

Proposed Merger Between East Devon College and North Devon College

Public Consultation
4th February 2008

Final date for receipt of
comments
7th March 2008



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1 Introduction

This consultation document sets out the context and rationale for the proposed merger of East Devon College (EDC) and North Devon College (NDC). In compliance with the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) guidelines for provider reorganisations, the two colleges submitted their joint proposal [the Initial Outline Proposal] to the LSC Devon and Cornwall in January 2008. The LSC has agreed that the proposal should be taken forward to the next stage, that of public consultation.

Your comments on the proposal are sought. Please see Section 7 for details for the consultation arrangements and guidance on how to respond.

Please note: **The final date for receipt of comments is 5pm on 7th March 2008.**

1.1 Executive Summary

The Corporations of EDC and NDC have considered the strategic options review and entered into their own discussions, both corporations agree with the recommendation that a model B merger, where the corporation of EDC is dissolved and its property, rights and liabilities are transferred to NDC, would be the way forward for the benefit of North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon learners. This is subject to amicable outcomes or potential deal breakers, and subject to effective and acceptable due diligences carried out.

Following approval to proceed by the LSC, the Corporations of both colleges have agreed to move to due diligence and public consultation in order to gather further evidence and the views of stakeholders in Devon and North East Cornwall and those areas of Somerset adjacent to Devon. These processes will look objectively at the viability of the proposed merger of EDC and NDC.

It is believed that the principal benefits of the merger will be the positive effect which it will have for North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon learners in terms of shared expertise, joint planning, shared resource and curriculum cohesion, provision and progression. Both East Devon College and North Devon College operate across a broad geographical area, serving many rural and dispersed communities. The merger will provide an opportunity to create a coherent, consistent, high quality, well resourced curriculum for the whole of North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon which no other form of collaboration offers.

1.2 Background Information

In May 2007 East Devon College Corporation appointed consultants to undertake a Strategic Options Review of the effective provision of education and training for the people of Mid and East Devon. Six options were considered as part of this process, which are as follows:

- Option One - Status Quo - No change
- Option Two - Change the mission, remit and structure of the College continuing as an independent further education corporation
- Option Three - Informal collaboration between the College, work-based learning providers, employers and schools
- Option Four - Formal collaboration between the College and work-based learning providers, employers and schools
- Option Five - Merger of East Devon College with one or more providers/institutions
- Option Six - Close East Devon College dispersing provision to other providers

On the basis of the evaluation of the options the Strategic Options Review Report for EDC stated: *“Therefore we recommend that the College Corporation should give serious consideration to exploring the possibility of a merger with one or more partners.”*

East Devon College – Strategic Options Review, KPMG, July 2007

EDC entered into a process of identifying a potential merger partner. A press advertisement was placed in the TES (Times Education Supplement) and organisations were invited to put forward proposals to the EDC Corporation to become a potential merger partner. After a robust and transparent process, the EDC Corporation decided that NDC was its preferred merger partner.

The two corporations have formed a Joint Working Party (JWP) to oversee the merger process.

The Initial Outline Proposal (IOP) for the merger between EDC and NDC was produced in late 2007. It was then approved by the individual corporations at their respective Board meetings in January 2008 and sent through to the LSC Regional Board for approval. The IOP was approved by the LSC Regional Board and the two Corporations agreed to proceed to the due diligence and public consultation stages of the merger process.

It has been agreed to aim for a merger implementation date of 1 August 2008, as it is believed that it is in the best interests of current/potential future students and staff that this process should press ahead as soon as is practicable.

2 College Contexts

2.1 East Devon College

EDC is a general further education college which operates on five sites over a broad geographical area. The main college campus is in Tiverton, but courses are also offered at centres in Honiton, Exmouth and an additional Tiverton centre. The College acts as the tertiary college for pupils attending 11-16 schools in Cullompton, Tiverton and Uffculme although the pattern of secondary education across most of the area comprises 11-18 schools.

The College mission is 'to develop skills, knowledge and confidence for all'.

EDC provides courses across 14 of the 15 subject sector areas.

The majority of full-time learners aged 16-18 are following courses at level 3.

