings from economies of scale, although redundancies will need to be avoided. Another element is around the potential financial impact of three colleges no longer ‘competing’ for funding from UHI/SFC. However, this will only be beneficial if the finances are not diverted into a top-heavy management structure or otherwise reduced due to other rationalisations such as redundancies. The EIS believes monies should always be re-invested in the core teaching and learning aspects of further education.</p> <p>Furthermore, the ability for the new college to 'break-even' may remain challenging, as evidenced by the fact that no other island-based college in Scotland makes a surplus. The EIS does not propose that Further</p>		
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		<p>Education colleges should make surpluses of any great extent as money should be re-invested. However, it is likely that the new entity will continue to rely on the SFC, via UHI, for the majority of its funding – as it should. As such, the new college may find itself ‘competing’ with other UHI colleges for funding from SFC which could put pressure on other UHI colleges.</p> <p>There could be further benefits through an enhanced student experience, particularly from a greater range of extra-curricular activities, providing a more holistic educational experience. However, any such benefits outlined in the consultation document will only be realised if adequate resources are dedicated towards investment. In short, much more detail is needed around the ‘who, what, when, where, why, how’ of this merger project before any substantive points can be made as part of this consultation.</p> <p>The EIS look forward to engaging in further consultation when the merger proposal evolves and to future negotiations regarding our members’ terms and conditions, working practices and other issues."</p>		
10	Yes	Fully supportive, it makes perfect sense. In the short-term this provides the opportunity to assure the financial viability underpinning our curriculum and professional support activities. Longer term it then provides a stronger foundation from which to improve the effectiveness and efficiency with which staff and resources are deployed to deliver curriculum, research, commercial services & training and professional support – all of which in turn will benefit the communities and students that the 3 colleges currently serve.	Giles Huby	
11	Yes	"I am supportive of this merger but PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE do not use it as an opportunity to cut and centralise key student facing services."	Robert James	
12	Yes	Makes sense to have stronger voice and offer more networked provision.	withheld	
13	Yes	"Maintain a base level of student experience across the organisation which can then be built upon. Ensure staff structures are clear and work well to provide a good student experience for all staff are currently spread too thin and this can impact the experience.	withheld	
14	Yes	Makes business sense	withheld	
15	No	"The broad concept of a merger amongst the academic partners that comprise the University of the Highlands and Islands is sound but the scale scope and ambition of this proposed merger of only three of	withheld	

		<p>those colleges that together comprise only a small percentage of the overall university studentship income and regional impact is unfortunately lacking.</p> <p>Economically educationally and politically the only sensible move would be a complete merger and restructuring of the entire academic partnership as a single legal entity (i.e. the University of the Highlands and Islands as a single organisation rather than a loose partnership with duplication of executive roles and associated very high overheads).</p> <p>The only viable way forward to secure the organisation's long term future is to be bold in the vision of merging ALL partners rather than this piecemeal 'coalition of the willing' between WHC, NHC and Lews Castle."</p>		
16	Yes	<p>I understand the reasons and thinking behind the merger proposals and the financial pressures facing the 3 colleges. Reducing senior management costs is the easy bit; the low hanging fruit. Integrating three quite different curriculum offerings and staff systems will pose a greater challenge.</p> <p>But the proposals do not get to grips with the fundamental problem of governance within UHI. Reducing the number of academic partner colleges within the federation by two is akin to kicking the governance tin can down the road. At some point in the future this issue has to be addressed.</p>	withheld	
17	No	I believe these colleges should be helping their respective communities with contribution of any kind the college can provide	withheld	
18	Yes	Inefficient to maintain duplicate teams and ways of working across the Partnership.	withheld	
19	Yes		withheld	
20	No	Supportive of the need to have a stronger voice/more opportunity for peripheral colleges within UHI	withheld	
21	Yes	Very supportive of any merger that aims to improve the quality	withheld	
22	Yes	"Mixed feelings it is an exciting opportunity and will make us a much bigger organisation but also its the fear of the unknown and change. Staff are familiar with the current set up and their job roles and responsibilities. In creating a much bigger organisation; how will all the departments work together? It takes time to gel as a larger organisation some staff have been through the Lochaber & Skye and Wester Ross College Merger and are aware of the Pro Cons. Concerns how that took time to work well and really came to	withheld	

		fruition during the Pandemic. Concerns with this being on a larger scale with multiple centres will it take as long? Struggling to see the picture and what it will look like "		
23	Yes	"Yes, I think it will be great to have a big powerful mostly rural partner in UHI"	withheld	
24	Yes	"It's easy to see that a larger organisation has a bigger 'clout' within the UHI family but not clear where the economies of scale come from given the statement that there will be no redundancies or merging of courses. NHC already operates a distributed teaching model."	withheld	
25	Yes	Dounreay welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposed merger consultation taking place. The vision and benefits for students, staff and communities is clear and is something that we would support. Leadership between the new merged colleges would need to be made clear and the expertise and specialism of the three different colleges should be exploited in full, thus providing, stronger and combined messages back into the larger UHI	withheld	
26	No	"As way of introduction I am a part-time lecturer at Lews Castle College having previously been a Senior Manager in another Organisation. I am very surprised that the consultation document published contains very little objective evidence of benefits perceived and is presented in very optimistic but imprecise wording. From my point of view this is very disappointing and having been involved in many such exercises I would have expected better. For example on page 4 there are statements about improving equity of opportunity acting as a catalyst to change and seeking to unlock new opportunities etc. These are merely hopeful statements without any evidence for achieving this. It is important to focus on outcomes rather than on activities and this seems high on activities-we are working very hard without quantifiable outcomes. On page 5 there are some expected outcomes. But again they are aspirational and not measurable. I would have expected to see a document that had measurable is outcomes timescales and evidence of the existing situation and an action plan for achievement of the new expected outcomes-with expected quantification of these. This seems to me to be very risky proposition and as such I would have expected to see a very comprehensive risk register attached to the document. If the colleges go ahead with the merger then it	withheld	

		<p>would be almost impossible to disentangle such a merger and this would be disastrous for Lews Castle College and will make it very vulnerable to external influences.</p> <p>Some of the language used in the consultation document is not understood (page 9). For example what is an 'anchor institution'? This vision statement seems to be wholly inappropriate and written by an advertising agency. The behaviour section is lacking any objective evidence of how we will become bold agile or collaborative and seems meaningless.</p> <p>On page 10 under the benefits section there is great aspiration but I see no sign of mechanisms that will be used to deliver such benefits-all very hopeful but lacking any way of achieving this.</p> <p>At the very least there should be detailed metrics covering the existing provisions of all three colleges to establish baseline data with benchmarking of similar universities within the UK. Once it's established would be the time to plan the alleged improvements that may be forthcoming from such a merger with the measurements and data that would flow from such a merger.</p> <p>There needs to be a comprehensive risk register for the merger and mitigations for the serious risks that may be foreseen.</p> <p>So in summary I find this document lacking detail measurable objectives evidence without any coherent plan of how such a merger would benefit Lews Castle College. It would appear that the decision has already been made since a Merger Administration Officer has been recruited"</p>		
27	Yes	<p>The three colleges and their stakeholder groups appear to be enthusiastic and positive with the expressed ambition. A great deal of work will have gone into the proposals to date and informed and enthusiastic 'self-help' is to be valued and applauded.</p>	withheld	
28		<p>"We are broadly supportive of the move to merge the three Colleges, and agree with the general principles. In particular, we agree and support the need to develop a new approach to tertiary education within the region that takes into account the significant economic and social changes of the past years, along with the growing need for a green economic recovery and growth strategy for the reason.</p> <p>The consultation document provides a clear rationale for the move and sets out a clear vision of the benefits it will bring. We would sound one note of caution in that a key benefit at present of the separate colleges is their ability to be responsive to specific local community and business requirements. Beyond the proposal to</p>	withheld	

		<p>create Local Advisory Committees, it is not clear at present what the management and governance arrangements of the merged College will look like. When this structure is being developed, we would emphasise that retaining a clear understanding of and responsiveness to the needs of the three different communities currently served must form a core part of the process.</p> <p>At present, each College offers not only regional but subject-matter expertise – to pick three examples, North Highland College UHI in Equine Studies, Lews Castle College in Gaelic, and West Highland College in Adventure Studies. At the same time, there is significant overlap in other areas such as Health and Social Care.</p> <p>As the consultation document notes, there is a real opportunity here to deliver “A stronger, sustainable and enhanced local curriculum offer”, and we support that aim. It is important, however, that the unique selling points of the existing three Colleges not be diluted as a result of the merger. As the merger process proceeds, it would be helpful for local stakeholders to have a greater understanding of how the current expertise distributed across the various campuses will be merged and managed.</p> <p>Finally, a key concern for the North Highlands in the coming years is population loss and skills drain. We believe that the proposals for a merged College could, if a truly distributed learning model is developed, offer a real opportunity to address and even in some cases reverse these trends, and we are pleased to see such strong recognition of this in the document.</p>		
29	Yes	<p>Yes: The Dounreay Stakeholder Group (DSG) welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the proposed merger consultation. Broadly there is support for this merger as long as it provides the strength and depth that joining of three colleges can bring to the UHI landscape.</p>	withheld	

Question 2. Do you agree with the proposed Shared Vision and Purpose statement?

	Number	yes	no	Additional Comments
Responses received	24	18	6	20
Responses published	24			
Summary of responses	<p>75% of respondents agreed with the proposed shared vision and purpose statement, with 25% opposed.</p> <p>Almost all respondents offered comments to qualify their responses. The following points are of note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of employers in the region, including greater alignment of provision with key and emerging sectors of the Highlands and Islands economy • seamless pathway through school, college and workplaces to sustainable employment and career enhancing opportunities • Vision and Purpose statement should be created and developed by staff and students as a joint activity (statement of intent on collaborative working) • Vision and Purpose statement should be engaged on with employers to ensure it reflects their needs more clearly • the current mission and vision for the merger needs to have far greater ambition for the communities it represents, becoming more than the anchor institution that it already is • commitment to sustainable development and a just transition to net zero is essential ('sustainable' not enough) -expectation of leadership for UHI in this area • why not adopt the UHI values? • Need a clear strategy and plan to deliver on the Vision and Purpose, with clear and transparent processes for that delivery and monitoring of success • Concern that the merger will dilute the USP and quality offer of each of the current three constituent colleges 			

