

Merger of Funding Councils Team  
Enterprise, Transport and Life long Learning Dept.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Europa House  
450 Argyll Street  
Glasgow G2 8LG  
9 07 04

Dear Sir,

### **Response to the Consultation on the Merger of the Funding Councils**

The Crichton Foundation, as the independent charitable body set up to support the development of the Crichton Campus, welcomes the opportunity to respond to the above Consultation Paper.

We approve and support the main objective of the proposal to achieve greater strategic co-ordination and coherence of tertiary education in Scotland and to deliver better and more accessible opportunities for life long learning. We also welcome the move to a single body which should make more efficient the response to Scotland's economic objectives.

The emphasis in the Consultation on parity of esteem, recognising the strengths and value of different types of learning, is very important and must be achieved without dilution of quality. The Foundation believes that education provision should be delivered to the highest possible standard across the sectors.

An integrated approach makes good sense in sparsely populated rural areas like Dumfries and Galloway where it has proved difficult to sustain separate Further Education and Higher Education institutions. The tertiary Campus offers a sustainable solution for this and other rural areas.

Dumfries and Galloway has historically been a low wage rural economy, with significant out migration of its young people in pursuit of Higher Education and Training. The recent development of the Crichton Campus has begun to address some of these longterm access problems through its provision of a range of undergraduate and Continuing Professional Development courses. The current proposals to develop initial teacher and social work education and training will further strengthen attempts to attract and retain staff in these key areas.

We therefore welcome the mention of the Crichton Campus and its pioneering role in joint working. Already it is recognised that significant numbers of students here are benefiting from the opportunities for flexible learning, the majority of them from backgrounds with no previous history of Higher Education.

We read with interest of the significant financial support given to the University of the Highlands and Islands and compare it with the support Crichton has received thus far. The comparative lack of funding received by this campus reinforces the claims made in the consultation Paper that the division between SFEFC and SHEFC has frustrated efforts to develop a sustainable multi-institutional Campus.

A good illustration of this is the dilemma we currently face over the provision of a new integrated library for the Campus. The library currently shared by Paisley and Glasgow is at capacity use, the library currently used by Bell College is inadequately located and the proposed relocation of Dumfries and Galloway College imposes yet further demands. The logical solution is an integrated library for all students on the Campus but the complexity of the funding arrangements is frustrating attempts to achieve it.

We support the assertion in the paper that, included in the role of the new body will be the need to encourage and facilitate new institutional models. At the Crichton we are determined to become Scotland's first fully integrated Campus for tertiary education. Many of the bureaucratic barriers which presently frustrate that progress, would be resolved by the merger of the Funding Councils.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Kelly', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Barbara Kelly CBE DL

Convenor, Crichton Foundation