For adults, most enrolments are at levels 1 and 2. A number of learners are currently following apprenticeship programmes. The College also offers Entry to Employment (E2E), and Train to Gain programmes and a significant amount of vocational training for school pupils aged 14-16.

Learners aged under 19 yrs old

In 2006/07 the college had 772 further education learners aged under 19 (LSC funded), of whom 728 were full-time learners. This compares with 783 further education learners aged under 19 reported in 2005/06, of which 704 were full time.

Analysis of further education enrolments (excluding tutorial enrichment) by learning aim type for 2006/07 revealed that 32% of enrolments were for AS / A2 level provision. GCSEs accounted for 6% of learning aims. A significant proportion of learning aims (62%) were 'other' vocationally related learning aims including NVQs / NVQ units, Key Skills, Certificates and Diplomas.

Analysis by sector subject area in 2006/07 revealed that there were further education enrolments in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas for learners aged under 19 years old. The top sector subject areas were:

Preparation for Life and Work, including key skills (40% of enrolments)

Arts, Media and Publishing (13%)

Science and Mathematics (11%)

Retail and Commercial Enterprise (7%)

The highest number of further education enrolments for learners aged under 19 years old in 2006/07 were at Level 3 (48% of enrolments), followed by level 2 (26% of enrolments) and level 1 (23% of enrolments). The remaining learning aims were entry level, or learning aims where level is not applicable.

During 2006/07, East Devon College had a work-based learning average number in learning of 178 learners. The College delivered Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships across a range of curriculum areas including Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty and Health Care and Public Services. The College also engaged a number of learners in Entry to Employment (E2E) programmes with 62 starts during 2006/07.

Adult Learners

In 2006/07 there were 1,037 further education adult learners (LSC funded) of which 137 were full time. This compares with 2,356 in 2005/06 of which 173 were full time.

Adult enrolments were predominately vocational. In 2006/07 the highest number of enrolments were found to be in Certificates (36% of enrolments), followed by NVQs (17% of enrolments) and then Diplomas (14% of enrolments).

Adult enrolments in 2006/07 were within all 15 sector subject areas. The sector subject areas with the highest number of enrolments were:

Preparation for Life and Work, including key skills (25% of enrolments)

Health, Public Services and Care (20%)

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (8%)

Education and Training (8%)

Analysis of adult enrolments by level in 2006/07 revealed that 35% were at level 3 followed by 33% at level 2 and 14% at level 1. 8% were at entry level. There were also a small proportion of enrolments at level 4 (3%).

The College also delivers work-based learning to adults, with an average number in learning of 65 during 2006/07. Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships are delivered in a number of areas including Hospitality, Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty, Health Care and Public Services.

Current Estate

East Devon College has actively pursued options to refurbish and rebuild its estate for a number of years. These efforts have culminated in the completion of a programme of new build and refurbishment at the main Tiverton site in Autumn 2007.

East Devon College operates principally from a main freehold site at Tiverton, together with two leasehold satellite sites at Honiton. The Tiverton premises are co-located with Tiverton High School. In recent years the College has pursued an accommodation strategy that has seen it withdraw from some of its estate, refurbish some areas and initiate new build at the main Tiverton site.

Until earlier in 2007 the Tiverton estate comprised a mixture of buildings, with many dating from the 1970s or before, some from 1992 and 2002 and a new workshop facility completed in 2006. The quality of the estate was very mixed, with some excellent facilities and some accommodation which was clearly inadequate and not fit for purpose. The estate also had substantial overcapacity. The position has been improved significantly in the latter part of 2007.

The final stage – Phase II – of the College’s property strategy was concluded in Autumn 2007, following landscaping and work on the car parks. This £5M project has seen the completion of a substantial new teaching block, which was handed over in June 2007, together with the demolition of most of the older parts of the College. The only remaining area of pre-1992 accommodation is the main ‘C’ Block, which houses the main College reception area and library/learning resource centre on the ground floor. These ground floor areas have been refurbished and substantially improved, as was ‘D’ Block, which was constructed in 1992.

The College site now appears much more open, modern, attractive to learners and fit for purpose as a result of this work.