No	Response to Question 2		Name	Organisation
1	Yes		John Murray	
2	No	LCC is great for music arts and computing studies; WHC for outdoor education, sport and leisure and NHC for energy environment etc. I think this merger will severely dilute each colleges reputation and quality of education. "	Hector Malcolm	
3	Yes		Florence Jansen	HISA
4	Yes	In Theory	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
5	Yes	<p>CNSRP is broadly supportive of the shared vision and welcomes that the benefits for students, staff and communities are clearly articulated.</p> <p>However, the vision and benefit statements could be strengthened by having a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of employers in the region, including greater alignment of provision with key and emerging sectors of the Highlands and Islands economy.</p> <p>There is also an ongoing requirement to provide seamless pathway through school, college and workplaces to sustainable employment and career enhancing opportunities</p>	Peter Faccenda	Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP)
6	No	<p>"We have responded 'no' to this question because a binary choice of answers was given. Having only a yes/no response to such a rich question is not a legitimate way to conduct a consultation. This is a biased approach to consultation which is not ethical.</p> <p>Vision and Purpose statements can often be seen as inconsequential or hollow unless they are substantively very clear on the reason and rationale behind them. The EIS believes the Vision and Purpose statement should be created and developed by staff and students as a joint activity. This practice would be both a statement of intent on collaborative working and a better way of ensuring the Vision and Purpose Statement adequately reflects the college community's shared aims and objectives. The EIS does not believe consulting on this statement which is a very earnest list of adjectives and nouns will provide great meaning</p>	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch

		for staff and students. Instead the very process of formulating the Vision and Purpose statement will highlight the ethos and principles of the new college."		
7	Yes	"As the economic and community development agency for the Highlands and Islands we believe the current mission and vision for the merger needs to have far greater ambition for the communities it represents. We already view the UHI and academic partners as an anchor institution and as a result believe the vision needs to inspire its staff students and wider community leading and working with others responding to the opportunities and challenges that exist becoming more than the anchor institution that it already is. If this is not something that the merger believes it can achieve then further consideration as to how this can be achieved is still required in order that the opportunities can be realised and challenges overcome. We acknowledge and welcome the reference in the initial statement to the proposed merger making a significant contribution to a green recovery the vision and mission however lack any reference to the climate emergency and just transition. The use of the word sustainable is taken to mean financial sustainability as opposed to sustainability in its fullest sense. We believe that commitment to sustainable development and a just transition to net zero is essential and will be something expected by students employers and other stakeholders. We look to UHI and the proposed merger to lead in this area across its estates academic and professional services"	Morven Cameron	HIE
8	No	"The EIS has responded 'no' to this question because a binary choice of answers was given. Having only a yes/no response to such a rich question is not a legitimate way to conduct a consultation. Vision and Purpose statements can often be seen as inconsequential or hollow unless they are substantively very clear on the reason and rationale behind them. The EIS believes the Vision and Purpose statement should be created and developed by staff and students as a joint activity. This practice would be both a statement of intent on collaborative working and a better way of ensuring the Vision and Purpose Statement adequately reflects the college community's shared aims and objectives. The EIS does not believe consulting on this statement – which is a very earnest list of adjectives and nouns – will provide great meaning for staff and students. Instead, the very process of formulating the Vision and Purpose statement will highlight the ethos and principles of the new college.	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA
9	Yes	Yes, but... The current vision and strategic statements were compiled in a necessarily short timescale, therefore it is recommended that they should be considered provisional at this point. Why? From past experience it takes much longer to develop these strategic elements in such a way that they are distinctive, relevant and compelling for our staff, students and stakeholders, therefore they should be reviewed and updated during the 1st year. Moreover, it is vital that staff are fully engaged in this process from the start in	Giles Huby	

		order to obtain their buy-in and to help reinforce the 'one team' message of the New College. Finally on this topic, I don't understand why we need to have different values to the UHI values of Collaboration, Openness, Respect and Excellence. This feels like we are being different to UHI for the sake of it, when actually those UHI values are 100% relevant and applicable to the New College and say almost identical things about our ethos.		
10	Yes	"Creating a common integrated identity that is collaborative and collegiate. No digging trenches to defend entrenched positions!! Get this right student services will blossom"	Robert James	
11	Yes	Hard to disagree with those sentiments.	withheld	
12	Yes	A clear plan/strategy so that we all know where we are heading and what our priorities are	withheld	
13		<p>"The broad concept of a merger amongst the academic partners that comprise the University of the Highlands and Islands is sound but the scale scope and ambition of this proposed merger of only three of those colleges that together comprise only a small percentage of the overall university studentship income and regional impact is unfortunately lacking.</p> <p>Economically educationally and politically the only sensible move would be a complete merger and restructuring of the entire academic partnership as a single legal entity (i.e. the University of the Highlands and Islands as a single organisation rather than a loose partnership with duplication of executive roles and associated very high overheads).</p> <p>The only viable way forward to secure the organisation's long term future is to be bold in the vision of merging ALL partners rather than this piecemeal 'coalition of the willing' between WHC, NHC and Lews Castle"</p>	withheld	
14	Yes	"The proposals address the what and the why but not the how. The document is big on aspirations but lacks any detail about how the merger will be carried out. A feature of recent UHI academic partner meetings have been debates on how to ensure a fair and reasonable settlement of budget allocations. I can see this now being replicated on a smaller scale within the new college and its constituent parts."	withheld	
15	Yes		withheld	
16	Yes		withheld	

17	Yes	"Standardisation same student experience for all align all processes and procedures"	withheld	
18	Yes	It's ambitious and exciting.	withheld	
19	Yes	"Improving the learning experience for its students, setting up an Alumni, helping graduates into employment and collecting data on work destinations. "	withheld	
20		<p>"Dounreay is broadly supportive of the shared vision and purpose statement.</p> <p>It is imperative that there is a strong link to the needs of employers and while we recognise this takes place at North Highland College this cannot be diluted as it will over the coming years become important to focus on grater alignment of key and emerging sectors of the Far North economy.</p> <p>This in turn would allow the curriculums of the merger proposal to retain the expertise and specialisms that each college currently delivers enhancing the offering by working closely together.</p> <p>Upskilling and re-skilling will become a key focus at Dounreay over the coming years as the site moves to closure. The workforce will need to transition into future new sectors and therefore alignment and upskilling in those emerging industries is key to the economics of the area.</p> <p>There is also an ongoing requirement to provide seamless pathway through school, college and workplaces to sustainable employment and career enhancing opportunities."</p>	withheld	
21	No	See above - no evidence given for outcomes.	withheld	
22	Yes	The almost fairy-tale tone of the "Building a Better Future Together' consultative document belies the fact that the proposal comes about at a time of stringent budgetary pressures for all in the sector. Whilst it is understandable that the proposal majors on benefits and the longer term it perhaps ought to acknowledge that in such a proposal there will be challenges and no doubt stress and uncertainty for individuals during the merger process. There is also the possibility of some 'distancing' from some of the remaining colleges in the wider UHI partnership. In short then the tone in the consultative document has (I feel) an understandably overly optimistic bias.	withheld	
23		As noted above, we welcome that the benefits of the proposed merger are clearly articulated and we are in broad agreement with the overall proposed Shared Vision and Purpose statement. We would note that, as with all such aspirational statements, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating and it is important that clear and transparent processes are in place to ensure that the merged College is delivering towards this statement. We would note our disappointment here at the lack of reference to local employers or to the	withheld	

		<p>(sub)regional economies that will be served by the merged College as part of the overall vision, although there is more detailed reference to them in the benefits section.</p> <p>While we appreciate that Colleges, and education providers in general, have wider responsibilities to their students than to prepare them for the world of work, the tertiary education sector is nonetheless a key part of the pipeline from education to employment. These statements could be greatly strengthened by more closely aligning them with the wider economic priorities for the region.</p>		
24	Yes	<p>"Employer needs will be fully engaged with the shared vision and purpose and would expect that employer engagement would be increased to ensure colleges takes their needs into account. How do the colleges currently engage and understand the needs of employers?"</p>	withheld	

Question 3. What do you see as the main priorities for the new merged college in its first three years of operation?

	Number
Responses received	27
Responses published	23
Summary of responses	<p>The following main points were offered in response to this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuring strong leadership and a clear management structure • Focus on student engagement, including ensuring students are at the heart of the new college • Strong staff engagement in developing the new college, with focus on staff health and wellbeing and fair work (Respect, Security, Opportunity, Fulfilment and Effective Voice) • Minimise disruption of change impact on staff and students, aiming for a seamless transition to the new college • Avoid loss of staff talent during period of significant change • Secure student retention and focus on increasing student recruitment into the new college • Provide a staff development/culture programme so staff can co-create the new college and its culture and collective ambition • Ensure lessons learnt are captured and made available to the whole UHI partnership • Delivering on the stated benefits of the merged college, foremost on shared provision and expanded curriculum • Ensuring local is retained and USPs are not diluted • Ensuring the college avoids looking inward only in establishing itself in the early merger implementation and integration phase, and focuses outward to ensure it delivers a proactive leadership role within its communities and with key partners • Develop a sound governance base on which to proceed • Agree priority areas for collaboration, alignment and investment (including estates and capital projects) with communities and key partners, including skills, tertiary pathways, research and innovation

No	Response to Question 3	Name	Organisation
1	Streamlining staff - strong leadership and management without too many roles duplicated or created.	John Murray	
2	No	Hector Malcolm	
3	Student experience staff satisfaction and sustainability	Florence Jansen	HISA
4	Maintaining a local service as a tertiary education provider within rural communities. To ensure staff security staff should be kept informed of updates and changes... Expansion of shared provision. Good and transparent communication between merged colleges	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
6	The health and wellbeing of staff has to be integral to the college. Issues such as staff travel and hybrid working amongst others are conditions of service which require to be negotiated between the employer and recognised trade unions prior to merger. The new college should recognise trade unions locally as well as being a signatory to the National Recognition and Procedures Agreement. This is an important opportunity to ensure the principles of 'Fair Work a Respect Security Opportunity Fulfilment and Effective Voice' are embedded within the organisation and staffs working lives.	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch
7	<p>The first three years will be important in terms of the merger process with the administrative functions requiring attention however it comes at a time of great importance for the areas which face a combination of significant challenges and opportunities. As a result it is essential that the colleges have the capacity to look up and out taking a proactive and leadership role within their communities and with key partners. We believe the following priorities could be considered:</p> <p>Establishing the governance processes and related systems that will enable the realisation of the Colleges overarching vision in conjunction with wider place based priorities;</p>	Morven Cameron	HIE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the wider community including public" private and third sector to agree priority areas and opportunities for collaboration and alignment (i.e. offshore wind aquaculture Gaelic tourism blue economy space and other areas such as growth deals " infrastructure investment and accommodation. • The provision of tertiary opportunities and pathways (education" skills " research and innovation) including investment in delivering improvements to existing curriculum/ new models of delivery • Ensuring that the research" business and innovation functions are strengthened with greater collaboration across the proposed merged colleges acknowledging their contribution to attracting people to the region whilst contributing to excellent " high impact and internationally relevant research on issues that are relevant to rural and island locations not just locally but across the world • Progression of the range of capital investment projects currently under development or awaiting a funding package which will ensure the estate" facilities and equipment requirements to deliver excellent education and research are fit for purpose. The Advancing Manufacturing Centre which is for all SME in the West Highlands and the whole H&I area is an excellent example of a leading initiative in UHI Colleges connecting the region directly with the National Manufacturing Institute of Scotland. 		
8	<p>The health and wellbeing of staff has to be integral to the college. Issues such as staff travel and hybrid working, amongst others, are conditions of service which require to be negotiated between the employer and recognised trade unions prior to merger. The new college should recognise trade unions locally as well as being a signatory to the National Procedure and Recognition Agreement. This is an important opportunity to ensure the principles of Fair Work – Respect, Security, Opportunity, Fulfilment and Effective Voice – are embedded within the organisation and staff’s working lives.</p> <p>Having secure, content, and healthy staff will have a significant impact on the quality of education students engage with. Staff who are teaching the courses are absolutely fundamental to the success of the college.</p>	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA
9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster a positive workplace culture as priority #1, because this constitutes the DNA of the New College. This is hard to do and is not simply achieved by having aspirational statements in strategy and policy documents. It requires continual effort, communication and leadership by example at every level of the organisation. 2. Implement an interim day 1 staffing structure, then evaluate and define what the ‘final’ structure should be over the 1st year. After that the end state structure can be progressed towards with current staff and, where required, through staff turnover. 3. Using the principles of the UHI Tertiary Curriculum Review, identify opportunities across the New College for (a) optimising delivery of HE and FE courses and (b) how to use the capacity created (update materials and pedagogy, CPD, develop short/commercial courses etc) 	Giles Huby	

