

Public Consultation Document

For the Exeter College and Bicton College Reorganisation

November 21st 2009 – December 21st 2009



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1. Introduction

Introduction

This consultation document provides an outline of the background and rationale for the proposed reorganisation of Exeter College and Bicton College. The proposal provides for Bicton College to become part of the Exeter College Group as a wholly owned subsidiary of Exeter College.

The reorganisation will achieve all of the benefits of a traditional merger whilst retaining the brand and integrity of Bicton College, safeguarding the land based curriculum for Devon and the South West region and responding to the needs of key stakeholders in Devon. This is a new and innovative model with relevance to the FE sector, given the economic challenges in the future.

The reorganisation will be achieved by the dissolution of the Bicton College Corporation and the transfer, under Section 27 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, of its property, rights and liabilities to a newly incorporated, wholly owned subsidiary of Exeter College.

Under the current statutory arrangements the final decision on whether the proposal should proceed will be taken by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Prior to this decision being taken, the Learning and Skills Council for Devon and Cornwall will consider the results of this consultation exercise, due diligence studies and the full merger proposal from the Colleges. The Regional Council will then make a decision as to whether or not to forward the full reorganisation proposal to the Secretary of State for him to make his final determination.

There is a statutory requirement that this proposal should be subject to a public consultation period lasting at least one calendar month. A list of organisations that are being consulted is provided at Appendix A. The Statutory Proposal and the Statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal are included at Appendix B.

Your comments on the reorganisation proposal and any other information contained in this document are welcomed. It will be useful if the pro forma at Appendix C is used for the submission of responses.

Responses

Representations may be made to the Learning and Skills Council by Monday 21 December 2009. Representations should be made in writing to:

**John Peart
Partnership Director
Learning and Skills Council
Ground Floor
Richmond Court
Emperor Way
Exeter Business Park
Exeter
EX1 3QS**

or via email to john.peart@lsc.gov.uk

The final date for receipt of comments is 12 noon, Monday 21 December.

2. Executive Summary

Introduction

This Consultation Document includes details of the proposed reorganisation of Bicton and Exeter Colleges. It outlines:

- the Vision and rationale behind the proposed reorganisation;
- the regional context in terms of demographics, the economy and local employment;
- the reorganisation proposal; and
- a commentary on the recent financial position of both Colleges and the forecast for the reorganised Group.

Summary of key points

College Vision

"To become outstanding, embracing ambition, innovation and enterprise whilst providing excellent teaching and learning for young people, adults and employers in our region."

Growth in future learner numbers

Above average population growth is anticipated in the South West. This trend coupled with the raising of participation age is likely to increase demand for further education going forward.

Demographics and participation in FE

The population of the South West is rising faster than that of the UK average. This trend will be evident to a greater extent in the Exeter region due to the potential new Growth Point development bringing 5,000 additional dwellings to the locality. The low carbon, food security and sustainability agendas will serve to drive demand for land based education, both as part of training new entrants to the sector and re-skilling those already in the industry to cope with a changing environment. Such factors, coupled with compulsory participation until 18, are likely to act as drivers for growth in learners numbers in the medium term.

Uncertainties over future funding levels

Uncertainties in the levels of future funding, however, mean that, although growth in learners is likely, corresponding growth in income is less certain. The reorganised Group will be stronger and better placed to cope with these pressures than as two individual Colleges.

2. Executive Summary (continued)

Land based provision

One of the prime reasons for the proposed reorganisation is to ensure the continuation and development of land based provision at Bicton College for the benefit of the County of Devon and the wider region.

Bicton College - Devon's specialist land based provider

If a viable partner for Bicton College were not identified it is likely the College would close leaving Devon without a specialist land based further education college. This proposal gives Bicton College the opportunity to develop, in an affordable and viable manner, as the specialist land based provider for Devon.

Importance of the land based sector

There are more than 20,000 land based businesses in the South West, employing around 60,000 people. This accounts for 14% of the UK's entire land based workforce and 2.4% of the total employment in the region. It is clear that Devon's land based sector is of importance not only to the Devon economy, but to the UK's land based sector as a whole. The land based industry is of high importance to the UK economy and will be subject to a period of significant change which will impact on the training needs of the sector.

The need for innovation in the land based sector

The sector must adapt to meet changing requirements of the future. Lantra and sector pressure groups acknowledge the need to drive better business acumen and IT skills through a mixture of better training and / or continual professional development. Europe, and both national and local Government are driving forward the food security, sustainability and environmental agendas, all of which require the sector to obtain new skills to cope with future challenges. The recent document "Jobs for the Future" published by the Government in September 2009 sets out the importance of low carbon initiatives, and the "creation of the UK's first specialist low carbon areas in the North East and South West regions. These will combine targeted Government funding with the expertise of local businesses, universities and colleges to help the UK maximise the economic opportunities a low carbon world can offer". These factors combine to drive demand for land based education, both as part of training new entrants to the sector and re-skilling those already in the industry to cope with the changing external environment.

Demand for specialist land based provision

The land based sector at a national level has an ageing profile, but this is even more of an issue in the South West where 53% of workers are aged above 45 (UK land based is 50%). There is a growing need to attract young people into the industry, and this will drive future demand in education to meet this need. On the other hand, projections show a decline in overall employment in South West land based businesses in the period to 2014. Despite this decline, reviews in the South West indicate that, due to the ageing profile and the need to replace people leaving the sector and retiring, there is a net requirement of around 9,000 entrants in the period between 2004 and 2014 (this equates to around 15% of the current South West land based workforce). The reorganised Group has a key role to play in attracting and educating the workers of tomorrow in order to ensure that land based industries in the South West do not suffer significant shortages of skilled workers in the medium term.

2. Executive Summary (continued)

Employer engagement

There is a shared commitment to employer engagement across the two Colleges. The reorganisation will benefit employers as key stakeholders in up-skilling and re-skilling the workforce. This will build on the work already undertaken by both Colleges and will also serve the needs of the local and wider land based community.

16 - 19 Centre for Exeter

The Group aims to build on Exeter College's excellent reputation and achievement success as the primary provider of A level and vocational programmes in the Exeter area.

Land based industries

As discussed above the land based sector will remain at the heart of Bicton College going forward as the Group seeks to improve links with local employers, and to provide a flexible range of training and education that meets the varied and changing needs of the sector.

Other sectors of strategic focus for the group

Analysis highlights that there are several industries in the South West which are experiencing hard to fill vacancies due to a lack of skills in the region. Construction and automotive sectors are expected to be key areas of focus in addition to the land based offering at the Bicton site. Not only is there curriculum cross over in these areas, but there is a demonstrable demand for skills gaps to be closed and for employers' training needs to be better serviced in these sectors.

Employer focussed delivery from a dedicated centre

The estate of Bicton College is particularly suitable for certain types of provision, such as employer related programmes, open seminars and higher education. The Group will benefit from the expertise of Exeter College in initiatives such as Train to Gain to develop new markets at Bicton College. There will be close links to influential bodies such as the South West Regional Development Agency, Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, the Environment Agency, Devon County Council and other sector bodies in order to ensure the needs of local employers and stakeholders are met.

Limitations of Exeter College estate

Exeter College has reached capacity and due to the suspension of LSC capital funding has limited opportunities for expansion. As at 9 September 2009 there are an additional 200 16-18 full-time learners, of whom circa 150 are unfunded in 2009/10 putting further pressure on the available accommodation. However, Bicton College has significant spare capacity in its existing estate, potentially providing Exeter College opportunities for relocation of complementary provision, which will allow for expansion and improved facilities at its centre.