2.2 North Devon College

North Devon College is a tertiary college with its main site in Barnstaple, and serves a large rural and dispersed local community. As an isolated College in a mainly rural area of approximately 800 square miles, with a population of 140,000, it endeavours to provide a comprehensive range of courses to meet the needs of its community. 65% of College learners live more than 3 miles from the College and 56% travel to College by bus.

The organisational scheme in North Devon consists of mainly 11-16 comprehensive schools, although there are two 11-18 schools, one in Bideford and one in Ilfracombe.

The College operates off-site provision in Barnstaple, Bideford, Bude and Holsworthy. It has developed significant Higher Education work, particularly Foundation degrees, and it also attracts international learners.

Most businesses in the area are small to medium sized enterprises. Average earnings in the area are below the national average.

The College offers provision in 14 of the 15 sector subject categories from pre-entry to level 4. The majority of learners are studying on level 3 courses.

The College is the main educational provider in the area and the second largest employer.

Its vision, as expressed in its mission statement, is 'to drive forward educational, economic and cultural success by continually raising the aspirations, knowledge and skills of individuals, communities and businesses'.

The current management team has developed the idea that NDC is 'One College with Four Faces'. The College has, and will continue to develop, an appropriate face for young learners, adults, higher education learners and employers in order to deliver high quality provision, raise aspiration and improve the local economy through skills development.

The College maintains strong links with all local secondary schools and community colleges as well as other institutions so as to ensure comprehensive provision for both young people and adults in the area.

In 2004 the College gained Beacon and Investors in People status. It also received LSC excellence status in 2004, and has Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status in two areas, engineering and manufacturing, and construction crafts.

In October 2006, North Devon College underwent an OfSTED inspection culminating in outstanding grade 1s awarded in all areas of the inspection.

Learners aged under 19 years old

In 2006/07 the College had 2,718 further education learners (LSC funded) aged under 19 of which 2,401 were full-time learners. This compares with 2,487 learners in 2005/06 of which 2,112 were full time.

In 2006/07 35% of enrolments were on AS / A2 level provision and 3% of enrolments were GCSE provision. A significant proportion of enrolments were 'other' vocationally related learning aims including Key Skills, NVQ / NVQ units, Certificates and Diplomas.

In 2006/07 the College delivered enrolments in all sector subject areas for those aged under 19. The sector subject areas with the highest number of enrolments included:

Preparation for Life and Work, including key skills (30% of enrolments)

Arts, Media and Publishing (13%)

Science and Mathematics (13%)

Languages, Literature and Culture (7%)

Analysis by level reveals that in 2006/07 57% of enrolments were at level 3. 22% of enrolments were at level 2 and 13% were at level 1. The remaining enrolments were entry or level not applicable.

In terms of work based learning, during 2006/07 North Devon College had an average in learning of 246 learners. The College delivered Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships across a range of curriculum areas including Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty, Business Admin, Management and Professional, Hospitality, Leisure Sport and Travel, Health Care and Public Services. The College also engaged a number of learners in E2E programmes with 87 starts during 2006/07.

Adult Learners

In 2006/07 there were 4,161 LSC funded adult learners at North Devon College, of which 3,976 were part time. Also in 2006/07 there were 5,773 adult learners as non-LSC funded activity. In 2005/06 the College had 7,152 learners, of which 6,888 were part-time learners.

In 2006/07 Certificates accounted for 35% of enrolments followed by NVQs which accounted for 23% of adult enrolments. The majority of the remaining aims were accounted for by 'other' vocationally related provision.

The College delivered enrolments to adults in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas during 2006/07. The sector subject areas with the highest number of enrolments included:

Preparation for Life and Work, including key skills (24% of enrolments)

Health, Public Services and Care (16% of enrolments)

Business, Administration and law (13% of enrolments)

Retail and Commercial Enterprise (11% of enrolments)

Level 2 provision accounted for 43% of adult enrolments. Both level 1 and level 3 accounted for 17% of enrolments each. The remaining enrolments were at entry level (8%), level 4 (2%), and for aims where the level was not applicable.

In terms of work based learning, during 2006/07 North Devon College had an average in learning of 141 learners. The College delivered Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships across a range of curriculum areas including Construction, Engineering, Hair and Beauty, Business Admin, Management and Professional, Hospitality, Leisure Sport and Travel, Health Care and Public Services.