	<p>4. Develop and publish the New College strategy for year 2 onwards – essential to include consultation throughout the process with staff, students, UHI and other relevant partners.</p> <p>5. Implement program of integration workstreams to plan, implement, monitor and continuously improve the joining up and delivery of key processes and outputs across curriculum, student journey, professional support, research and commercial.</p> <p>6. Provide UHI with an integration lessons learned report to support subsequent UHI integration planning.</p>		
10	Library service and supply IT and video conferencing facilities help with admin and funding queries	Robert James	
11	Look for ways to make workload more manageable for staff in all three colleges through managing workload more efficiently	withheld	
12	More help for students to get into employment. Additional support for mental health. Access to online and physical services at the times and locations STUDENTS need them not what suits us as a business	withheld	
13	I see the only viable and sensible option as a merger of all partners and consolidation as a single legal entity. This should be the top priority for all UHI partners and colleges.	withheld	
14	<p>Each of the three colleges provide programmes that are particular. Safe guarding the uniqueness of each college provision will be a priority.</p> <p>A programme of staff development to ensure that teaching staff "buy in" to the new model.</p> <p>Enhanced programme of student advice and guidance to ensure students aren't lost in the new arrangements.</p> <p>Ensuring that established programmes with local secondary schools are maintained.</p> <p>Each college runs a number of satellite centres that provide services across large geographic areas of the north and west of Scotland. Protecting this provision will be an important indicator of the success of the proposed merger. LCC has recently embarked on an expensive collaboration with other community partners in South Uist. How will this feature in the detailed discussions?</p>	withheld	

	I expect a voluntary severance package will be put in place. The challenge will be when the "wrong" staff ie those that the colleges want to hang on to begin to apply.		
15	To become more efficiently structured whilst representing the needs of the local communities.	withheld	
16	Unique Local Excellent. Fear that we will lose our purpose and origin will accessible education at FE level continue to be available at local college centres for people who potentially can't leave the area or are not ready to? Will shared delivery bring more networked delivery and more HE delivery?	withheld	
17	Don't lose staff.	withheld	
18	Having been a former NHC and OU student the value of shared learning cannot be over emphasised. Whilst there will always be courses that can only be accessed remotely we need to support local learning wherever possible	withheld	
19	Utilising a blended approach an Increased provision of in-work learning and expanding existing upskilling and reskilling interventions would be helpful. Alignment to emerging sectors to encourage growth in student numbers. Effective communication and engagement with communities" stakeholders and partners in Caithness area (this would include North Sutherland as part of the Dounreay Travel to Work area)	withheld	
20	See above - no evidence given for outcomes.	withheld	
21	As close to a seamless transition as possible for students and staff with positive local and regional press/media reporting. Case studies to demonstrate that a variety of the beneficial aspects set out in the consultative document have been delivered. Evidence of continuing positive support from both students and staff and confirmation that all three Local Advisory Committees are supportive of the way the merger has been developing.	withheld	
22	As noted above, the tertiary education sector is a key part of the pipeline from education to employment and we welcome the recognition of this when considering the benefits that the merged College will bring to students.	withheld	

	<p>We would see this as being a major priority for the new College in the first three years of operation – firstly to ensure understanding of and alignment with the wider regional and sub-regional economic priorities and development plans, and then focusing the College’s delivery on preparing students for the changing world of work within the region.</p> <p>With the difficulty in general of attracting individuals to live and work in the region, it is clear that a greater focus on upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce will be key to enabling future economic developments. The merged College should, therefore, look not only to the pipeline of students coming in from secondary education, but work closely with local employers and other agencies to enhance the provision of adult and in-work learning to enable this.</p> <p>There will be a continued need to attract students to the area for learning and employment opportunities, and by focusing on key growth sectors both across the region as a whole (renewable energy) and development of sub-regional specialties – looking at the opportunities for hydrogen within the North Highlands, for example – the College should aim for growth in student numbers in courses aligned to these growth sectors.</p> <p>As part of this, the College will need to prioritise close alignment and consultation with employers and representative bodies such as Chambers of Commerce within the region to understand both the immediate and upcoming skills needs and work to align learning offer to these. The College should also continue to work with Developing the Young Workforce initiatives across the region to build a clear pathway from school into further education and onwards into the workforce.</p> <p>We have already noted above the local specialisms offered by the existing Colleges, and we believe there is a real opportunity to build on those and develop regional centres of excellence in specialised subjects, providing further opportunities to draw students into the area.</p>		
23	Upskilling, reskilling and aligning the needs for emerging industries to ensure a pipeline of young people being trained for the industries that are looking to employ. Ensuring the curriculum meets these future opportunities.	withheld	

Question 4. It is proposed to create three Local Advisory Committees to ensure the right learning can be retained in the right place. In your view, what is the most important part of local college provision?

	Number
Responses received	21
Responses published	18
Summary of responses	<p>The following main points were offered in response to this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community and business needs, including local skills requirements • Maintaining local access and college centres in each location for students • Flexible, attractive and high quality lifelong learning provision, with clear pathways to local employment and entrepreneurship opportunities • Curriculum co-designed with employers • Local advisory committees welcome, but clarification required of their remit, scope and decision making power/influence, as well as how the three committees interact within the new college • A strong local offer relevant to each local need and market demand • Focus on talent retention and attraction • Focus on equity of opportunity locally, both for young people as well as development for people in work • Ensure the new college remains rooted in and connected to local places and communities

No	Response to Question 4	Name	Organisation
1	Delivering for local skills/business needs - whilst also playing it's part delivering the National objectives	John Murray	
2	No	Hector Malcolm	
3	The connection to the local community and needs as well as integration of local culture	Florence Jansen	HISA
4	Accessibility to courses for students. Important also to remain in the public eye as go-to local provider - despite increase in online learning and home study.	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
5	The remit scope and decision-making powers of the Local Advisory Committees requires to be clarified. The interaction between these committees the new college Board or the new Group Board plus local colleges Board and UHI has to be clear in terms of remit.	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch
6	<p>We welcome the creation of Local Advisory Committees to represent the priorities of the local areas and fully support the membership being representative of the wider community. The remit and level of authority held by the proposed Local Advisory Committees will be important particularly within the wider UHI governance model to ensure that the priorities are represented.</p> <p>We believe that the following are an important part of local college provision for the areas: Flexibility and adaptability in terms of curriculum content that is aligned to need with an eye on the future enabling greater resilience and opportunities for innovation with the businesses and wider community; but also in terms of mechanisms of delivery to meet the needs of the people and place taking into consideration technology and changes to the approaches to learning and teaching. Attractive to learners with pathways to local employment (including research within the associated research institutes) and entrepreneurship opportunities" " with local employers involved in curriculum design and delivery. Accessibility and inclusion providing exciting lifelong learning opportunities and continuing professional development</p>	Morven Cameron	HIE

7	The remit, scope and decision-making powers of the Local Advisory Committees requires to be clarified. The interaction between these committees, the new college Board or the new Group Board, and UHI has to be clear in terms of remit. Local accountability and local decision-making is important; but overall accountability and decision-making has to be transparent.	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA
8	The most important part of local college provision needs to be driven, site by site, by market demand – demographics, business needs etc. We need to ensure we enable students to become employment-ready for careers that will keep them in the region (if they wish to), and that they know they can come back for top-up courses, reskilling and further study that works round them. Each of the 3 colleges has its own specialisations, but the Green Economy is a relevant theme that provides enormous and sustained opportunities for all 3, especially wind energy, hydrogen, electrification, decarbonisation and workforce transition (from Oil & Gas, from Nuclear etc).	Giles Huby	
9	As above - the most important part is being part of an appropriately sized and scaled organisation. This merger of only 3 (comprising less than 25% of students and a fraction of overall income) is not sufficient.	withheld	
10	I expect that initially the existing college boards of management will transfer to become the local advisory committees. It is important that each committee demonstrates inclusiveness across it's geographical area. How the advisory committees deal with college history will be an important indicator of their usefulness.	withheld	
11	To be a part of the local community.	withheld	
12	Supporting students and communities. Keeping the work rooted in and connected to local places and communities.	withheld	
13	Outreach for senior High School students either in person or on-line to augment opportunities locally.	withheld	
14	Dounreay agrees with this approach but each local advisory committee needs to ensure close links into each other to ensure transparency and real partner working to maximise the benefits for all three colleges.	withheld	
15	Do not agree that Colleges should be merged.	withheld	

16	No comment - it must be up to the relevant local communities to determine that.	withheld	
17	<p>We welcome the proposal to create Local Advisory Committees and feel this will be a core part of meeting the priorities we have identified above. It is important that these Committees have real power to influence decisions made by the new College, and that they are made up of a representative group of those in each region who will be impacted by any such decisions.</p> <p>In our view, the most important part of local college provision is that it offers opportunities for skills development at all levels and across a broad range of subjects and sectors. The more opportunities that are available for young people to study in the region, and for the adult workforce to develop and retrain for work in growth sectors, the more we can retain talent within the region.</p>	withheld	
18	<p>From a Caithness & Sutherland point of view it is inevitable that given the amount of public funding provided that ETEC and the strong engineering presence in the area continues through the apprentice training to higher level education. As well as this, ERI is an important part of the North Highland College campus and this should not be diluted in any way from the area.</p> <p>With the use of blended learning it is key that each college works to its strengths and ensures that the student learning experience is valuable.</p> <p>Continued cooperative learning for senior High School students. Support for students and graduates in finding positive outcomes from their study, possibly an Alumni and tracking of ongoing careers.</p>	withheld	

Question 5. What additional provision or services would you like to see being made available locally as part of the new merged college?

