Orkney Islands Council on behalf of Orkney College UHI

Orkney College broadly welcomes the post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill (‘the Bill’) and the aims contained within it. We are fully supportive of the aims of the Bill to ensure that there is a regional approach to planning college provision. We believe this will improve collaboration to ensure provision is delivered efficiently and tailored to the local needs of the region. In addition we support the aim to improve accountability and ensure that outcomes are delivered which provide the best opportunities for our learners.

Orkney College is a subcommittee of the Council and its statutory genesis lies in the Local Government Scotland Act 1973, and therefore these provisions in the main do not affect Orkney College. We welcome that this non-incorporated status continues and that there is no intention to alter the governance arrangements of Orkney College. That said, Orkney College, together with its academic partners, already operates within a regional context as part of the University of the Highlands and Islands.

We previously welcomed Dr Foxley’s proposals contained within the report of the Working Group on the future structure and function of the University of the Highlands and Islands. In these proposals there would be an FE Regional Board on which Orkney College would have representation. We are disappointed that there is no provision in the Bill to allow for delegation of powers held by the Strategic Regional body to the FE Regional Body. We are concerned as Orkney College is only likely to have representation on the FE Regional Body rather than the Regional Strategic Body. Orkney College is a provider of education and training for its local community and requires to be responsive to local needs. There is concern that having a FE regional body without powers for the strategic planning and funding of further education will result in funding decisions that are detrimental to our local needs.

In addition, there will be costs for the establishment and running of the regional bodies and we are concerned as to the funding mechanisms to deliver them. Orkney College strives to ensure that funding is maximised to benefit learners and any top-slicing of existing budgets to fund these bodies will not be welcomed.

Steven Heddle
Convener

Janice Annal
Chair of Education, Leisure & Housing Committee and Chair of Orkney College Management Council