Better utilisation of estate through the reorganised Group

As discussed above the estate of Bicton College is particularly suitable for certain types of provision, such as employer related programmes, open seminars and higher education. Utilisation of the Bicton Estate as a hub for such activities gives Exeter College the opportunity to:

- focus on delivering core 16 - 19 provision from its existing site;
- support the 14-16 demands in the Exeter area;
- alleviate pressing accommodation issues at Exeter;
- provide the College with greater capacity for future 16 - 19 growth; and
- better meet the needs of learners within Exeter.

2. Executive Summary (continued)

14 - 19 Centre for East Devon

Bicton has the potential to become a 14 to 19 centre benefiting from increased regional profile, improved links to local schools and employers providing a complementary offering to that of Exeter College.

Higher Education

The site at Bicton College will become the major HE centre for the Group, providing an enhanced overall HE provision, which meets the needs of the regions employers and learners.

Development of a 14 to 19 centre for East Devon

It is intended that the Bicton site will offer a complementary provision to Exeter College, and will develop land based and other diplomas, allowing learners of the Group to take advantage of its rural location and facilities. It will seek to develop a higher profile than it currently has in East Devon and will work in partnership with neighbouring schools to enhance its role in 14-19 provision. Bicton College will expand its 14 –16 provision for 2009/10, with the support of Exeter College, and this will continue to grow as the College raises its profile with local schools. The College already has strong links with a number of East Devon Schools and runs a number of projects with schools relating to the food agenda (currently in excess of 200 14-16 learners). Additionally, it will develop environmental studies in partnership with Devon County Council to support the learning of the County's junior school pupils.

Hub for Higher Education in Devon

There will be one unit for the management and promotion of HE across the Group with the aim of providing progression routes, mostly at Foundation Degree level and for professional higher level qualifications, across all major and specialist curriculum pathways. This will also ensure that there is a sharing of 'good practice' in respect of teaching and learning, assessment and quality.

Greater focus on employer needs

The enlarged Group will offer a significant opportunity to develop the HE offering of both existing Colleges. It is recognised that there is a developing need for higher level skills and training in subjects such as renewable energy and food security, and the resources available to develop appropriate programmes in these subject areas will be enhanced by the reorganisation.

The Group will be employer focused and better able to respond to the higher level education and training needs of the area and the land based sector by providing flexible HE professional learning. Given its location, and its potential to offer additional learner residential accommodation, the Bicton site provides an ideal opportunity for further development of HE provision for the Group.

2. Executive Summary (continued)

Quality

The reorganisation has the capacity to achieve continued improvements in the experience and performance of learners in the Group and to give added value to the learning experience.

Improved quality and learner experience

Bicton College has been assessed by Ofsted as being "satisfactory" across all areas covered by the inspection, whilst Exeter College was deemed to be "good", again this rating was consistent across all areas. Both Colleges' inspection reports give a clear agenda for quality improvement with accountability and there is a clear ambition for the proposed Group to become outstanding. Best practice will be shared and quality assurance systems will be rationalised. There is a solid platform for both partners to achieve outstanding success.

Exeter College will have the opportunity to extend its already comprehensive curriculum portfolio and gain wider access to learners in Devon and beyond, whilst continuing its drive for excellence and for improved learner performance. Bicton College will benefit from sharing best practice with Exeter College and will be able to focus more effectively and with greater capacity on the development and quality of land based and other employer focussed provision.

Overall, the reorganisation will improve capacity to widen participation, improves access and the skills base of the community and will improve engagement with employers in Devon, and particularly its land based and rural industries. It will provide the opportunity to stabilise the financial position of Bicton College and invest in the estate and the curriculum to secure the quality of resources together with improved teaching and learning.

2. Executive Summary (continued)

Impact on other providers

It is not anticipated that the reorganisation will have any significant negative impact on the other general FE providers in the area. The reorganisation gives the region a strong provider that can meet the needs of a growing number of local learners and may alleviate pressure that could otherwise fall to other providers who have less flexibility in their finances and estate.

Exeter College's track record and financial health

Exeter College is in a position of outstanding financial health.

Effect of the proposal on other providers

One of the prime reasons for the proposed reorganisation is to protect and develop the land based provision at Bicton College for the benefit of the County of Devon. As a result there is no major change to the profile of provision at Exeter College envisaged aside from providing general business and management training for the land based sector in conjunction with Bicton College. In this respect it is not anticipated that the reorganisation will have any impact on the other general FE providers in the area.

The reorganisation will enable Bicton College to move forward with some financial security and invest in curriculum developments which has not been possible over recent years. There are a number of learners based within a reasonable travelling distance of Bicton College that are choosing to undertake land based programmes at other land based providers. It will be a priority of the Group to ensure that learners in the locality wishing to study land based programmes will recognise Bicton College as being the first choice provider. This will also have an impact on the environmental travel to learn patterns of learners. There is a possibility that this will impact on other providers although no single land based provider will be significantly affected.

The business case for Exeter College

In 2007/08 Exeter College enjoyed a strong underlying operating position and balance sheet. The strong financial health of Exeter College is best demonstrated by its current ratio, its levels of net funds, and cash balances. Exeter College is in a position of "Outstanding" financial health according to LSC financial health ratings.

The further education sector is anticipating a challenging period ahead. Exeter College enters this difficult period with a demonstrable track record of sound financial management, combined with the resources necessary to successfully navigate these challenges, whilst maintaining financial stability for both Exeter and Bicton Colleges.

Bicton College requires a partner that will be able to provide it with the financial stability and viability which has been lacking in recent years.

3. Context

The national context

The proposed reorganisation will be undertaken against a background of structural changes within the sector as a whole. From April 2010 the Learning and Skills Council will cease to exist and will be replaced by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the Young Persons Learning Agency (YPLA). As part of this restructuring local authorities will have increased responsibilities for the commissioning of post-16 provision within their area. It is likely that the Regional Development Agencies will also have an increased role in the determination of a skills strategy for their areas.

The reorganised College will have a commitment to working with its partners at a local, regional and national level for the benefit of learners and employers.

Demographic and socio economic environment

Both Exeter College and Bicton College are aware of the need to ensure the reorganisation is considered against a backdrop of the demographic and socio economic position of the area and the wider County. Exeter College is a city centre based institution primarily serving the needs of the learners of Exeter and its immediate locality. In contrast, Bicton College is the only specialist land based provider in Devon and serves a much wider catchment area.

The South West has the lowest population density of any region in England, and in particular, Devon has a lower population density than other areas in the South West. The South West also has the highest proportion of older people in England. In 2007 18.8% of the South West population were aged 65 or older, this compares with 16.0% for England as a whole. Projections suggest that these percentages will have risen to 24% for the South West and 20% for England as a whole by 2026. Projections also indicate a 3% increase in the 14-19 category for the region by 2026, indicating there will be potential for modest growth of learner numbers during this period. However, the projected population increases are higher in older age categories, and the overall picture is one of an aging demographic profile in the South West.

The only areas of significant population density lie in Exeter, Plymouth and the Torbay areas of the County.

Regional economy and employment

The South West workforce totals around 2.4 million, which accounts for around 10% of the total UK workforce. Devon has a relatively broad economy with sectors which are fairly representative of the UK economy as a whole.

The national trend of growth in the service sector and decline in manufacturing have been replicated in the South West region, although high value sectors such as finance and business services accounts for 3% less of the South West workforce than they do the UK as a whole.

There are around 215,000 employers in the region of which most are micro businesses (defined as those employing 5 or fewer employees). Large firms (defined as those employing 200 or more employees) account for just 1% of regional employers.

Micro and small employers account for 9 out of 10 South West businesses, employing 13% and 24% of the workforce respectively. Large employers in contrast account for only 1% of South West businesses yet account for 28% of the workforce. This emphasises the relative importance of a small number of large businesses to the South West economy, and to regional skills development.