	Number
Responses received	20
Responses published	19
Summary of responses	<p>The following main points were offered in response to this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear provision of tertiary pathways into local industry sectors (i.e. hospitality, food&drink) • A more sustainable curriculum with wider choice, retaining local access and progression • Clear connection of local college centres with each other and with their communities • Enhanced partnership working with key agencies (SDS, HIE) and business partners • Creating an 'interface' team between college and its local communities/businesses/third sector • Assure student and staff accommodation/housing • Expand work-base learning opportunities in each location • Share best practice on quality and pedagogy, as well as all other college key functions • Adopt all outcomes of NRPA and secure sustainable permanent working hours for staff • Explore co-location and partnership opportunities locally • Ensure 'local' covers all relevant areas of the college's geography (white spaces on map) • In order to secure market place, market our geographic USP and lifestyle benefits, not just curriculum provision

No	Response to Question 5	Name	Organisation
1	Clear Hospitality/Food & Drink pathways	John Murray	
2	Access to Reference only books currently individual sites protect these and don't let them off their own patch!	Robert James	
3	No	Hector Malcolm	
4	A more sustainable curriculum with a wider choice of courses and clearer pathways from FE to HE We would like to see the learning centres and lively learning hubs connected with each other and a vital part of the communities they are situated in with social spaces	Florence Jansen	HISA
5	Joined up approach to SDS advice and services for students - working in partnership. Increased access to employability services. Lack of term time accommodation for students out with local areas (in Fort William and Broadford on Skye remains an issue). Hard to attract students if nowhere for them to live or accommodation is too costly	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
6	We would like to see that any shared delivery agreements with Argyll College UHI do not result in reduced teaching hours for current WHC lecturers in a new merged college as these are currently based on a percentage share of teaching. We expect to see sustainable permanent hours for lecturing staff (the removal of the clause in contracts that allows hours to be decreased) and particularly do not want to see this clause used to reduce lecturers' hours after any merger as a way of getting around the commitment to avoid any compulsory redundancies as a result of a merger. Learning and teaching should be a priority at any new college and this means investing in lecturing staff rather than increasing staff at management levels. We believe that best practice that is currently happening at each college should be examined and expect this to be prioritised in the new college.	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch

7	<p>We believe the following to be of importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurship opportunities working alongside Business Gateway" " HIE and others. • The creation of a Development Team with posts per facility" creating a permanent new team for the proposed merged College providing the necessary interface between academia and local business communities " public and third sector that will deliver on ambitions. • Commitment to working with stakeholders to deliver suitable accommodation that will support growth of students and wider community needs along with exploration of opportunities for co-location opportunities with community" private and public sector facilities through education training " research. • A focus on meta skills, placements, programmes and continuing professional development opportunities that provide year-long activity; or shorter provision that support extended seasons supporting local economies. 	Morven Cameron	HIE
8	<p>The EIS expects to see sustainable permanent hours for lecturing staff. We do not expect a reduction in teaching hours. There requires to be harmonisation of terms and conditions to ensure the National Working Practices Agreement is adhered to when the National Recognition and Agreements Procedure is signed. Learning and teaching needs to be front and centre of investment which means adequately investing in lecturing staff</p> <p>The EIS wishes to see best practice within each local college examined and prioritised in the new college.</p>	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA
9	<p>Not a service, exactly, but can the merger provide this opportunity? To explain, we all currently work closely with public sector and enterprise/redevelopment organisations (HIE, Highland Council, chambers of commerce etc) and attend meetings with them (in some cases several different meetings/WGs with the same people). However if there was the opportunity to share premises with them or host them on our site(s) we could work with them rather than just hold meetings, and this would significantly increase the pace with which we all jointly bring tangible benefits to our communities.</p>	Giles Huby	
10	<p>The merger should involve consolidation of all partners under a single entity rather than this piecemeal approach which does not sufficiently address the wider challenges of the university.</p>	withheld	
11	<p>To be both a local choice for tertiary education for the community as well as expert / specialisms to be a location of choice for some courses / subjects.</p>	withheld	

12	<p>WHC currently has good progression routes with options from access to degree. Ensure to keep the continuity and if there is something that we do not offer can the other APs plug the gap? Changing the name causes confusion. Students and the public think of Skye as SMO and Fort William as Lochaber College. Can also be referred to as UHI or The UHI. Currently students in receipt of FE Funding will have a payment made by NHC when enrolled with WHC. Some students will have WHC as their enrolling Academic Partner but receive teaching from another partner. There is already confusion. If the merger will make us work as one entity then a single name but if we merge and retain identity keep as is.</p>	withheld	
13	<p>A gap on the map - the northwest corner of the mainland (where I live) - needs at least one dot! There are learning centres (e.g. Assynt Learning) and it would be great to support them and link them into the new college. We are currently neither West Highland nor North Highland but we're in your catchment.</p>	withheld	
14	<p>Expansion of Work Based Learning Provision In particular Foundation Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships. In addition given Dounreay is the main employer in the Caithness (and North Sutherland) area the NHC should also consider addressing the skills need in decommissioning and waste management. This could be for Dounreay in the short term but has the potential to expand to providing a learning experience for others within other Scottish nuclear sites.</p>	withheld	
15	<p>Do not merge</p>	withheld	
16	<p>No comment - it must be up to the relevant local communities to determine that.</p>	withheld	
17	<p>We would like to see further opportunities for work-based learning, not just within existing frameworks such as Foundation/Modern/Graduate Apprenticeships but looking for innovative solutions to deliver other accredited training and Continuing Professional Development to the workforce within the region. Additionally, while we appreciate that this is somewhat outwith the remit of the College, the potential to deliver Masters-level apprenticeships, should these become available within Scotland, would be a real coup for the merged College and a significant selling point for the region.</p>	withheld	
18	<p>The student experience – to compete with the universities in the central belt the rural colleges need to sell the life style of the various locations and provide a student experience.</p>	withheld	

	The area has much to offer and needs to be marketed properly to encourage students into the area.		
19	Enhanced programmes of student advice and guidance working in a closer partnership with feeder secondary schools. Greater engagement with local business and industry and a more responsive attitude based on "how can we best meet your needs" as opposed "to this is what we offer"	withheld	

Question 6. Name of the new college – In your view, should the new college continue to operate under the current names and brand identities of the three colleges within the UHI partnership brand, or move to a new single brand?

	Number
Responses received	21
Responses published	18
Summary of responses	<p>The following main points were offered in response to this question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A majority of respondents were in favour of a single name/brand, pointing to the need to create a single identity for the three colleges covering such a large geographic area and currently having three distinct cultures and identities. A single name/identity would be clear for both students and staff, as well as within UHI and external stakeholders. • Some respondents indicated that 'UHI' should be the main single identity, with current local brands retained • Some respondents indicated that it would be difficult to create a single identity which would adequately reflect the north/west highland and Outer Hebrides identities in a single name • Some respondents pointed to potential for a Gaelic single name, but recognised Gaelic may not be supported in North Highland communities • Some respondents preferred retention of local identities, indicating that change would lead to dilution of current local identity and market share, as well as confusion of students and stakeholders; they also pointed to the fact that local identities would be difficult to combine into a representative single brand or name • EIS FELA took this question as an opportunity to comment on 'group structure', corporate form and merger process, interpreting the question as one regarding governance approach rather than college name

No	Response to Question 6	Name	Organisation
1	Single Brand - However the rumored UHI/SRUC merger affects the brand name - if it went ahead.	John Murray	
2	No	Hector Malcolm	
3	Single Brand	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
4	<p>We believe this to be a question on governance rather than on the college's name. This question speaks to whether the merger is one which establishes a new 'Group' structure within UHI or establishes a new single entity college within UHI. We think there are two options for the new single entity, either a phoenix model or a host college.</p> <p>We are particularly concerned about the proposals for governance arrangements going forward. At the moment within the consultation literature there is no detail on governance proposals although the options were outlined in the consultant's report on merger.</p> <p>We are opposed to privatisation of Further Education colleges in Scotland. Whilst the EIS is aware that one of the colleges to be impacted by merger is historically a non-incorporated college we think now is the time for UHI to show commitment to ensuring FE provision remains in the public sector as outlined and supported by the Scottish Government's historical and recent commitment to ensuring ONS classification of FE remains as public bodies.</p> <p>We would be concerned that any move to the creation of an unincorporated body essentially results in the delivery of Further Education by a private company i.e. privatisation. Given the level of public funding which is invested in FE this would appear to be contrary to the expressed intention of the Scottish Government to ensure that governance and accounting structures are robust. The EIS believes a new entity should be incorporated in terms of the Further Education (Scotland) Act 1992.</p> <p>We are concerned that a 'Group' structure could be opaque in terms of decision making top-heavy with management and unaccountable given this would require the Local Advisory Committees and potentially local college Boards of Management to feed into an overarching 'Group' Board and then on to UHI. The EIS is concerned this is an option which could allow privatisation of decision-making structures whilst ostensibly appearing not to change the incorporation status of the local colleges.</p>	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch

5	<p>We believe local identity is important for communities as is being part of the wider UHI brand; we also appreciate the value of being able to refer to the three as a single entity particularly at regional and national level and consideration should be given to whether there is a way to achieve both</p>	Morven Cameron	HIE
6	<p>The EIS believes this to be a question on governance rather than on the college's name. This question speaks to whether the merger is one which establishes a new 'Group' structure within UHI or establishes a new single entity college within UHI. The EIS believes there are two options for the new single entity – either a phoenix model or a host college.</p> <p>The EIS is particularly concerned about the proposals for governance arrangements going forward. At the moment, within the consultation literature, there is no detail on governance proposals although the options were outlined in the consultant's report on merger. However, the EIS understands the Partnership Board tends to favour a 'host' model for the merger.</p> <p>For clarity, the EIS is entirely opposed to non-incorporation of Further Education colleges in Scotland. Whilst the EIS is aware that one of the colleges to be impacted by merger is historically a non-incorporated college, the EIS believes now is the time for UHI to show commitment to ensuring FE provision remains in the public sector through incorporation, as outlined and supported by the Scottish Government's historical and recent commitment to ensuring ONS classification of FE remains as public bodies.</p> <p>The EIS would be concerned that any move to the creation of an unincorporated body essentially results in the delivery of Further Education by a private company i.e. privatisation. Given the level of public funding which is invested in FE, this would appear to be contrary to the expressed intention of the Scottish Government to ensure that governance and accounting structures are robust. The EIS believes the new entity should be incorporated in terms of the Further Education (Scotland) Act 1992.</p> <p>The EIS is concerned that a 'Group' structure could be opaque in terms of decision making, top-heavy with management and unaccountable given this would require the Local Advisory Committees, and potentially local college Boards of Management, to feed into an overarching 'Group' Board and then on to UHI.</p> <p>The EIS is concerned this is an option which could allow privatisation of decision-making structures whilst ostensibly appearing not to change the incorporation status of the local colleges.</p> <p>The EIS understands there is always a concern from management about 'flexibility' of finances in the public sector, in particular in the further education sector due to double counting periods. The EIS is content for the Scottish</p>	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA

	Government to provide more guidance in this regard but maintains that more 'flexibility' in the sector's finances could amount to less scrutiny. This is not something the union would support when it comes to tax-payers' money as, ultimately, the colleges should not be run as private businesses or entities.		
7	It is ESSENTIAL that the New College has one new name. This has obvious logistical benefits for one thing (document templates, accounts etc). More importantly however, one name will be vital to developing a 'one team' ethos and culture. Prior to working at NHC I worked with several businesses that had been merged/acquired with other businesses. Those on different sites would refer to themselves by their old name, even though the new company name was over the door. This illustrates how readily people cling to old brands and identities, and the same would be true for the local community: in Thurso NHC is still often referred to as 'the Technical college'. Therefore a new name - one name - is vital. Also, we must integrate this into the forthcoming UHI rebrand, in order to visually signify our continued (and increasingly significant) membership of the University partnership.	Giles Huby	
8	If this is a new college with merged teams of staff working towards one common goal then for the sake of staff and students feeling part of one organisation it should have a new identity overall. People will always feel separate from each other if there are different brands that's just adding another layer to the situation we already have with students feeling conflicted as to whether they are part of their local college or UHI. North West Highlands and Islands College	withheld	
9	A single legal entity involving a merger of all academic partners and colleges should be created trading under the name 'University of the Highlands and Islands'. Anything short of this will create greater confusion increase internal competition and potentially damage future prospects for the region.	withheld	
10	These discussions have been going on for about as long as UHI was a project in the early 90's.. A Gaelic name would be nice though resisted by NHC no doubt.	withheld	
11	New single brand.	withheld	
12	Single	withheld	
13	Changing the name causes confusion. Students and the public think of Skye as SMO and Fort William as Lochaber College. Can also be referred to as UHI or The UHI. Currently students in receipt of FE Funding will have a payment	withheld	

	made by NHC when enrolled with WHC. Some students will have WHC as their enrolling Academic Partner but receive teaching from another partner. There is already confusion. If the merger will make us work as one entity then a single name but if we merge and retain identity keep as is.		
14	Move to a single brand.	withheld	
15	Care needs to be taken when defining this to ensure the messaging does not dilute the UHI broader offering that the colleges can reach back to. Any new branding/name needs to ensure that it is clear that this merger continues to part of the wider UHI offering.	withheld	
16	So difficult: taking a word from each existing college could give 'North & West Castle College'. It is usually detrimental to lose a key element of a known brand and in that regard the emerging proposed rebranding of UHI must be taken into account. UHI North West Castle College	withheld	
17	It is difficult to see how the different offerings and geographical locations of the three existing Colleges could be properly represented under a single brand. While we can understand the rationale for having a single, new brand to represent the new entity, we also believe it is important that the local connection is maintained in some fashion – perhaps through branding three broad campuses as “North Highland”, “West Highland”, and “Islands”?	withheld	
18	This needs to be clear in the branding/messaging that there is a continued UHI working ensuring that the relationships and how UHI works across all the colleges are clear. It does need to be clear that there is a focus on the North Highland Region without diluting the UHI brand. It is important that each of the three colleges are allowed to retain their own unique identity within the merger.		

Question 7. Do you have a suggestion for the new college name?

	Number
Responses received	18
Responses published	17
Summary of responses	<p>Suggestions included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UHI + campus name as now• UHI North West Highlands and Islands• UHI North West Lews• University of the Highlands and Islands• Northwest Highlands and Islands College• Scotland's Island and Rural College• North Scotland College UHI• North College UHI <p>There was a request to provide options for further consultation of students, staff and communities.</p> <p>There was also scope to look to a name other than reflecting geographic area, pointing to Canada for inspiration.</p>

No	Response to Question 7	Name	Organisation
1	You need marketing folk to put a few options out there for the public to vote on	John Murray	
2	UHI and then campus names as now	Robert James	
3	A new single brand with locality in it. e.g. xxx UHI West Highland Bilingual branding is a must as well in regards of the region the new college will be operating in North West Highlands and Islands	Florence Jansen	HISA
4	UHI North West Lews	Learning Centre Managers	WHC
5	The names must be in a consistent style.	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch
6	No	Morven Cameron	HIE
7	No, but the names must be in a consistent style.	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA
8	It's a subjective view (and I recognise it's a working title) but I'm not keen on the 'Rural & Islands College' label. Hopefully this consultation will elicit many good suggestions and then we can lock some marketing staff in a room to review them and come up with the best name! Further to my comments above we should also adopt the revised UHI college naming convention once that is announced.	Giles Huby	
9	University of the Highlands and Islands	withheld	
10	No	withheld	

11	Northwest Highlands and Islands College	withheld	
12	Scotland's Island and Rural College	withheld	
13	Top Left Corner	withheld	
14	It would be better not to have a H&I brand since the new college will already have UHI in its title. North Scotland College UHI might be better. North Scotland College UHI	withheld	
15	Irrelevant	withheld	
16	No.	withheld	
17	<p>It is assumed that it will be called X College UHI, so Highlands and Islands will already be its brand. Rural gives an impression it concentrates on agricultural and might be a turn-off (for say) engineering students. Something more imaginative, e.g. there is a Perimeter Institute in Canada. If you google 'Highland' you will find locations other than Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Scotland College, Far North College or simply North College UHI <p>Why not ask the students or wider community?</p>	withheld	

Question 8. Any other comments you would like to make on this proposal?

	Number
Responses received	14
Responses published	13
Summary of responses	<p>Other comments included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong unified and collective efforts with local focus • Avoid centralisation at all costs • Retain staff expertise • Minimise disruption from merger • Harmonise staff terms and conditions • Ensure wide consultation on corporate form • Ensure the new merged college can operate as flexibly as possible to secure financial sustainability and investment over multi-year projects to deliver on all benefits outlined in the merger proposal • Focus on job retention and creation of high value new jobs • Focus on driving innovation and enterprise • Focus on international – both inward attractor and transnational, including with other rural and island communities • Focus on transition to net zero • Be explicit about wider benefits for UHI partnership, and UHI as a tertiary university • More detail about organisational structure – impact on support staff? What happens to staff where job roles are duplicated in each college? Impact of shared curriculum delivery on teaching contracts? • Ensure that current core specialisms need by local industry and businesses remains available/undiluted • Expectation of no detriment on local communities through local job losses • This merger includes some of the rural and island colleges in UHI - what about the other island colleges in UHI and impact on UHI's island strategy?

No	Response to Question 8	Name	Organisation
1	Stronger unified and collective efforts - with local input from industry and students - works for me	John Murray	
2	People in the Highlands and Islands suffer enough from centralised power. Do NOT make us young people have our education suffer the same fate.	Hector Malcolm	
3	<p>As evidenced by previous college mergers and other organisational restructures there is a substantial risk of highly experienced knowledgeable and skilled staff being lost to the new merged college. This disruption and loss of expertise would only make it harder for student numbers to be maintained far less increased. This should be added to the risk register for the new college.</p> <p>There requires to be harmonisation of terms and conditions to ensure National Working Practices Agreement is adhered to.</p> <p>We expect trade unions to be fully consulted throughout this process in an effective and meaningful way. We expect each college to negotiate on any proposed changes to working practices terms and conditions etc with recognised trade unions following completion of this consultation process. Although employment rights are protected in part by TUPE terms and conditions can be changed for 'economic organisational or technical' reasons post-merger. Any changes will require to be consulted on via recognised trade unions</p>	Miriam Iorwerth	WHC EIS FELA Branch
4	<p>The following additional points are made (in no particular order)</p> <p>We encourage decisions around the status (i.e. incorporated/unincorporated) of any proposed merger to be widely consulted on to ensure the necessary levels of flexibility are in place so that development funds secured can be maximised to best effect. Flexibility will be required to grow and diversify curriculum in the way that businesses and communities require. The ability to utilise effectively development funds over multiple financial years (e.g. Levelling Up or Shared Prosperity Funds) will be important.</p> <p>We acknowledge and support the commitment to no compulsory redundancies as a direct result of the proposed merger and reinforce the need to actively support and grow opportunities for new jobs fairly across the area. The UHI Islands Strategy is a good example of senior level commitment to this for the Islands. We also note and support the commitment to there being no intention for any form of centralisation</p>	Morven Cameron	HIE

	<p>We acknowledge the need for financial savings in these challenging times nationally. It is important to reinforce however that as the most rural and fragile area of Scotland merger proposals must be for the value gained and not driven purely by financial savings.</p> <p>We acknowledge that the UHI anticipate that any gains will be re-invested to deliver our ambition and look for this to be confirmed.</p> <p>We recognise the SFCs increasing focus on College Innovation and would encourage any possible merger and the SFC to consider how it could be more involved in driving forward innovation through Colleges in the most rural and fragile part of Scotland. We also welcome opportunities to strengthen the research institutes associated with the colleges for example the Environment Research Institute and Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research reinforcing the need for excellent research that will create opportunities for growth attracting people to the region. International collaboration relating to shared challenges and opportunities with other rural and island communities is key and encouraged. We note the lack of reference to environmental sustainability of the colleges in particularly the transition to net zero including estates and highlight the importance of this being considered in financial sustainability and appraisals by UHI and SFC.</p> <p>We acknowledge Scottish Governments response to the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and support the continued focus of UHI on becoming a more fully integrated tertiary institution that thrives in the future and delivers for communities and stakeholders in the region; and we would also expect it to continue this direction of travel.</p> <p>We would hope that the proposed merger will realise benefits and create opportunities for the wider UHI partnership.</p>		
5	<p>The EIS remains concerned that the core rationale for the merger is a financial and economic one, rather than an educational one. The EIS understands the SFC seek continuing budget reductions and cost-savings. The EIS further understands that SFC’s financial forecasts are based on returns from each college and cannot ever be definitive, least of all prior to a Governmental budget being set. However, the EIS would be interested to see the projected intention of the financial forecasts for the new entity, including projected funding, which sits alongside the rationale for this merger. Given the Scottish Fiscal Commission’s projection that younger people are choosing to remain in education for longer it seems antithetical that already-stretched budgets across these three colleges would need to contract further. The EIS maintains that investment is key within the sector.</p>	Sarah Collins	EIS FELA