Current Estate

The College currently operates from one main site and seven other sites. Having undertaken a number of small property projects, by 2005 the College was contemplating the construction of a new dedicated HE centre. At this point it was considered appropriate to conduct a thorough review of the estate, and a Property Strategy was completed in 2005-06. This concluded that much of the College's estate was not fit for purpose, and a substantial amount of backlog maintenance was identified. Refurbishment costs for the estate were estimated at c. £30M. The strategy concluded that the preferred option was a new build on a new site in Barnstaple.

An Application in Principle for LSC capital funding to support a new build project was initially submitted in September 2006. The objectives of the project were, and remain, to provide:

- New and fit for purpose accommodation close to the centre of Barnstaple;
- Accommodation in Barnstaple that is consolidated onto one site;
- High quality facilities to improve participation;
- A dedicated HE facility;
- Improved access from Barnstaple and North Devon as a whole;
- Appropriate vocational facilities to meet the needs of learners and employers;
- Improved visibility and presence for the College; and
- Better links with the community and other stakeholders.

The existing space in Barnstaple amounts to 28,500 m2 Gross Internal Area (GIA) as follows:

The Main Site is 25,314 m2 GIA; and

Five other sites total 3,186 m2 GIA.

The College's initial work indicated the need for an estate of 25-26,000 m2 GIA. However, the LSC was concerned that this was predicated on lower than expected on-site daytime annual guided learning hours ("GLH"). The College and the LSC have worked closely together to agree an accurate baseline position for GLH and a detailed assumed growth projection. This indicates growth of 27% in GLH from the 2005-06 baseline, and as a consequence the new build is now assessed at 28,500 m2 GIA, together with a satellite project in Bideford amounting to 500 m2 GIA.

North Devon College has continued to progress with a major new build project which would see the relocation of College operations within Barnstaple. An Application in Principle for capital support was approved by the LSC's National Capital Committee early in 2008 and approved by the National Council to progress to a detailed proposal on 30 January 2008. Current plans are for a new College site to open in September 2011.

North Devon College's future plans focus, understandably, on the delivery of its planned new centre in Barnstaple.

3 Rationale for the Merger

The main rationale for the merger of the two colleges is the positive effect which it will have for North Devon, Torrington, Mid and East Devon learners in terms of shared expertise, joint planning, shared resource and curriculum cohesion, provision and progression. This will provide an opportunity to create a coherent, consistent, high quality, well resourced 14-19 curriculum for the whole of North Devon, Torrington, Mid and East Devon which no other form of collaboration offers.

A merger will ensure greater efficiency and utilisation of capital resources to support a vocationally orientated curriculum, including new buildings and state of the art resources. There are significant opportunities for participation, reducing wasteful competition, and the introduction of a unified approach to student recruitment across North Devon, Torrington, Mid and East Devon.

A merger will enhance the learning programmes, include new programmes and initiatives, and better provision for students with learning difficulties and specifically young learners not in education, employment or training (NEET).

3.1 Benefits of the Merger

The merger of East Devon College and North Devon College will provide significant benefits for learners, staff, schools and for employers and communities in North Devon, Torrington, Mid and East Devon. The overarching benefits of the merger will be:-

- an opportunity to bring clarity to education provision across North Devon, Torrington, Mid and East Devon;
- improved efficiency through the introduction of common management information systems;
- enhanced quality improvement strategies and systems through combining of expertise and good practice, target setting and internal benchmarks;
- improved staff development opportunities, again through the sharing of good practice which has been evidenced within both colleges in recent OFSTED inspection reports;
- stronger relationships with other local partners, including enhanced collaboration with schools and the Local Authority, particularly in the light of the creation of DIUS and DCSF, and the potential introduction of Academies;
- resultant economies of scale which will create the flexibility and resources to respond to changing needs.

3.2 The Merger Will

The driver for the College vision will be the concept of “One College Four Faces”. Simply stated, the College simultaneously recognises its four core client groups, Young Learners, Employers, Adults and Higher Education as equally important and requiring equal focus and energies.

Each Face – Building In Excellence

The strategic approach towards each face will be driven by the need to build in excellence for the learners by creating aspiration, engaging them in a new and appropriate manner, and offer the learning product or provision most appropriate to the learner or employer.