Average earnings in Devon are 8% below that of the South West region and 13% below the UK average. A recent report published by Devon County Council reviewed the state of Devon's economy and noted that there are large discrepancies in earnings between districts within Devon.

16% of South West employers have skills gaps, which is 1% higher than the UK average. Of the employers with vacancies, 22% are related to skills gaps in the region, compared to 21% for the UK as a whole. It is also worth noting that skills shortage vacancies ("SSVs") have widened in the South West since 2005.

The population of Devon is growing at a faster rate than nationally. Projections suggest that the number of people in the south west aged over 65 will continue to rise to 24% of the population.

There is an identified need for skills related education and training.

3. Context (continued)

The land based sector

The land-based sector accounts for around 5.7% of UK GDP, but the importance of the sector is not simply economic. The industry manages almost 90% of the UK's landmass and represents around 219,000 businesses.

The sector is vital to the economic and environmental future of the UK, yet it faces its own key challenges. It must cope with environmental changes caused by climate change as well as playing its part in reducing its impact to the environment, and there is the issue of an aging profile within the sector.

Food and sustainability are key themes of recent government announcements from DEFRA, and the government aims to publish a "food strategy for the future" later this year.

Recent government research suggests the UK is performing well in terms of food production, food diversity, and distribution but that the sector faces key challenges ahead to meet the changing needs of the nation.

The sector must adapt to meet changing requirements of the future. LANTRA and sector pressure groups acknowledge the need to drive better business acumen and IT skills through a mixture of better training and / or continual professional development. Europe, and both national and local government are driving forward the food security, sustainability and environmental agendas, all of which require the sector to obtain new skills to cope with future challenges.

The land based sector in the South West

There are more than 20,000 land based businesses in the South West, employing around 60,000 people. This accounts for 14% of the UK's entire land based workforce and 2.4% of the total employment in the region. It is clear that Devon's land based sector is of importance not only to the Devon economy, but to the UK's land based sector as a whole.

The region has many land based businesses that are either classed as small or micro. 70% of land based businesses in the region employ no staff, and 98% have 10 or fewer employees. Such small businesses are often owner managed, and in such an environment business skills can often be lacking (a skills gap made more critical due to the poor economic conditions).

The land based sector as a whole has an ageing workforce, and this is even more true of land based industries in the South West. The proportion of the UK land based workforce aged over 45 is 50%, compared with 53% in the South West. The average proportion across all UK industry aged over 45 is 39%.

This is likely to drive future demand for new entrants into the sector and with that comes the demand for training.

Although there has been a decline in employment in land based industries and this is projected to continue, there are pressures for new entrants into the sector being driven by the age profile of the current workforce. Research suggests that there is a net requirement of around 9,000 entrants in the period to 2014.

Summary

It is recognised that there are numerous external factors which provide both opportunities and threats for the reorganised Group going forward, and strategies will be developed to maximise opportunity, and to mitigate risk.

Meeting the needs of regional employers is at the heart of the vision for the Group. In particular the Group has identified land based, construction and automotive industries as potential key areas of strategic focus to provide future growth. In order to meet these objectives the Group will take the opportunities available to engage with employers and promote increased awareness of skills development in micro and small businesses.

Demographics projections show an ageing population in Devon. The same is also true of LANTRA industry workers. The need for lifelong learning is put fully into context when the demographics of both the region and the industry are viewed alongside the land based sector's education and training requirements.

The reorganised College will be better able to support the economic needs of the area and the needs of the wider land based industry.

4. Background to the Colleges

Introduction

The reorganised College will bring together a tertiary provider and a specialist land based provider, offering a differing and wide range of provision. Exeter College as a city based provider draws learners primarily from the immediate area whereas Bickton College, due to the specialist nature of its provision, draws from a wider catchment area.

The reorganised Group will have in excess of 8,500 learners with 80% of them attending Exeter College. Bickton College has a greater number of part time learners than full time whereas the reverse is the case at Exeter College, primarily as a result of its 'A' level cohort.

Exeter College

Exeter College has over 4,000 full time learners; the vast majority aged 16 –18 and offers all levels of learning from entry level to level 4 (foundation degree). The majority of its learners study level 3 programmes, although there are large and growing numbers at entry level and levels 1 and 2. The College is actively involved with 14 –19 partnerships in the development and delivery of the new diploma routes.

Exeter College has experienced an 18% increase in full time 16-18 learner numbers since 2005/06 whilst at the same time part time numbers have fallen by 43%. This represents an overall increase in numbers of 13% in line with the College's strategy of consolidating and growing full time 16 - 18 learner numbers. The majority of Exeter College's 16 - 18 learners are on level 3 programmes.

Full time adult learner numbers have shown an increase of 11% since 2005/06 although there has been a significant reduction in part time numbers of 47% over the same period. Entry Level provision provides the highest volume of enrolments followed by level 2 provision but both have experienced reductions over the period.

Exeter College has a strong HE partnership with the Universities of Plymouth and Exeter and the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John (UCP Marjon).

Approximately 83% of 16-18 learners and 78% of adult learners live within a 15 mile radius of the College.

Bickton College

Bickton College is a specialist land based provider based in East Budleigh approximately 13 miles from Exeter. The College is based in a rural setting on a 200 hectare estate and has been home to land based education in its various forms since 1947.

In 2008/09 Bickton College had 427 full time 16 –18 learners with the majority following level 2 programmes. The College has experienced a 5% fall in full time 16-18 learner numbers since 2005/06 and a 53% fall in part time numbers over the same period. This represents an overall decrease in 16-18 numbers of 27%, mainly as a result of changes in LSC funding priorities, impacting significantly on short course provision.

Bickton College had just over 1,100 adult learners funded by the LSC in 2008/09, with land-based provision the largest sector subject area. Adult numbers have fallen steadily since 2006/07; some of this decline can be attributed to changing LSC priorities. In 2008/09 there were 90 full-time learners, a reduction of 32% from 2005/06 numbers and just over 1,020 part time learners, a reduction of 27% over the same period.

Bickton College has a strong partnership with the University of Plymouth and offers HE provision primarily in areas of land based studies.

The College has a much wider catchment profile than that of Exeter College with only 59% of 16-18 learners and 62% of adult learners living within a 15 mile radius of the College.

The reorganisation represents the coming together of two Colleges with complementary provision for the benefit of learners and employers in the Region.

5. The Reorganisation Proposal

Background to the proposed reorganisation

This Proposal is based on the voluntary commitment of the Bicton and Exeter College Boards to proceed with the reorganisation subject to the satisfactory completion of the necessary processes.

In early 2008, the Governors of Bicton College commissioned a Strategic Options Review, supported and partly funded by the LSC Devon and Cornwall. The review considered the options for the future structure of Bicton College. The options considered by the review were:

- continuation as an independent college and improving capability;
- continuation as an independent college, but extending the mission;
- continuation as an independent college and establishing formal collaborative arrangements with other providers;
- merge with a general FE college;
- merge with a specialist Landbased college; and
- dissolution.

The outcome of the options review was that Governors decided to explore the possibility of greater collaborative working with Exeter College. Legal advice was sought regarding what a proposed structure and legal arrangement may look like.

A feasibility study was undertaken in April/May 2008 on the proposed reorganisation arrangements. The feasibility study concluded that Bicton College in its current form is not financially viable and requires significant change to enable it to continue to operate.

A joint steering group has been established by the Corporations of Bicton and Exeter Colleges, with membership from both Corporations. Both Boards are in agreement that the proposed reorganisation of the two Colleges will be of benefit to learners in the educational catchment area of the two Colleges and of the wider land based community.