	<p>As evidenced by previous college mergers and other organisational restructures, there is a substantial risk of highly experienced, knowledgeable and skilled staff being lost to the new merged college. This disruption and loss of expertise would only make it harder for student numbers to be maintained, far less increased. This should be added to the risk register for the new college.</p> <p>The EIS expects trade unions to be fully consulted throughout this process in an effective and meaningful way. The EIS expects each college to negotiate on any proposed changes to working practices, terms and conditions etc with recognised trade unions following completion of this consultation process. Although employment rights are protected, in part, by TUPE, terms and conditions can be changed for “economic, organisational or technical” reasons post-merger. Any changes will require to be consulted on via recognised trade unions.</p>		
6	No	Giles Huby	
7	I wish those in charge of the proposed merger well though I do not underestimate the difficulties of ensuring success. Ultimately this should be about improving the quality of the student experience and not just saving money.	withheld	
8	<p>Will there be a change to staff work patterns/workloads will these increase/decrease as there will be staff in similar roles across the 2 other partners? There is not a direct comparison of job roles across the 3 partners. Staff within WHC have more than one area of responsibility. What does it mean for support staff roles? Curriculum already undertake shared/networked delivery Will there still be some independent working e.g. Staff Conference Graduation Ceremonies? Another UHI within UHI.</p> <p>It Will be good to be part of a bigger team where some teams/departments are smaller. Current good practice examples include Funding processed by NHC for WHC and AC. Currently an area of low staffing merger would bring benefits to this area in terms of resource and knowledge.</p> <p>Budgets how will these be managed going forward for departments e.g. would there be one Library budget for all 3 Colleges? Would like to see more alignment with Registry Admin and Admissions Teams. Other partners seem to work more closely across these areas. Similar with Guidance and Marketing. Merger would increase service provision for students accessing library resources. Merger would create good working relationships and sharing of best practice to improve ways of working. Other partners are using SITS Fund Manager which would be an advantage if we merged to align systems. Allows for processes to be streamlined and more efficient. Shared Celcat Timetabling and Registers database across the partners would advantages. Some staff have attended some of the</p>	withheld	

	<p>consultation meetings but feel these are at a high level and would not feel comfortable in asking a question. Felt it was very much an academic focus. Appreciate the opportunity to be able to feedback like this.</p> <p>Questions around 'No Compulsory Redundancies as a direct result from merger': How will this work will there only be for example 1 Principal 1 Head of Curriculum 1 Head of Student Support will there be a need for as many Managers? With shared/networked delivery will there be a need for so many teaching staff? If there are no compulsory redundancies will staff be moved into other roles? What if there are too many staff in a particular role what happens to them? Each AP currently has a different structure different job roles and responsibilities they are not aligned. How will this work? What advantage financially is there to merge with two Colleges who are in the red? Will smaller Centres with very few students still be sustainable as part of a larger organisation? What makes a centre viable?</p>		
9	<p>Dounreay is keen to ensure that whatever the outcome to this consultation and if the merger goes ahead that there are clear lines drawn in the areas that already well founded within the existing colleges.</p> <p>For example the ETEC facility at North Highland College is a facility that was supported by funding through the nuclear partners. It is essential for the continued apprentice training programme (and for the other local engineering companies) that engineering continues as part of the North Highland College and not diluted to one of the other colleges.</p> <p>The Environmental Research Institute is another example of where the strengths lie and this should remain prominent within North Highland College.</p> <p>Key to everything across the merger proposals is good employer engagement to ensure that the learning experience of the students aligns to the needs and requirements of the employer.</p>	withheld	
10	Do not merge - once done cannot be undone!	withheld	
11	<p>Evolution is to be expected. That the proposal has been championed from within the UHI partnership is a bonus. It is understandable that certain aspects of the process have not been touched on in the consultation paper. In order to achieve the stated goals it seems inevitable (to me) that some redeployment of staff will be necessary together with one presumes some voluntary redundancies. There is however every prospect that the outlined benefits for staff development and student benefit should result. Whilst supporting the proposal I express the hope that in progressing the aspirations for the new college care and attention be given to its interaction with the remaining partners in UHI it being most important that the hard won status of the University of the Highlands and Islands not</p>	withheld	

	<p>be endangered in any way. In this regard I note the somewhat contradictory ambitions signalled in the UHI Islands Strategy published in August 2020 (which by way of an example included Orkney College) with the more recent focussed aspirations expressed in the current consultative document which relate solely to the three named colleges and exclude significant island and rural communities in the southwest Highlands and the northern isles served by other colleges within the UHI partnership.</p>		
12	<p>We welcome the chance to contribute to this first stage in the merger process and look forward to the opportunity to engage further as the process continues. Once again we welcome the chance to respond to this consultation and look forward to engaging further as the process continues.</p>	withheld	
13	<p>While we appreciate you have indicated no redundancies eventually further down the road you would expect reviews to be undertaken and posts to be combined/subsumed. We would absolutely object to any loss of local jobs within the North Highland College campus. This is the most important area of concern prior to any proposed change. It is very easy to make statements prior to discussion but there needs to be a binding agreement signed to ensure that a no redundancy policy is adopted.</p>	withheld	

Appendix 1 – Other Comments and Queries Received during the Consultation Period

Fa-sgrìobhadh 1 - Freagairtean agus Ceistean eile a fhuaras trom Àm Co-chomhairleachaidh

Comments and Feedback from Consultation Sessions, Emails and Staff Meetings between November 2021 and 15 February 2022					
	Staff or Student or Public	Subject	Comment	Response	Concern/areas for focus
Nov-24	Staff email	Working Groups remit	Thank you for this update. I am the Work-based Learning Coordinator for West Highland College and support the Curriculum Teams and Business Development Manager with our SVQ, MA and FA delivery. Just reading the section about Working Groups and wondered where Work-based Learning will sit amongst this?	Work-based learning will sit in a couple of working groups – curriculum to map and shape provision of work-based learning and business development on employer engagement, fees etc. The systems integration group will also capture any requirements around common use/processes for systems.	Question
Nov-30	Staff email	Trade Union representation	1)I notice that there's a meeting of the trade union engagement forum tomorrow. Please could you let me know who has been invited from WHC to join this forum? 2)As it's a trade union forum should there not be representation from the EIS branch at WHC? Seems unusual that we haven't been invited. 3) That's great, thank you. Please could you include me and Layla Sawford on future meeting invitations. I'm teaching all afternoon and don't know what time the meeting is, so it's likely that I'll not be able to make it today.	1) Heckie Cormack and Maggie MacDonald volunteered to represent WHC on this workstream. 2) We haven't formally elected representatives for the unions but I have no objection to representation from the EIS branch at the meeting	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Name/ single institution	Will remove confusion students have over centre/ college/UHI	Noted	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Size/ Reach	How big will we be and how will that affect us	Referred to consultation document	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Local/ Central	How will it look? Will support teams e.g. Registry/Admissions just get bigger?	Suggested we think of this as "distributed" and "cohesive"	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Priorities for next three years	Financial sustainability, public perception and reputation	Noted	Concerned

Jan-11	Staff	Staff Wellbeing	Pandemic and Cyber incident have meant that staff have had to reshape some working practices and styles. However this has meant some staff face additional challenges and stresses. We should ensure a focus on staff wellbeing through what could be another stressful period. Are we involved in any national schemes for wellbeing e.g. Wellbeing in the Work place	Noted and we will explore	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	New Opportunities	Looking forward to joining with colleagues in other college teams to widen the reach eg through NHS boards		Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	New Opportunities	Important to get some new initiatives underway asap to use as a showcase of what is possible with a new organisation - be BOLD		Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	New Opportunities	When will be the right time to start working with other college teams on new projects/how make contact	The workstreams project will naturally ensure this happens but we don't need to wait for this to happen. Collaborative working will be encouraged all the time where it makes sense.	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Local Identity	Need one name/identity to maximise benefits - we don't want to be called "small" anymore	Noted	Concerned
Jan-11	Staff	Employment	Do I need to be physically resident in my geographical area to be employed	Terms of employment wont change as a result of merger. Contracts/roles will be totally dependent on the effectiveness of the individual and the needs of the job.	Negative
Jan-11	Staff	Challenges	What would the consequences be of not merging - can we survive with 19 centres	Challenges as outlined in the Consultation Doc.	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	For staff - comfortable and non-bureaucratic; for students - new opportunities in what and how to learn; strategically - create space to tackle bigger strategic issues that we don't have capacity for as smaller individual colleges	Noted and we will explore	Neutral

Jan-12	Staff	Vision	Could achieve greater engagement with stakeholders by having the enhanced headspace. The phrase 'learning organisation' may be ambivalent. Current wording doesn't quite capture the connectedness and uniqueness of the colleges/centres, could reflect more enthusiasm	Noted and we will explore	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	Is this a merger or partnership? If local centres retain their management how is it different?	Definitely a merger - single Board and strategy, but will retain the multi-centre delivery and local management	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	Each of the three colleges has very different identity to the others of which to be proud	Noted	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Gaelic	Where does Gaelic fit in?	LCC and WHC are in Gaelic heartlands and this will be reflected in the plan. Strong commitment to Gaelic learning and Gaelic medium	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	Important to leverage services wherever possible and don't try to reinvent the wheel	Noted	Neutral
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	Would hope merger would produce smoother coordination around systems, between partners and within UHI	Noted	Overall positive
Jan-12	Staff	Initial priorities	Would be useful to see examples of tangible benefits such as funding streams, projects and contracts that could be achieved as a merged college that are beyond reach individually	Noted	Overall positive
Jan-12	Staff	Name/ single institution	Local communities are hugely invested in their local centres to an almost granular level, so names very important. Could lose engagement if identities are "taken away" too quickly	Noted and we will explore	Overall positive
Jan-12	Staff	Name/ single institution	May be better staff buy-in with a single name, which promotes cohesion and a sense of shared identity	Noted and we will explore	Positive

18-Jan	Public	Gaelic	How does this merger protect, reinforce and progress Gaelic. Concerned that the absence of it from NHC now will lead to a weakening of it in merged college	Have taken bilingual approach to consultation, Gaelic intrinsic to us. Proposal an opportunity to do more for G heartlands and right across H&I. Looking at G provision in curriculum, will be more developed in full business case as part of academic rationale. Very real potential to expand provision, particularly in area of G primary teachers.	Positive
18-Jan	Public	Gaelic	Gaelic isn't part of Caithness culture so isn't needed there and shouldn't be forced on areas where it's not spoken	Noted	Positive
18-Jan	Public	Name/ single institution	Stick with current college names - students need to know where they're going and where they're attached to, one name doesn't fit all considering our geography	Noted and we will explore	Positive
18-Jan	Public	Business development	What plans are there to build links between the colleges and businesses across the separate areas?	Not sure we're so separate, business development teams will collaborate on best practice, main difference will be in the industries. Chambers currently collaborate across the areas, we will do similar - as with DYW. Will help us respond better to gaps in the workforce. Will retain the local relationships but will combine resource to do it better.	Positive
18-Jan	Public	Governance	How does this fit into the wider governance picture - just reducing the number of APs doesn't necessarily improve governance	The hope is that this will improve things for everyone, with the removal of duplication and help make the EO more efficient. It's also what we AS UHI can do better for our communities. H&I very large and diverse, think bespoke and expert approach for our communities is needed to deliver more equitable opportunities. Will also improve our voices where funds and funding is concerned.	Positive