Further, this will be supported by a unique learner experience for each face. The strategies for teaching and learning will address the differing needs of each face. A special but not exclusionary environment will exist for each face. For example a higher education environment in which adults feel most comfortable, but will be accessed by young people who partake in a HE module.

Each face will be expressed differently to be appropriate to the learners’ needs:

Young Learners

- A learner’s experience which is fun, friendly and outstanding in every way;
- Focus on aspirational careers;
- Strong visionary partnerships with schools to maximise transition at 16;
- In partnership with others, develop and rationalise the curriculum, maximising areas of strength and expertise;
- In partnership with schools, develop an appropriate 14-19 curriculum;
- In partnership with others, develop an appropriate vocational provision in East Devon.

Employers

- Providing solutions which improve business operation and success;
- Meet Local and Regional Skill needs through dynamic provision and by maximising Tiverton’s central location;
- In partnership with others develop a demand led curriculum;
- As part of a rural Devon partnership, develop innovation and knowledge transfer.

Adults

- Develop an adult experience which is engaging, fun, friendly and focussed on individual success;
- Lifelong careers through lifelong learning;
- Prioritise and focus on learners without good Skills for Life, or without a first level 2/3;
- Develop and expand learning for fun and pleasure in the community.

Higher Education

- Develop Higher Education which is focussed on meeting the skills needs of the economy of East and Mid Devon;
- Develop a Centre for Higher Education, Knowledge Transfer and Incubation;
- Develop a culture in which progression to Higher Education is normal for people in East and Mid Devon;
- Ensure all our graduates are ready for the world of work.

4 Profile of the Proposed Merged College

4.1 Vision for the merged college

The vision for the merged college is:

“An Outstanding College at the Heart of an Outstanding Learning Community - Economically, Culturally and Socially”

The vision and values will drive everything the College does, it will work with stakeholders, staff and partners to make the vision a reality.

4.2 Curriculum and Learners

The focus of the College will be helping all learners to succeed. The merged College will enable strategic planning of the curriculum based on market needs. The greater critical mass of one college will give opportunities to run flexible programmes with good progression routes from Foundation and level 1 to Higher Education programmes. The emphasis will be on business development and responding to learner needs including local access and choice. The College will continue to develop personalised learning programmes to meet the identified needs and ambitions of individual learners.

In line with national and regional priorities the College will also plan its curriculum provision taking account of employment and skills needs. The College will be committed to employer engagement and will seek to work closely with employers and Sector Skills Councils.

4.3 Governance

The two Corporations have set up a Joint Working Party with membership from each Corporation. This Joint Working Party will oversee the merger process and any decisions will be referred back to the two Boards for approval prior to the Incorporation Date when the East Devon College Corporation will be dissolved.

The nature of a type B merger means that the Corporation of East Devon College will be dissolved whilst the Corporation of North Devon College continues to exist. After the Incorporation Date, the new North Devon College Corporation will have a decision-making role for the merged College and can confirm proposals on structure, appointments, regulations, policies, procedures and practices. On the formal dissolution date the new Corporation will take over all functions and responsibilities of the East Devon College Corporation.

The Corporation of the merged College will include members of the current East Devon College Corporation and will ensure that the needs of the rural and urban communities and employers of Mid and East Devon are represented on the Corporation.

4.4 Management

It is believed that the success of the integration of the two colleges will be dependent on effective, coherent joint services which operate between all the sites of the merged College and, consequently, it is likely that there will be a number of cross institutional responsibilities that Senior Staff will carry in addition to any day to day responsibilities at each site.

Further work is required on the organisation structure for the merged College.

4.5 Human Resources

In order to promote clarity and certainty for staff an early priority will be communication and consultation with the recognised trade unions. It is likely there are currently some differences in contractual terms and conditions of employment for staff employed at each college. The merged college will honour its obligations under the European Acquired Rights Directive and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

The Governors of both colleges recognise the need for sensitivity in addressing these issues. The two colleges believe that the merger will grow and enhance educational and training provision in the Devon area. The merged College will need a well-qualified and experienced workforce to achieve this aim. Both Corporations recognise the need to review the organisational, management and staffing needs of the merged College.

