

A Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in Further and Higher Education

Although not listed in the stakeholders likely to be interested in responding to this call for evidence, Eildon Housing Association are delighted to submit our views and we hope the review secretariat find these comments helpful.

We are a progressive housing and care organisation operating within the Scottish Borders. We have a highly ambitious growth strategy and, as a social interest organisation, are totally committed to working with partner organisations to achieve inclusive economic growth.

To this end we have a highly developed relationship with our regional college, Borders College. We sit alongside senior College staff in Community Planning groups, as well as wider fora, such as the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, South of Scotland Enterprise, and the Borderlands Growth Deal.

Whilst further education interests could be represented in many different ways, we believe that it is critical for the success for the fragile rural economy of the Scottish Borders to be supported by an establishment that is both based in and understands the complex issues facing our local communities.

We have recently cemented this relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding setting out a common work programme with Borders College, covering issues such as social care sector skills, modern methods of construction, sustainable and low carbon heating technologies, supply chain development, and deployment of mobile working technologies. We have also successfully partnered with Borders College on the development of our own bespoke Learning Management System.

In addition, we share our innovation experiences e.g. Borders College renewable heat technology (Shark) and Eildon Housing development of the IOT network and applications across the region.

This flexible ability to share agendas and be responsive to both need and opportunity can only successfully occur as a result of developing an evolved relationship with a locally based regional college.

Our experience of collaborating with Borders College is not unique to the bi-lateral relationship that we have. We are aware of a range of other successful initiatives resulting from having a strong and multifaceted local College. These include:

- Development of a Care Career Academy with Borders Council and linked to the Technology Enhanced Care Hub (SOSEP Funded).
- Collaboration with Eyemouth Boatyard to deliver an Apprenticeship in Boatbuilding and create a learning hub
- Sustainability STEM Hub in Hawick. Development of a Passive House and sustainability kit that reduces our carbon footprint.
- Development of a learning and skills network across the Scottish Borders providing access to online learning in schools, community venues and in businesses.
- Partnership with Napier University on the Downhill Mountain Biking Innovation Hub

These notable successes are achieved despite constraints that currently exist, especially with respect to intervening in new sectors in line with local needs.

Eildon Housing receives help through Borders College via the Workforce Development Fund. However, we understand that this fund is oversubscribed locally which risks missed opportunities.

Despite these obvious and substantial achievements, our discussions with the College acknowledge that there is more to be done and an appetite to further support our struggling local businesses, communities and learners via the high-quality environment provided in the Galashiels campus.

I hope the information outlined above highlights the important work being undertaken in partnership by Borders College, working in partnership with a range of local stakeholder, including Eildon Housing. With the right conditions, flexibilities and funding support this infrastructure provides a solid base to support economic resilience and inclusive growth through these challenging times.

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Chief Executive

10 August 2020