18-Jan	Staff +EO	Vision Values	Why are ours different to UHI? Would this be an opportunity to harmonise?	Senior Management team have spent a good deal of time on reviewing our current strategies and we feel that this are the right words for us right now to demonstrate the spirit of bringing together the very wide views of three different organisations and we have included the UHI values within these. May change in the future but this is the first offering	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Staff/ Employment	Can we demonstrate tangible benefits for professional services staff as well as academic staff	Absolutely and we will work up examples to demonstrate this for many different areas. We want to reap the benefits of larger teams and of being a larger partner.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Terms and Conditions/ Employment rights	For economic / reasons post merger changes to job roles can happen and Trade Unions would need to be consulted. In WHC our contracts have a clause that say ours can be adjusted - a lot of people are concerned that this could be used to reduce hours.	TUPE - All staff employed by the three colleges will be protected in terms of employment status and into the new corporate institution. We have made a commitment to staff that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a direct result of merger. Going forward we may have to create a new structure but there would be consultation with Trade Unions. Contract changes within each college would also be done with Trade Unions. Also we have committed to be a signatory to the NRPA so that teaching and support staff would be protected also. We will also discuss this in the Trade Union Forum.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Terms and Conditions/ Employment	Will there be alignment of differing responsibilities and job titles and remuneration across the partnership	People workstream will be working on this to align things across three partners	Positive

18-Jan	Staff	Relationship with UHI	How do we ensure that there is a balance of UHI partnership and the new organisation ie what do we mean by "us" within a local focus for a new institution	What do we mean by "us" - three coming together but also WE are UHI - we make UHI - there is no other US. We will work hard to continue to engage with UHI colleagues via the workstream leads. In doing this we will benefit the UHI partnership through simplification and streamlining with fewer partners to deal with. But also gives an anchor and better voice for rural and islands contexts - we will be a better stronger voice and will create a better balance for the partnership and the balancing of the resources within it. Benefits for all.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Experience of merger	Have we consulted with other colleges within Scotland for hints and tips / lessons learned.	Yes ,we have benefited from using their business cases and merger documentation from Funding Council and best practice across the four nations. WHC is the result of a successful merger between two very small colleges 11 years ago. LR has been involved in 8 mergers and only 3 were successful - there are no foregone conclusions.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Local identity /branding	How much of a merger will it be if we are retaining local identity and with only three colleges?	UHI rebrand, we want to balance the local/central and new. The other partner have an open door to a merger following the options appraisal.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Curriculum	How will we deliver curriculum and build on the key strengths of each partner?	We have a workstream looking at curriculum, where a college has strengths, we may roll out but we may dilute - this will come out in the full business case and once the workstream concludes. We already share curriculum - HSP, Argyll and HE space. Partnership wide approach will be used and we will look to develop our own approaches.	Positive

18-Jan	Staff	Curriculum/ Relationship with UHI	How can the UHI curriculum review and curriculum review tie up? Keep the door open to ensure success - smaller partners often have staff with a lot of hats and it can be hard to engage them so I can see real benefit for them.	Curriculum workstream will be in touch with the curriculum review	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Funding/finances	What are the financial positions of the three colleges? Are the finances of the colleges the main driver for the merged college?	There is a finance workstream, they are looking at the funding to support the NB costs, full merger business case will outline this. We are coming at this voluntary, this is for considering how long we can thrive and survive - deliver the best for staff, students and communities. Finance is difficult for all colleges, official reports outline this as identified in the SFC. We are all assigned colleges, all funding comes from the University to college, the outlook in general is tight and if it becomes tighter it would be more problematic.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Incorporated vs Un-incorporated	Unincorporated and privatised - Shetland College - will we be seeing the new college becoming privatised or incorporated?	There is a lot of work to do, a paper has gone to all boards where the decision will be made on this. A lot more discussions need to take place. We will be looking for the best option that meets the needs/visions of the new college. ONS classification. Any proposal will be for full consultation.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Funding/ finances	It terms of the funding - NH is funded less that LC and WHC in terms of the rurality funding. Will that be aligned or how will it be divided?	Different pots of money, depending on the funding council. This is being looked at by the finance working group. This is assessed on need depending on their rurality - its being looked at in terms of need.	Positive

18-Jan	Staff	Governance/ Leadership	Who will govern the new merged college? Will the boards be disbanded?	We are proposing one board of management - distributed as we would have management team. Local advisory teams would be deemed useful but this is still to be discussed and decided by the governance workstream.	Positive
18-Jan	Staff	Governance/ Leadership	What does coming together look like for one college? In terms of staffing, terms and conditions? We already have multiple layers.	We have proposed one executive team. There will be one board and they will be responsible for staff. The role of local advisory boards are part of the consultation, they will be a committee to help advise not make decisions. We are bringing together three organisations with large geographical locations - we want to make sure that the advisory committee feed up to the board to represent these local concerns to inform the single board. We want to exploit all opportunities at local and national level.	Positive
26-Jan	Public	Vision/ Opportunities	What do we mean by anchor institution	We are already anchor institutions in our own areas but this will provide us with a greater presence - here to serve all the educational needs. Will give us a greater voice. Its about what added value we can deliver to our communities and what added value we can gain in a remote rural highlands and islands context - helping them to address challenges such as poverty, covid, Brexit, climate change etc	Positive
26-Jan	Public	Student experience/ delivery of curriculum	How will we address consistency of delivery and how does it fit with curriculum review	This will be a huge challenge and is a key principle for this merger. Equality of experience of all students is v important. About consistence for our communities too e.g. share strengths that we have individually eg in Gaelic, business engagement	Positive

Jan-26	Public	Staff	Colleges are integral to our communities - v important to attract students from outwith communities. How is e-learning affecting this? Feels its important to go back to face to face learning to make it attractive to those outwith the region/rest of Scotland. Need good college environment and return to a better student lifestyle they have been denied since covid.	The new normal will be a hybrid as we need both approaches to learning. Combined curriculum will also highlight specialisms that we already have eg linked to physical facilities. We want to improve the opportunities for those living in rural and highland communities without having to move to an urban establishment. Also needs to recognise that students are increasingly returners etc who need the flexibility to be able to learn online . Want to increase business engagement in each community through specialist facilities too. New facilities planned for each of the colleges as new capital estates developments shows investment in the local communities.	Positive overall
Jan-26	Public	Staff redundancy	Would have been concerned about this primarily but sees the question has already been addressed		Question
Jan-26	Public	New opportunities	Scotwind/ Northland Power /CalMac - Opportunities for renewables etc Bids submitted would have required an indication of socio economic investment that the successful bidders would provide. We need to drill down to find out what was identified/promised	Important for us to take advantage of new developments/bids in major regional investment - can do this with a larger profile / more resources for engineering etc. Merged college would allow us to have one contact for large projects and a simpler way to engage that will strengthen those contacts and allow us to take advantage of those opportunities.	Question

Jan-31	Public	Centralisation	Is this going to feel like one college with 16 campuses?	Commitment to local and retain the distributed nature. Bring the curriculum of the colleges together and improve them make them better and more sustainable. At the start of the year, we have to look at student numbers and often have changes on course viability affecting staff and students. We want to make everything more sustainable.	Question
Jan-31	Public	Shared Curriculum/ New opportunities	Will we be sharing curriculum, having something available at North Highland available at West Highland and so on.	All colleges struggle with viable numbers, we also struggle to take up opportunities available to our areas. We want to widen the curriculum, we want to be in positions to take advantage of new opportunities green energy, Gaelic. We want to do more. Curriculum for further education, we already collaborate for virtual schools, award winning. We have experience of sharing HNCs/HNDs - we hope that we can build on joined delivery and benefit more people and more staff and allow development.	Question

Jan-31	Public	Job security/ job roles	<p>Difficult to look at a merger without being selfish, looking at your own role, if you are merging, you aren't looking to improve and expand. Colleges will be looking to save money. Would we need three course leaders and then deputy leaders in place? Local contacts are still important - no redundancies planned but would jobs change.</p>	<p>No compulsory redundancies, strong commitment - there might be change, but change wouldn't happen on compulsory redundancies. If a new college is created, everyone is protected under TUPE. A new structure will need to be planned and then implemented. Three colleges would run in parallel for the remaining academic year. We are looking at a wider curriculum, there might be efficiencies, we would look to retain specialties and widen the curriculum. We would find roles for the specialisms within that space. There may inevitably be more opportunities to be more efficient. Staff are stretched and not able to develop and have more thought leadership opportunity and structure differently with cross curricular opportunities. Things will be different.</p>	Question
Jan-31	Public	<p>Curriculum/ Opportunities Why do we need to Merge?</p>	<p>Practical subjects would be hard to pull curriculum levels together- are we going to have multi level approach to how we will pull these types of courses together? Also ownership on campuses being 'ours' second point - are you for this, or against. What does that actually look like? Different isn't always good, depends on your perspective. Difficult to see what its going to look like and get behind it. Opportunity is there already as part of UHI, why do we need to merge? Does within UHI mean that bigger gets more?</p>	<p>Cultural change on being ours and associated with campuses. We need to look at curriculum differently - take the opportunities to be innovative. Second point - we are trying to articulate the opportunity together and make it work for all of us. Practical courses will be delivered still practically. However, technology will not stand still and students will have entitlements to become digital capable and what our new organisation might deliver to practical subject areas - an opportunity to network, liaise and connect to form a team to deliver the course within their localities. Benefits on being bigger. We should benefit as a partner with a bigger voice and deliver better to our</p>	Question

				communities and contribute more to the partnership and balance better.	
Jan-31	Public	Opportunities	Similar questions to UHI coming through - sees it as positive. We need a bit of size to do something within UHI. Numbers/staff and ability to deliver. Positive step and shouldn't be scared of change.	As small colleges to be a partner in a big sector development such as hydrogen energy, other colleges/universities will be called on as a more credible partner. We want to be bigger, be capable of going for the sector contracts and work together as part of a framework and be one rather than just wanting to work together. Deliver lasting change and improvements. If we do this right, we can significantly move UHI forward, us forward and make a better difference to our communities.	Question
Feb 2 Even	Staff/ HISA	Governance/ delivery in different council areas	How will the new college cope with the different council areas eg how will we deal with school link organisation etc	We already deal with two councils so nothing will change operationally but we will have commonality of strategy and planning. We will also want to take account of the differences to ensure all communities are served. School College Partnership is particularly important in our geographic area and the Virtual School initiative has been shown to be award winning/excellent along with E-Sgoil so we need to embrace both and use the best of both to give equity of opportunity to pupils. We can also export to the rest of Scotland. We can level up to the best possible standard locally but also explore how to expand and offer opportunities for those outwith the area.	Question