At full Board meetings in September 2009 both Corporations endorsed the Education Case and the Business Case in support of the reorganisation proposal.

A reorganisation with Exeter College provides Bicton College with the opportunity to establish financial viability and to secure and develop land based provision at Bicton.

5. The Reorganisation Proposal (continued)

How the reorganisation will be achieved

The LSC is treating the proposed changes to the structure of Bicton College as a 'Model B' reorganisation. This will be achieved by formally dissolving the existing Bicton College Corporation under the provisions of Section 27 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. All property, rights and liabilities of the College would be transferred to a newly incorporated, wholly owned subsidiary company of Exeter College.

Key features of the proposed structure

The model proposed will:

- enable Exeter College to establish a wholly owned subsidiary (the new company) as a company limited by guarantee;
- allow the brand of Bicton College to continue to operate through a new legal entity (the new company) a wholly owned subsidiary of Exeter College. This will provide Bicton with the opportunity to build on its reputation for excellence in land based studies and continue to be recognised as a key regional player;
- result in Bicton College Corporation being dissolved and its assets and liabilities transferred into the new company together with its own staff and learners so that the new company shall operate as a separate entity within the Exeter Group under the Bicton brand;

Bicton College, as a subsidiary company of Exeter College, will have a board. A number of places will be available on the Exeter College board for members of Bicton College and funding agreements will be with or through Exeter College.

An additional benefit of the proposed model is that it will provide the flexibility for expansion to incorporate other federated members at a later stage if it is desirable to do so.

More importantly than the description of the reorganisation, however, is the manner in which the reorganised institution will operate in the future.

Unlike other specialist and general FE college mergers the proposed structure provides for an element of on-going independence for the new Board of Directors of the Bicton College Company.

Merits of the proposed structure

In a typical merger one institution is dissolved with the liabilities and assets being transferred to another college. As highlighted previously, the proposed structure of this reorganisation will result in Bicton College's liabilities and assets being transferred to a new company limited by guarantee.

Although the new company will be a subsidiary of Exeter College, Bicton College will retain its own identity, its own board, its own senior management team and its liabilities and assets will be held in a separate legal entity to Exeter College but the company will have different responsibilities in terms of its FE funding relationship and accountability as it is not an incorporated FE College.

The name and local identity of Bicton College will be preserved and its ability to meet the needs of local learners, the wider land based sector and employers will be strengthened.

The proposed arrangement provides the opportunity to implement an innovative model which will enhance the prospect for Bicton College to be financially viable. It will also provide Bicton College, by being part of a larger structure, the opportunity for growth and development which is not available to a smaller college.

An indicative reorganisation timetable is provided at Appendix D. The Governing Bodies of both institutions are committed to the proposed reorganisation being completed by 31 March 2010. This is believed to be a challenging but achievable timescale which all parties are confident of achieving.

The proposed structure will allow for Bicton College to retain its own identity and an element of independence.

6. Rationale and Justification of the Reorganisation Proposal

Introduction

The governors of both Colleges believe that the proposed reorganisation offers a unique opportunity to secure and develop land based provision in Devon. In addition, the joining together of the two Colleges with complementary provision will result in enhanced opportunities for curriculum development and progression routes.

The reorganisation will bring together the depth of knowledge of the land based sector at Bicton College with the financial strength and management experience of Exeter College. The reorganisation will lead to an expansion in the range and type of opportunity offered.

The commitment to the development of land based provision will be emphasised by Bicton College retaining its name whilst its reputation will be revitalised and enhanced by the leadership and financial stability the reorganisation will provide.

The proposed reorganisation of Exeter College and Bicton College will provide a Devon wide arrangement, based on the strength of meeting the skills needs of the County and drawing strength from working closely with key stakeholders of Devon.

The reorganisation provides the opportunity to develop added value from the bringing together of two separate and distinct organisations by:

- creating synergy between curriculum areas;
- promoting Devon wide coverage of land based provision; and
- building on the considerable assets of both organisations.

The impact of ensuring not just the survival but the development of Bicton College should not be underestimated and creating a higher profile for land based provision and for the wider curriculum will be a key priority for the new organisation.

The Group's Vision

The Group's Vision is:

"To become outstanding, embracing ambition, innovation and enterprise whilst providing excellent teaching and learning for young people, adults and employers in our region"

In order to be successful in achieving the Vision, the Group will put into place a number of strategies, these include:

1. Building on Exeter College's excellent reputation and achievement success as the primary 16 to 19 centre providing A level and vocational programmes in the Exeter area.

2. Further development of a successful specialist land based centre for Devon and beyond, providing courses for 14 –19 year olds, and, increasingly those working in the land based sector, including managers and owners. The provision will cater for a comprehensive range of land based skills. The range of provision will be subject to regular review and will be developed to meet the demand arising from new developments, skills needs, the environmental agenda and government and regional priorities.

3. Potential for the development of a 14 to 19 centre for East Devon with a complementary provision to Exeter College, developing land based and other diplomas and allowing learners of the Group to take advantage of its rural location and facilities. It will develop a key role in 14-19 provision with neighbouring schools.

4. Meeting the needs of local employers. There is a shared commitment to employer engagement across the two Colleges. The reorganisation will benefit employers as key stakeholders, building on the work already undertaken by Exeter College and will also serve the needs of the local and wider land based community.

5. The site at Bicton College will become the major HE centre for the Group The enlarged Group will offer a significant opportunity to develop the HE offering of both existing Colleges. It is recognised that there is a developing need for higher level skills and training in subjects such as renewable energy and food security and the resources available to develop appropriate programmes in these subject areas will be enhanced by the reorganisation.

6. Rationale and Justification of the Reorganisation Proposal

In order to achieve the vision and aims of the reorganisation the Group will:

- create a reorganised College that improves on the quality of provision of the two existing Colleges;
- develop a range of HE provision that meets both individual and employer needs;
- improve relationships and partnership working with local schools and other specialist institutions;
- develop delivery methods that make learning more accessible for rural based learners; and
- review the location of delivery of certain programmes, with a view to relocation, to better utilise the Bickton estate and release space at the Exeter site.

Justification for the reorganisation

The proposed re-organisation will:

- provide a larger and influential entity that will be able to contribute more effectively to addressing regional and national land based agendas and decisions with key stakeholders for the benefit of learners and employers in Devon;
- provide a comprehensive and complementary curriculum offer that will give learners improved opportunities for progression;
- provide the opportunity to offer a 'one voice' approach to engaging schools and learners in East Devon and surrounding areas;
- enable a co-ordinated approach and solution to employers needs in the region, building upon the best practices currently in operation in both institutions;
- result in the possibility to increase the scale of provision at the Bickton campus through the relocation of complementary curriculum;
- enable the development of a 'shared services' function that will result in considerable cost savings and enhanced service provision;
- enable Bickton College to be a viable operation;
- provide the opportunity for growth, development and capacity building of Bickton College with a partner with an established reputation and which is not available to a smaller institution; and
- provide management capacity to exploit new opportunities and grow income from previously untapped potential.

The reorganisation will help to further improve and increase provision in the following ways:

- better promotion of land based learning to meet the skills needs of the industry;
- the development of other provision to improve access and participation post 16;
- the development of the 14 –19 curriculum, particularly for 14 –16 courses, with input from Exeter College for provision Bickton College cannot offer. This may include Entry to Employment (offered at Exeter College), Foundation Learning and diploma routes; and
- responding to the emerging agenda, focusing on;
 - energy security
 - food security
 - sustainable development
 - mitigation of and adaptation to climate change
 - renewable energy technologies
 - biodiversity

Considerable opportunities exist to add value to the existing curriculum, to improve access, increase participation of young people and improve progression routes and to develop the curriculum to meet emerging needs.