4.6 Property

The new institution will use the existing sites of both North Devon and East Devon Colleges. North Devon College is currently undergoing a large capital investment proposal which will relocate its current Sticklepath Hill site to Seven Brethren in Barnstaple.

4.7 Concluding Statement

The merged Corporation will pursue partnerships that add real value to the provision for the rural communities in North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon. The merged College will work with schools, other post 16 providers and employers to benefit all communities.

The merged College will develop a local curriculum to meet local needs at North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon. An appropriate vocational provision in East Devon will be developed, and this will be achieved in partnership.

5 LSC Reorganisation Criteria

When considering any proposal for the reorganisation of further education colleges, the Council will have regard to its duties to secure proper and reasonable facilities for education and training under the 2000 Act.

The Council has agreed the following criteria against which reorganisation proposals shall be judged. A high level assessment is provided against each LSC criteria. A more detailed assessment will be provided in the Full Merger Proposal

Criterion 1 The proposal is likely to extend participation, learning and training. The proposed merger would look to extend participation in learning and training. The strategic objectives for the merger include increasing 16 to 18 year old participation (including tackling the NEET group) and also improving adult participation and employer responsiveness. The merged College will seek to provide an environment that is accessible to all, that promotes equality of opportunity and values diversity.

Criterion 2 The proposal is likely to result in raised learner achievement. A key aim of the merged College will be improving the levels of retention, achievement and success. The merged College will have a strategic approach for improving success rates for all ages and at all levels, agreed with the LSC. The focus on achievement is reflected by a strong focus on improving success within the stated objectives. The merged College will target year on year improvements in its success rates as part of its strategic objectives.

Criterion 3 The proposal is likely to result in raised standards of education and training being delivered. A key aim will be to create an outstanding College which is highly regarded across North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon, regionally, and nationally. EDC was inspected in 2007 when Ofsted awarded it grade 3 for effectiveness of provision, grade 3 for capacity to improve, grade 3 for achievement and standards, grade 3 for quality of provision and grade 4 for leadership and management. For the curriculum areas, the College received two grade 3s and two grade 4s. NDC was inspected in 2006 when the College was awarded grade 1 in every area. Bringing EDC and NDC together will allow the merged College to review the quality of teaching and learning and adopt best practice from each institution, culminating in raised standards of education and training being delivered.

Criterion 4 The proposal is likely to address any issues of over- and under provision in an area. The merged College will seek to tailor its offer and rationalise any provision that is in over supply, and grow in those areas the LSC consider to be a strategic priority. A thorough review and analysis of provision will be conducted as part of a joint curriculum planning exercise for 2008/09. This will include developing further the range of provision to meet the needs of the NEET group. In addition the merged College will look to increase the number of adults engaged on Skills for Life, full level 2 and full level 3 provision and also

provide a stronger and more responsive offer to employers locally, regionally and nationally.

Criterion 5 Adequate consultation has been undertaken and proper consideration has been given to alternative options. A Strategic Options Review was commissioned by East Devon College in 2007. The review considered a range of potential options against agreed criteria. On the basis of the evaluation of the options it was recommended that EDC should “*give serious consideration to exploring the possibility of a merger with one or more partners*”. A number of stakeholders were consulted as part of the review, including all of the Devon College Principals and the Local Authority. The initial outline proposal was the first stage of the formal process. The second stage of the merger process is the full public consultation, with the due diligence exercise running at the same time.

Criterion 6 The proposal is likely to be financially viable, affordable, cost-effective and successfully managed.

The Colleges have yet to conduct a detailed study to identify the likely costs and benefits of the potential merger. The two colleges will need to consider a range of issues, including the funding differential that exists in terms of £/full time equivalent learner, LSC allocations, staffing issues, systems integration and estates issues.

Criterion 7 The proposal is consistent with any area-wide inspection report. Account will be taken, as appropriate, of all inspection and other strategic planning documentation and action plans.