	Public	Future planning	Where do you see yourselves in 5 years - what changes will you make and what will you have achieved.	<p>Full Business case is being developed as part of the Merger Proposal and will show our financial measures in terms of growth, efficiencies, impact and reach. Some areas we are looking are things like curriculum in the areas of renewables and green energy/how we address population decline by attracting students inward/Tourism research/wind energy/hydrogen. Key aim is to achieve sustainability in delivery to our students by providing more job security to staff and opportunity for career progression. Become an employer of choice for the regions we serve. But this will also give more options and progression opportunities to students.</p> <p>Also want to invest in more specialist facilities through ambitious and innovative use of our Estate to create a lasting impact in our communities that will help.</p>	Question
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Feb 2 Even	Public	Future planning	Post covid - what is the capacity for mental health training and support for engagement of autistic students. Community learning context- what agreement will be in place with local authorities to deal with the unemployed/unskilled	This is the level of detail in the curriculum plan/people strategy/learning support strategy are all being worked up just now. We have a number of workstreams that are identifying key projects eg student support/health and wellbeing to identify and share best practice using the right data available. These will be set out over 5 year strategies. All three colleges have teams working with unskilled/training and merger would allow us to combine best practice and possibly expand One of the workstreams is to analyse our work with Our Communities so that we aren't focused only on the college and what we will be offering but in re-affirming the partnership working we have had in the past and re-establishing where links have lapsed.	Question
Feb 2 Even	Public	Student experience	Retaining young people - when they aspire to move away and how we attract inwards.	Very positive - wishes us well. Looking at core curriculum and attractor curriculum. But we also want to make attractive campuses that match the beautiful locations with their landscapes and cultural heritage. We are looking at how we can offer a 3 centre experience to study -- offering plus plus plus	Question

Feb 2 Even	Public	University	What is the UHI position?	Fully supportive and helping us access funding for this merger. We are creating a new partner within the university . Greater success for us means greater success for the University - we ARE the university. We will be better able to represent the local and rural communities to bring the right learning in the right place. We need more investment and to be a bigger voice and more credible partner for private and commercial opportunities in the future.	Question
Feb 2 Even	Public	Name/ single institution	Have one name to enable us to move forward and create unity of vision (Ullapool is closer to Stornoway than Fort William!)		Question
Feb 2 Even	Public	Name/ single institution	Agree - this is an aspirational project and we should not keep old names with their connotations. Be ambitious with the name		Question
Feb 2 Even		Name/ single institution	University College of the North and West of Scotland		Question
Feb 2 Even		Name/ single institution	Should be a Gaelic name and the community should decide through consultation. Should ask the Gaelic organisations for their suggestions and views. Would help us keep engaged with them as partners	Please send us suggestions - they would be really welcome.	Question
04-Feb	Student/HISA	Engagement	Student engagement with consultation sessions low - how can we encourage more students to engage with the process?	Maybe the question is too broad and students don't have a good sense of what we want to know from them. Narrowing it down to be a bit more specific may help generate responses	Question

Feb-07		Governance/ Merger Options/ potential conflicts	How are we only at three that have chosen to merge? Where are Orkney and Argyll? i can't see it in the documentation why they chose not to join. Concern that everything goes ahead, is there any conflict with the island plan and the proposals of the Rural and Islands Merged College - will there be collateral damage across the partnership. (very positive about the approach but is concerned about any potential conflicts.)	The options appraisal was shared with boards and staff at the college's that are merging. The principal's and boards that accepted the recommendations of the original option with merger moved forward with a visioning event. This looked at the early benefits and what it could look like. Argyll decided at this stage that they wouldn't come in at this time. Shetland took 8 years to merger - Orkney remained clear they wanted to retain part of the council. We are working close with colleagues on leading the islands strategy and west highland are part of the forum as they have presence on Skye. It has lots of synergies with our plans, we're working looking closely, looking at curriculum and across the UHI. We have to make sure we are not in danger of this.	Question
Feb-07		Community/ local targets	Thanks for the presentation - really helpful. Will you be establishing any local targets going forward and how do you see the Dounreay site fitting into your plans for the future?	Thanks David, we will and I understand DSG are providing a joint consultation response, I'll be in touch	Question
Feb-07		Workload and Opportunity	Really like the vision and ambitions - reinvesting into the infrastructure. This may take time and at the same we have to respond quickly to demands - islands deal etc, how do we do this to drive it, the consultation that it takes and as well work as colleges? how do we do what is needed now as well as the transformational change.	We have funding secured from SFC to support the development - this has gone into project coordination and admin to support the proposal. Its a project and its got to be managed. We have money from SFC to support phase 1 and have only just recruited additional staff to support. We are all very busy but we are trying to not drop the balls - we will continue to work as a partnership and utilise the resources available to us.	Question

Feb-07		Centralisation	Local advisory committee - how local is local especially when it comes to islands. We need to make sure we have that community representation from Lews, North and West.	We have governance processes that reflect our communities. We will have a single board that represents all colleges but we will also have a local advisory board to ensure we are reflecting local needs. Our proposals on this, will be outlined on our next stage document. WH board member - we have coverage across our locations on the board to ensure we have a wide area covered. We try and hold our meetings at different centres. We move it around so we are seen as having a local representation and perspective. NH is the same - we cover Caithness/Sutherland/Ross Shire. Supporting the local is key.	Question
		Identity/branding	Consultations like today are key for the process, Surprised that the consultation didn't come to community planning - we did hear about a revised brand for Lews College.	Staff will be told about the new name change for Lews next week - this process had begun before the merger. All meetings have been sent to councillors for their feedback too. JV - exec sponsor for the new brand - really positive. Brand launch will be end of march. Naming and branding will take into account under the new brand framework within the partnership.	Question

Feb-07	Public	Cost savings/ Finance	Is the merger driven by particular savings.	Any savings will be reinvested back into the colleges. There are lots of resources that will improve if pulled together could really improve the student experience. If the colleges were not to merge, would there be financial changes - probably answer is no. We are coming into this voluntarily and creating a future that we want to take forward and sustainable for our staff and students. We don't know what the funding settlements are yet but what we are trying to do is deliver the best for our communities and retain capacity and vision for them.	Question
Feb-07		Merger Governance	Surprised that Argyll haven't joined into it.	Argyll and Bute - we decided to go forward at a speedy rate, the vesting date is coming fast and lot needs to be done by then. However the door always remains open to any potential colleges.	Question
Feb-07		Email	Thanks for the presentation - it covered some of the things I was worried about.		Question

Feb-22	Political	Sue Macfarlane and Michael Foxley met with Chief Exec, the 2 directors of education and skills and convenor of education committee for WI Council.	<p>Would want to see reassurance on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing strong presence in each of the OH island areas – non-negotiable to them • Not taking jobs from island areas – jobs retained in all LCC centres • Equity in distribution of jobs in the merged college – both academic and non-academic • LCC is smallest college so don't want to see lost out but gets a fair share • No loss of identity of the islands as a place to study • Governance very important and that CNES has access to the college board (not just informally). OH (as well as other college areas) need to have sufficient and fair influence/membership on new board. Local advisory groups need to have teeth <p>Other comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business case needs to be 'island-proofed' – ref to island act, island deal, Gaelic (noted that consultation document did not refer to Gaelic) • Local centres (mention of Cnoc Soilleir) – ensure not just retain jobs but grow jobs/students in these centres and locations – don't lose what we already have there and ensure blend of in person and online learning – not just online • Like to see some focus on climate change so important for communities eg S Uist • Will growth be at the expense of the local authority (eg apprenticeships, training) • Economies of scale mentioned – will this result in things being lost off island because more economical to do elsewhere in the college? • Gaelic agenda very important – already a missed opportunity. Need to create digital and Gaelic media and community language provision – not big formal quals • Need to consult with young people in terms of careers (earlier than secondary school/college age) • Importance of keeping young people – 300 leave islands each year (£3 mill from economy) • Need to ensure curriculum is flexible across school/college/SDS provision • Adds quality and value <p>Name:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tragedy to lose brand of Outer Hebrides to a contrived name to try and suit OH/WH/NH – don't wrangle over this • Better to keep the 3 UHI names – it is what matters locally 		Question
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Feb-09	SVR LCC		Do you understand what the proposed merger is all about and what other info do you need? How would you like to get access to that?	Access to information online so students can get to it when they have time, Place to submit questions and possibly FAQ section. What does it mean for the college campus?	Question
Feb-09	SVR LCC		·Will there be changes to my course or where I can study?	Students had concerns about what courses would run and if they would have to move to attend certain courses already available here. Students questioned how practical and FE courses would look in a merged college.	Question
Feb-01	Student email	New student recruitment opportunity	Will this mean that the university will have a stronger pull to apply for approval for ELCAS, the military enhanced learning funding scheme for ex servicemen & women attending university?	You are absolutely correct that as a larger, merged organisation we would very much like to be able to explore ELCAS provision. Whilst we aren't individual providers of ELCAS yet, as academic partners of the University of the Highlands and Islands we are all signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and will definitely raise this as an area to be considered in the future.	Question
Feb-22	Student Experience Workstream Meeting WHC HISA Depute	Student Experience/ delivery of curriculum	<p>HE students have fed back that there is a high strength of feeling about the relevance of UHI degrees compared to other universities and that they weren't compared favourably by employers.</p> <p>He had feedback that what we term "attractor" courses and the marketing of these gives one view of what to expect, but the reality is very different. We need to be clear when we market these and the right expectations set, especially linked to the wider student experience. Many students thinking they are coming to university do not expect to be working alongside FE students and, although there are many benefits here, this should be clear to them before they arrive.</p>		Question

Feb-22	Student Experience Workstream Meeting WHC HISA Depute	Student Experience/ delivery of curriculum	Another area where it is felt we are not as strong as other Universities is that of Alumni. There is a requirement to improve this considerably and use Alumni to support delivery as well as student experience. He recognised that this merger won't necessarily address this issue directly (as the student preference is to have "one" UHI), but that we should make sure that we correctly define experience within the business case."		Supportive of the proposal and the supportive of the events
Feb-07	Local Politician	Rhoda Grant MSP Briefing with LR/MF	How will we maintain our local links and reflect the diversity of the region the three colleges serve? Mergers are always about cost savings – despite commitment to no compulsory redundancies, how will we protect jobs/protect the local economy from potential job losses incurred in the context of merger?		Question
Feb-11	Local Politician	Donald Cameron MSP Briefing with LR/MF–	Main questions discussed: given the three colleges are already part of UHI, how will merger make a material difference within UHI? looking for reassurances about not losing local roots/profile/staff and local offering maintain strong local focus and no centralisation; case for merger made is a compelling argument; how to achieve continued unity? why Argyll not in merger?		Question

Feb-14	Local Politician	Eilean a' Cheò Ward/Area Committee Meeting Chair John Finlayson (Councillor)/Ward Manager William Mackinnon; attended by Councillors John Gordon, Calum Munro and Calum MacLeod;	<p>Presentation of consultation meetings slides and discussion of consultation questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *All in agreement with merger proposal, in particular creating 'scale' and potential for that increased organisational scale to add to local offer/choice/opportunity *Want to ensure local identity is kept and is key to success; maximum subsidiarity for decision making *Want a bespoke approach to local opportunities, careers advice going forward *Name – would be happy to entertain a new name (no suggestion as such) plus campus name in reference protocols *Looking for improved offer for Skye for hospitality; health and social care (Broadford Hospital/Lewis Ritchie Report/recommendations); leisure/outdoor/adventure; crofting/local rural heritage; Gaelic, including Gaelic medium education/teacher training *Questions – what is UHI's view/support of the proposed merger? what would be its USP; what are the key obstacles? 		
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