Benefits of the reorganisation

In summary, the major benefit of the reorganisation will be the continuation and development of the brand of Bickton College as a specialist land based provider for Devon in an affordable and viable manner and the creation of a single Group that will provide high quality education and training. The Group will meet the challenge of providing support and training to employers of the area and the wider land based community. The reorganised Group will have a commitment to academic, vocational and HE provision which reflects the make up of the provision of the constituent Colleges.

Exeter College will aim to consolidate and enhance its position as the primary 16-19 Centre in Exeter including being the primary provider of A level and vocational programmes, building on its excellent reputation and achievement success. Bickton College will aim to develop its core land based vocational provision.

6. Rationale and Justification of the Reorganisation Proposal

Benefits of the reorganisation (continued)

A number of detailed benefits will arise from the reorganisation, including

- providing Bicton College with the ability to operate and develop viable and sustainable land based provision for Devon;
- increased progression opportunities for learners from levels 1 and 2 to level 3 and through to HE. This will also include progression to occupations with the relevant skills to meet the sector needs;
- improved employer related training opportunities, particularly for the land based sector, to address current industry needs and developing environmental concerns;
- the creation of an HE centre at the Bicton site and a review of provision will provide enhanced local higher education opportunities;
- investment in the infrastructure at the Bicton site which will provide enhanced facilities and learning environment for staff and learners. This will, in turn, lead to better utilisation of the site and release some of the accommodation pressures at Exeter;
- improved partnership working with local schools will help to develop a diploma offering and the possibility of a 14-19 centre at the Bicton site at some stage in the future;
- the capacity to develop programmes to address climate and environmental issues;
- a single employer engagement unit to co-ordinate provision for employers across the Group. This will assist in addressing the skills needs of the local economy and the wider land based sector;
- improved cross college career opportunities for staff. The co-ordination of skills, expertise and physical resources will lead to a greater range of staff development opportunities for staff;
- continuous improvement in the quality of provision; and
- the development of a shared service function that will result in significant annual efficiency savings across both Colleges.

The major benefit of the reorganisation will be the securing of land based provision in Devon. In addition, the joining together of the two Colleges with complementary provision will result in enhanced opportunities for curriculum development.

7. Learners and Curriculum

Introduction

In respect of learners already studying at the two Colleges it is not proposed that there will be any immediate change to their place of learning. It is anticipated in time, that given the space constraints at Exeter College, there will be opportunities to relocate some provision to the Bicton College site. This may be particularly appropriate for HE provision. It is not anticipated, however, that learners will be required to travel between sites.

Although it is not possible at this stage to detail the precise curriculum changes that will be undertaken after the reorganisation it is envisaged that the changes will be related to curriculum enhancements rather than rationalisation.

This section of the Consultation Document provides an overview of learners and provision at the two Colleges.

Exeter College

Table 7.1 shows the total FE learner numbers at Exeter College for the 2008/09 academic year. This shows a total of 7,083 learners, 91% of full time learners were in the 16-18 age group, by contrast, 93% of part time learners were in the 19+ age range.

Table 7.1 FE learner numbers 2008/09

	16-18	19+	All ages
Full - time	3,808	369	4177
Part-time	188	2718	2906
Total	3996	3087	7083

Table 7.2 opposite details the enrolments for the above learners spread across the 15 Sector Subject areas (SSA). These enrolments represent a number of courses in each area. Preparation for Life and Work provides the largest number of enrolments followed by Arts, Media and Publishing.

Table 7.2 FE learner enrolments by SSA

Sector Subject Area	16-18	19+
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	40	-
Arts, Media and Publishing	2,169	132
Business, Administration and Law	584	142
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	173	85
Education and Training	-	274
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	237	97
Health, Public Services and Care	828	550
History, Philosophy and Theology	479	68
Information and Communication Technology	227	398
Languages, Literature and Culture	1,179	71
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	812	108
Preparation for Life and Work	660	2,087
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	641	185
Science and Mathematics	1,881	115
Social Sciences	591	18
Unknown	170	55

7. Learners and Curriculum

Bicton College

Table 7.3 shows the total FE learner numbers at Bicton College for the 2008/09 academic year. This shows a total of 1,710 learners, 83% of full time learners were in the 16-18 age group, by contrast, 85% of part time learners were in the 19+ age range.

Table 7.3 FE learner numbers 2008/09

	16-18	19+	All ages
Full - time	427	90	517
Part-time	592	1,021	1,193
Total	179	1,111	1,710

Table 7.4 below, details the enrolments for the learners spread across the 10 Sector Subject areas (SSA). These enrolments represent a number of courses in each area. As would be expected, Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care provides the largest number of enrolments.

Table 7.4 FE learner enrolments by SSA

Sector Subject Area	16-18	19+
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	784	639
Arts, Media and Publishing		41
Business, Administration and Law		25
Education and Training	4	107
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	26	1
Health, Public Services and Care	103	186
Information and Communication Technology	94	357
Languages, Literature and Culture	170	
Leisure, Travel and Tourism		17
Preparation for Life and Work	98	159

Direct provision overlap

There is little direct overlap of provision between the two Colleges. In total there are 15 courses of direct overlap accounting for approximately 1,700 enrolments, 50% of these are on Preparation for Life and Work courses.

Level of provision

Table 7.5 below details the levels of enrolment at both Colleges in the 2008/09 academic year. At Bicton College, level 2 accounts for approximately 46% of all enrolments. Exeter College has the highest number of its enrolments at level 3, accounting for 52% of its total.

Table 7.5 Learner enrolments by level

	Bicton College	Exeter College
Entry	106	1642
Level 1	673	1482
Level 2	1,292	3,410
Level 3	523	7,862
Level 4	4	149
Level 5	-	77
Unknown	213	434
Total	2,811	15,056

Summary

Although the Group will offer a comprehensive programme through the present offers of both Colleges, there is potential to develop jointly the curriculum in a number of sector subject areas. Joint expertise could deliver innovative programmes meeting the emerging needs of the area and those of the land based industry and the rural economy of Devon.

The reorganisation gives the potential to deliver innovative programmes, increase access and improve participation. There will also be an exciting opportunity for the Group to meet the education and training needs of the employers in the area and those of the wider land based community.

8. Quality

Introduction

The reorganised College will be subject to a range of external quality inspections as is the norm for the sector as a whole. Each College currently operates to its own internal quality systems to manage the quality of the education and training provided. Of necessity, work will be undertaken to bring the two systems together to ensure that there is consistency of approach across all areas of operation and that the information provided to Governors and Senior Managers is timely, accurate and supported by evidence of the quality of teaching and learning that is delivered.

The reorganised Group will have the capacity to achieve continued improvements in the experience and performance of learners and to give added value to the learning experience.

Both Colleges' inspection reports give a clear agenda for quality improvement with accountability and there is a clear ambition for the Group to become outstanding. Best practice will be shared and quality assurance systems will be rationalised. There is a solid platform for both partners to achieve outstanding success.

Ofsted inspection

Both Bicton and Exeter Colleges have had Ofsted inspections since the beginning of 2008. Since its inspection, further progress in the performance of Exeter College has been evidenced through the publication of the Ofsted Monitoring Report of March 2009. The main findings of the inspections of both Colleges are compared below:

Table 8.1 Results of Ofsted inspection

Area	Bicton College	Exeter College
Effectiveness of provision	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2
Capacity to improve	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2
Achievement and standards	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2
Leadership and management	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Satisfactory / grade 3	Good / grade 2

The reorganisation has the capacity to achieve continued improvements in the experience and performance of learners in the Group and to give added value to the learning experience.