6 Conclusion

The agreement in principle that the two colleges should consider merging has arisen from significant detailed research culminating in a Strategic Options Review for EDC in 2007. Having considered the strategic options review and entered into their own discussions, both Corporations agree with the recommendation that a model B merger, where the Corporation of EDC is dissolved and its property, rights and liabilities are transferred to NDC, would be the way forward for the benefit of North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon learners and employers. This is subject to amicable outcomes or potential deal breakers, and subject to effective and acceptable due diligences carried out. Both Corporations are mindful that the main benefits of the merger have to be felt by the learners and other stakeholders of North Devon, Torridge, Mid and East Devon, and the wider catchment area. It is believed that a merged College will:

- extend participation in education and training in the North, Mid and East of Devon;
- provide a comprehensive range of progression routes into apprenticeships, employment, higher education and other continuing learning;
- deliver a responsive and targeted curriculum that equips learners and employers with the skills they need to meet the economic challenges which they face;
- be financially healthy and cost-effective;
- create a larger and even more effective College by building on current strengths in both colleges;
- capitalise on nationally renowned provision (good brands);
- synergise curriculum planning such that the separate building projects can create first class learning environments for their respective students;
- as a larger institution, put the rural challenges further up the regional and national agenda;
- as a larger institution, be more effective in meeting the challenges facing the rural communities;
- enhance the quality of provision by expanding the excellent models of delivery which already exist at North Devon College to all of the learners in East Devon and Mid Devon.

7 The Consultation Process

Internal Consultation

There have been regular communications with staff as the proposal has been developed. These will continue if the merger process progresses. In addition, the Principal of each College will keep staff and governors up to date with developments.

Recognised trade unions have been informed of the merger proposal and further consultations will be held with them when appropriate.

External Consultation

The Governing Bodies of both Colleges believe that all external stakeholders should have the opportunity to comment on the proposed merger. This document is central to that process and is being distributed to individuals and organisations that may be regarded as stakeholders. Copies of the document will also be circulated to public libraries and details advertised in the local press.

How to respond

The LSC and the Governing Bodies of both Colleges would urge you to make your views on the merger known by submitting them in writing to the LSC. Please complete the attached Consultation Response Pro-forma.

If you are able to reference your comments to particular sections or paragraphs within the document this would be much appreciated, as it will assist the process of analysing the responses.

Responses should be made using the enclosed form and submitted by **5pm on Friday 7th March** to:

John Peart
Partnership Manager
Learning and Skills Council, Devon and Cornwall
Exeter Office
Ground Floor
Richmond Court
Emperor Way
Exeter Business Park
Exeter
EX1 3QS

Consultation Response Proforma

Responses are invited by **5pm** on **7th March 2008** to the attached consultation document on the proposed merger of East Devon College and North Devon College.

Please provide your comments in the appropriate spaces below and append additional sheets as necessary.

Please indicate whether your comments are directed to the colleges involved, to the Learning and Skills Council or to all parties in order that the appropriate party may respond where necessary. Please note, all responses will be considered both by the colleges and the Learning and Skills Council.

Question 1 – Do you support the proposed re-organisation and do you have comments on the overall proposals for re-organisation?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No Response**

Q1.

Question 2 – Do you have any comments or views on the rationale for the merger and the perceived benefits?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No response**

Q2.

Question 3 – Do you have any comments on any curriculum issues and potential impact on learners arising from the proposal?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No Response**

Q3.

Question 4 – Do you have any comments on the profile of the new merged college?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No response**

Q4.

Question 5 - Do you have any comments on governance, management, or staffing issues arising from the proposed merger?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No response**

Q5.

Question 6 - Do you want to make any comment on accommodation, resources or finance issues arising from the proposed merger?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No response**

Q6.

Question 7. Do you want to make any comments on any potential impact of the proposed merger on other providers of education and training in the area?

(Please tick one box only)

- Yes**
- No**
- Not sure**
- No response**

Q7

The previous comments are directed to **(please tick one or more boxes)**:

- East Devon College
- North Devon College
- Learning and Skills Council, Devon and Cornwall

Name

Organisation (if applicable).....

Address.....

.....

.....

Signed Date.....

Please return this pro-forma by **5pm** on **7th March 2008** to:

John Peart
Partnership Manager
Learning and Skills Council, Devon and Cornwall
Exeter Office
Ground Floor
Richmond Court
Emperor Way
Exeter Business Park
Exeter
EX1 3QS