9. Governance and Management

Governance

It is not by coincidence that successful colleges have strong leadership both at governor and management level and the two work together effectively, aware of their roles and responsibilities, to provide clear direction for the future development of an institution. It is recognised that this will be a key factor in determining the success of the reorganised College.

A Steering Group to oversee the reorganisation has been established comprising the Principal and two members from each College. The group is meeting on a regular monthly basis to discuss issues and identify further actions required for the reorganisation process to proceed effectively. Updates on progress are reported to the governing bodies of both Colleges.

At the point of reorganisation the Bicton College Corporation will be dissolved and all assets, staff and liabilities will be transferred to the 'Bicton College Company' which will be a wholly owned subsidiary of Exeter College.

Exeter College Corporation

Exeter College Corporation will have the ultimate strategic authority for the vision of Bicton College, ensuring the quality of learning, and securing the financial viability and future direction of Bicton College. However, within this overall strategic framework and annual budget agreed by the Exeter Corporation each year, it is intended that Bicton College will have substantial input into determining the strategy and vision for the College and will have some independence for operation within the agreed parameters. This will include the planning and financing of delivery of provision.

The expectation is that a number of places will be made available on the Exeter College Board for existing board members of Bicton College. The precise number has yet to be determined as has the criteria for appointment. However, it is likely that the appointments will reflect the skills, knowledge, experience and the extended remit of Exeter College required for the effective operation of the reorganised institution.

Bicton College Company

The main function of the Board of the company will be to determine detailed policy for Bicton College in light of the mission, overall strategy and aims of the Group. The Board's role will necessarily differ from that of the Board of Corporation of a College. This will be an important feature of the model and may help to distinguish this proposed model from that of a traditional merger. It will, for example, be responsible for setting the strategic direction for rural, land-based provision, but not for a wider curriculum, which will be the remit of the Exeter College Board.

The size and composition of the Board has yet to be determined but it is likely that it will be of a reduced size from that of the existing Bicton College Board. The role of the Board will be to focus its attention on key business issues, strategic thinking, policy formulation, accountability and oversight of management.

Management

The reorganised Group will adopt a management structure that will allow Bicton College to operate with a high degree of autonomy whilst at the same time providing strong leadership and management of those cross college functions and services that impact on all the group e.g. quality assurance, financial performance etc.

A review has recently been undertaken to assess the implications of the reorganisation for the management functions of the Group and make recommendations for the way in which it should be structured in the future.

The reorganised College will be more aligned to a private sector corporation, organised into a strategic group with a wholly owned subsidiary with a high degree of autonomy and delegation. The autonomy will be balanced by a strong corporate strategy and clear lines of accountability.

10. Human Resources

Background

Prior to the reorganisation taking place Bicton College is proceeding with a significant re-structuring exercise which will result in a revised staffing structure and reduced staff numbers. After the reorganisation a further re-structuring programme will take place arising from the implementation of a shared services function. This re-structure will affect staff at both Exeter College and Bicton College.

Irrespective of the uncertainty and disruption that will surround the reorganisations the Governors of both Colleges recognise that staff will be the key resource for the success of the new organisation.

Terms and conditions

There may be contractual issues to be resolved between the terms and conditions of Exeter College and those of the Bicton College Company (which will become the employer of the existing Bicton College staff). However, the requirements of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) TUPE will apply. Legal advice is being taken on the employment law issues relating to the reorganisation.

Professional development

The scale of the reorganised Group and its specialist College will provide improved career development opportunities and greater scope for specialisation. It will also provide the scope for enhanced CPD and further training to fulfil the requirements of new roles.

Communication

It will be a priority to promote clarity and certainty for staff through clear lines of regular communication and consultation. A communication strategy has been developed to ensure that staff across both Colleges are kept fully informed of developments.

It is recognised that staff are the most valuable resource of both Colleges and governors are committed to open communication and consultation throughout the reorganisation process.

11. Estates

Bicton College

Bicton College is based in a rural setting on a 200 hectare estate. The estate includes an 18th Century listed building known as Bicton House and a number of other buildings including equine and agricultural facilities, and separate blocks housing accommodation, animal care and the Learning Resource Centre. In addition, Bicton College's estate also includes Bicton Home Farm which is separate to the main campus.

In December 2008 Bicton College commissioned a condition survey of the Bicton House and surrounding estate. This engagement specifically excluded Bicton Home Farm.

The results of the survey highlighted that 42% of the buildings surveyed were bordering on the required standard, 43% were below the required standard while around 10% fell into the category of unacceptable and 5% of the estate is of an acceptable standard.

There are significant issues with the maintenance of Bicton House, and the campus is in need of modernisation, a situation which has been consistently highlighted by estates consultants, College management and OFSTED.

The financial position of the College has not allowed it to make the investment necessary to bring improvement to the College estate. Investment would not only improve the estate itself but would also help significantly in raising the profile of the College and enhancing the learner experience.

Exeter College

Exeter College is based on a number of sites in the city centre. The College's accommodation strategy is currently in the process of being revised as a result of the LSC suspending capital funding from the sector for all but a limited number of Colleges. The withdrawal of funding has presented Exeter College with significant accommodation problems, because the College has reached full capacity. The College has therefore reviewed and down-sized its capital priorities to include only two future developments.

In July 2007 Exeter College prepared an audit of estates as part of its development plan. 22% of the accommodation was rated below the required standard and 11% was rated as unsatisfactory.

In terms of the estate's functional suitability 32% was deemed to be unsuitable to the purposes employed. Only 7% of the College's estate was deemed to be "very well suited to its purpose".

Estates challenges of the individual Colleges

Both Bicton and Exeter Colleges have challenging estates issues. Bicton College has ample accommodation but this is generally in poor condition, while Exeter College's estates are in better overall condition but capacity has been reached limiting the ability of Exeter College to cope with increasing numbers of learners whilst maintaining quality. Additional pressures at Exeter College are that a large proportion of the estate is not ideally suited to the purposes employed, there is a lack of car parking availability, and expansion is likely to be more expensive due to the city centre location.

Bicton College has significant spare capacity in its existing estate, potentially providing Exeter College opportunities for relocation of some provision which will allow for expansion and improved facilities at its centre. It is to be noted that the estate of Bicton College may be particularly suitable for certain types of provision, such as employer related programmes, professional development seminars and higher education.

Summary

Both Colleges have significant estates challenges to address, but the proposed reorganisation provides opportunities for both Colleges to benefit. In particular Exeter College will benefit from utilisation of Bicton College's estate, which will free up accommodation at the Exeter site and put buildings to more suitable uses than they are currently. Bicton College will benefit from investment by Exeter College in the estate which is so badly needed due to the poor condition of the campus.

There is a commitment to continue to offer provision at the existing sites of both Colleges.

Estates will be better utilised and will be subject to greater levels of investment under the proposed reorganisation.

12. Impact on Other Providers

Background

Both Colleges are aware of the potential impact that their decision to proceed with a reorganisation may have on the local community and other providers. However, given the specialist nature of Bicton College's provision it is unlikely that there will be any major impact on other local providers.

It is unlikely that the profile of the provision offered by Exeter College will change significantly as a result of the reorganisation. However, the reorganisation will offer opportunities to provide a more comprehensive offer linked to the land based programmes at Bicton and these will be developed. As an example, this will have particular relevance for business and management training within the land based sector. It is not anticipated that other FE providers in the area will be significantly affected by the reorganisation.

The reorganisation will enable Bicton College to move forward with some financial security and invest in developments which has not been possible over recent years.

It will be a priority of the Group to ensure that learners in the locality wishing to study land based programmes will recognise Bicton College as being the first choice provider. This will also have an impact on the environmental travel to learn patterns of learners. There is a possibility that this may impact on other providers although there is evidence that no single land based provider will be significantly affected.

It is not anticipated that the reorganisation will have any significant impact on the other providers in the area.

13. Financial Information

Introduction

This section of the consultation document provides background financial information for the two Colleges and the forecast position for the reorganised group.

Bicton College

The College's income has grown by less than 1% since 2005/06, yet despite these pressures the College has failed to take effective action to address its increasing cost base. Costs have been allowed to grow by 11.5% in the period since 2005/06, the result being the College entering into a deficit position in 2006/07 and cumulative losses now amount to over £2.2. million.

In 2008/09 Bicton College has made a provisional deficit of £836,000. Although initial cost cutting measures have reduced the level of deficit from that seen in 2007/08, they were not substantial enough to return the College to a break even position.

13.1 Summary of recent financial performance

	2007 £000's	2008 £000's	2009* £000's
Income	8,513	8,714	8,752
Pay costs	5,252	6,078	5,820
Non-pay costs	2,908	3,259	3,176
Depreciation	486	518	561
Interest payable	63	50	31
Operating result	(196)	(1,191)	(836)

*Provisional financial results.

Bicton College's recent financial performance has been poor, and the College has had to rely on LSC advanced funding in order to continue operations. In May 2009 the College developed a new recovery plan which now included potential savings from the proposed arrangement with Exeter College. It became clear from this latest review that it was unlikely that Bicton College would return to financial viability as an independent incorporated further education college.

The May 2009 recovery plan deals with two main issues facing the College's future, firstly the current cost base of the College is unsustainable, and secondly the College is likely to suffer future cuts in income due to the loss of transitional protection.

The recovery plan deals with each of these two issues separately. Firstly the cost base is made sustainable through restructuring and efficiency savings which are assumed to be achieved over a two year period to 2010/11. The latter three years of the recovery plan assumes efficiencies and modest income growth of 3% which enables the College to absorb the loss of transitional protection income,

Exeter College

Exeter College has a history of producing operating surpluses and the cost base of the College has been well controlled.

13.2 Summary of recent financial performance

	2007 £000's	2008 £000's	2009* £000's
Income	28,871	29,658	32,472
Pay costs	16,905	18,176	19,838
Non-pay costs	8,614	8,106	9,820
Depreciation	2,098	2,229	2,066
Interest payable	383	422	402
Operating result	871	725	346

*Provisional financial results.

At 30 June 2009 the College held £11.8 million of cash, and net assets amounted to £29 million. Financial benchmarking shows the College's cash position is over double that of the sector benchmark for tertiary colleges, clearly this is a position of financial strength.

Exeter College has a history of producing operating surpluses and is in a strong financial position. In contrast, Bicton College is not financially sustainable as an independent institution.

13. Financial Information (continued)

Group forecast

A combined Group financial forecast has been prepared covering the period to 2014. Although operating deficits are forecast throughout the period it should be noted that the historical cost and underlying operational positions both show surpluses being generated in all years post 2009. During the same period the Group also generates a positive cash flow in each year. The underlying operational position is forecast to improve throughout the life of the plan.

In the absence of LSC capital funding, Exeter College needs to invest resources in new teaching accommodation to ensure that the needs of local learners are met. Exeter College is set to invest £1.2 million in Bicton College and around £3.5 million on capital projects to increase capacity within Exeter. This investment results in lower forecast cash reserves for the Group. Despite these challenges, the forecast shows the Group retaining healthy levels of resources and the financial health rating is not forecast to fall below "Good".

The reorganised College would have a combined turnover of approximately £40m. Opportunities will be taken to generate efficiencies through the adoption of shared services for a number of central support functions.

Despite the additional financial strain of the investment in Bicton College and Exeter College accommodation, the Group is forecasting to remain in "Good" financial health.

14. Marketing

Strategy

In order to maximise the benefits of the reorganisation an integrated marketing strategy will be developed which will focus on enhancing the opportunities for local learners and the wider land based community.

The retention of the identity, name and brand of Bicton College will be a strong factor in reassuring the land based community of the continuation of specialist provision in the County of Devon. The Group wide marketing strategy will take into consideration the differing learner groups the reorganised Group will engage with, and the local, regional and national agendas.

A communication strategy has been developed to ensure that key stakeholders including staff and learners are kept fully informed of developments during the reorganisation process. The strategy will be further developed to take account of the actions required for post reorganisation integration.

It is recognised that the reorganisation will be the subject of much public interest and to ensure that this is effectively addressed there will be a structured PR strategy developed.

Initiatives will be developed to improve working relationships with existing partners and employers in the area in order to maximise existing and new opportunities.

As detailed previously, it is the intention that both Colleges will retain their existing names and identities.

A marketing and PR strategy will be developed for the reorganised Group to take account of all learner groups and local, regional and national agendas.

15. Consultation on the Reorganisation Process

Process

The Learning and Skills Council are now consulting on the proposed reorganisation of Exeter College and Bicton College. The public consultation is for a period of one calendar month with a closing date for comments of 21 December 2009.

All responses will be acknowledged by the Learning and Skills Council and copied to both Colleges. The Regional Council of the LSC will consider the results of the consultation exercise alongside the results of both legal and financial due diligence reports and a full reorganisation proposal from the two colleges will be considered against the nationally determined criteria detailed at Appendix E.

At that stage it may be decided to support the reorganisation and forward a proposal to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. Alternatively, they may require a revised proposal, which may require further formal consultation, or choose not to support the proposal.

If the proposal is accepted and forwarded to the Secretary of State it is the intention that an Order will be made for the reorganisation to become effective from 31 March 2010.

All consultation responses will be included in the file sent with the proposal to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Appendices

Appendices

A. List of Consultees

B. Statutory Proposal

C. Pro forma Response Submission

D. Reorganisation Timetable

E. Reorganisation Criteria

A. List of Consultees

Devon County Council	Exeter Chiefs Rugby Club
East Devon District Council	Exeter City Football Club
Mid Devon District Council	Sport England
North Devon Council	Flybe
Exeter City Council	South West Region Private Training Providers Association
South Hams District Council	Petroc
Teignbridge District Council	City College Plymouth
Torridge District Council	South Devon College
West Devon Borough Council	Plymouth College of Art
Torbay Borough Council	Cornwall College
Government Office for the South West	Wiltshire College
Devon 14-19 Strategic Leadership Group	Bridgwater College
Employment and Skills Board for Exeter	Hartpury College
Budleigh Salterton Town Council	Kingston Maurward College
Ben Bradshaw MP	The Royal Agricultural College
Hugo Swire MP	Harper Adams University College
Giles Chichester MEP	University of Plymouth
Lantra	University of Exeter
Improve	UCP Marjon
Skills Active	Axe Valley School and Community College
Landex	Hanham High School
East Devon AONB Partnership	Henbury School
Devon Federation YFC	Marlwood School
Devon YFC Centre	The Sir Bernard Lovell School
Lord Lieutenant of Devon	Budehaven Community School
Devon Wildlife Trust	Callington School and Community College
National Farmers Union	Helston School
Western Morning News	Saltash Community School
South West Regional Development Agency	Launceston College
Devon & Cornwall Business Council	Liskeard School and Community College
Royal Marines	Bideford College
Bishop of Exeter	Blundell's School
Connexions Cornwall & Devon	Bramdean School
Countryside Landowners Association	Braunton School and Community College
Association of Colleges	Chulmleigh Community College
Devon & Cornwall Constabulary	Clyst Vale Community College
Exeter Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Colyton Grammar School
Women's Farmers Union	Coombeshead College
Clinton Devon Estates	Cullompton Community College
Natural England	Dartmouth Community College
Environment Agency	Dawlish Community College
The Met Office	

A. List of Consultees

Devonport High School for Boys
Eggbuckland Community College
Emmanuel School Exeter
Estover Community College
Exeter School
Exeter Tutorial College
Exmouth Community College Great Torrington
Community School Sports College
Grenville College
Hele's College
Holsworthy Community College
Honiton Community College
Ilfracombe Arts College
Isca College of Media Arts
Ivybridge Community College
Kelly College Senior School
King Edward VI College
King's Ottery School
Kingsbridge Community College
Newton Abbot College
Lipson Community College
Magdalen Court School Pilton Community
College
Queen Elizabeth's Community College
Ratcliffe School
Sands School
Sidmouth College
South Dartmoor Community College
South Molton Community College
St James' School
St Luke's High School
St Margaret's School
St Peter's CE High School
St Wilfrid's School
Stoke Damerel Community College
Stover School
Teign School
Teignmouth Community College
The Kings School
The Maynard School
The Park Community College
The Small School
Tiverton High School
Torquay Grammar School for Girls Tower House
School
Trinity School
Uffculme School
West Buckland School
West Exeter Technology College
Brixham Community College
Churston Ferrers Grammar School
Coombe Dean School
Devonport High School for Girls
Notre Dame RC School
Okehampton College
Paignton Community College
Plymouth College
Plymstock School
Shebbear College Senior School
Sir John Hunt Community College St Boniface's
College
St Cuthbert Mayne School
Stoodley Knowle School
Tamarside Community College
Tavistock Community College
The John Kitto Community College
The Ridgeway School
Torquay Community College
Westlands Bilateral School
Woodruffe School
Wychbury House School
Bickton College Student Union
Exeter College Student Union
National Union of Students
UNISON
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Association of Managers in Education
Higher Education Funding Council for England
Accent International Language Consultancy

B. Statutory Proposal

PROPOSAL UNDER SECTION 51 (1) (C) OF THE FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992 (THE ACT) FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF BICTON COLLEGE UNDER SECTION 27 OF THE ACT

NAME OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Bicton College

ADDRESS

East Budleigh, Budleigh Salterton, Devon, EX9 7BY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDED AND THE NUMBER OF LEARNERS AT THE INSTITUTION

Bicton College is located in Budleigh Salterton, within the East Devon Local Authority area and in the area of the Devon and Cornwall Local Learning and Skills Council. The College's main site is located at Bicton, approximately thirteen miles east of Exeter.

The College is a small specialist provider of land based education with approximately 2,000 learners in the 2008-09 academic year. The College offers programmes from Entry Level to Level 5, including programmes funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in partnership with a local university. The College also offers work-based learning programmes.

REASONS FOR PROPOSING THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION

The governing body of Bicton College has agreed to merge with Exeter College. This would be achieved by the dissolution of the further education corporation of Bicton College and the transfer of its property, rights, and liabilities to a newly incorporated, wholly owned subsidiary company of Exeter College.

The principal reasons advanced by the governors of the Colleges in support of the proposal are to ensure the continuation and development of land based provision at Bicton College for the benefit of the County of Devon and the wider region. The proposed reorganisation will also be of benefit to local employers by building upon the work already undertaken by both Colleges and will serve the needs of the local community and the wider land based sector. Further benefits are anticipated from the development of improved links to local schools with Bicton College providing a complementary offering to that of Exeter College.

B. Statutory Proposal

CRITERIA

The Learning and Skills Council will consider the proposal in the light of criteria shown below:

- the proposal is likely to address the needs of learners and employers;
- the proposal is likely to increase opportunity for learners to exercise choice and encourage diversity in the education and training available;
- the proposal is likely to increase local participation rates and result in improved quality and success;
- the proposal is likely to develop innovation and improve access to learning for the community;
- the proposal ensures the embedding of all aspects of equality and diversity;
- the proposal is likely to promote effective community cohesion through community presence and representation within governance structures; and
- the proposal is likely to provide better value for money.

DATE PROPOSED FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF THE CORPORATION:

31 March 2010

EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROVISION TO BE MADE FOR THOSE LEARNERS WHO HAVE NOT COMPLETED THEIR PROGRAMMES ON THAT DATE:

Provision will be made for those learners at Bicton College who have not completed their programmes by the date of the dissolution to complete their programmes under the auspices of the joint institution.

B. Statutory Summary of Draft Proposal (Notice)

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACT 1992 THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

BICTON COLLEGE, EAST BUDLEIGH, BUDLEIGH SALTERTON, DEVON, EX9 7BY

The Learning and Skills Council (the Council) hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (the Act) of the draft proposal that the Secretary of State under section 27 of that Act should by order provide for the dissolution of the further education corporation of **Bicton College** and the transfer of the property, rights and liabilities of that corporation.

Dissolution of the corporation is proposed, at the request of the corporation of **Bicton College**. It is proposed that the property, rights and liabilities of the corporation be transferred to a company limited by guarantee which is a wholly owned subsidiary company of Exeter College. The company will be called Bicton College.

The date proposed for the dissolution is **31 March 2010**.

Provision will be made for all learners at **Bicton College** who have not completed their courses of study by the date of the proposed dissolution to complete their studies as registered students of Exeter College with learning being delivered by the Bicton College Company.

A copy of the draft proposal is available free of charge from the Council and will be sent to any person who requests it.

In accordance with the provisions of section 51 of the Act, representations may be made to the Council by **12 noon, 4th January 2010**.

Representations should be made in writing to:

John Peart
Learning and Skills Council
Ground Floor
Richmond Court
Emperor Way
Exeter Business Park
Exeter
EX1 3QS

Tel: 01392 354700

Date of Publication: 27 November 2009



Signed:

Malcolm Gillespie, South West Regional Director, Learning and Skills Council.

C. Consultation Response Pro forma

CONSULTATION RESPONSE PRO FORMA

Responses are invited by 21 December 2009 to the following attached documents:

- a. Consultation document on the proposed reorganisation of Bicton College and Exeter College.
- b. Statutory Notice for the reorganisation of Bicton College.

Please provide your comments in the appropriate space below and append additional sheets as necessary. **Please indicate overleaf whether your comments are directed to the Colleges involved, to the Learning and Skills Council or to both 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.

1. Comments on the objectives of the proposal

2. Comments on any potential impact on learners arising from the proposal

C. Consultation Response Pro forma

3. Comments on any curriculum issues arising from the proposal

4. Comments on any governance, management or staffing issues arising from the proposal

5. Comments on any accommodation, resource or finance issues arising from the proposal

C. Consultation Response Pro forma

6. Any other relevant comments

The above comments are directed to (please tick one box only):

- The Colleges
- Learning and Skills Council
- The Colleges and the Learning and Skills Council

Name

Organisation (if applicable)

Address

.....

.....

.....

Signed Date

Please return this pro forma to:

John Peart
Learning and Skills Council
Ground Floor
Richmond Court
Emperor Way
Exeter Business Park
Exeter
EX1 3QS

by noon, 21 December 2009

D. Reorganisation Timetable

Bicton College and Exeter College Indicative Reorganisation Timetable

Date	Action
November 2009	Consultation Document finalised and formal public consultation commences
November 2009	Financial and legal due diligence completed
December 2009 College Corporations	Public consultation period ends and outcomes considered by LSC and
January 2010 LSC	Full Proposal completed, agreed by Corporations and submitted to the
February 2010	LSC prepare report and assessment of the Full Proposal
February 2010	If supported, final documentation submitted to the Secretary of State
31 March 2010	Reorganisation takes effect

E. Reorganisation Criteria

CRITERIA

The Learning and Skills Council will consider the proposal in the light of criteria shown below:

- the proposal is likely to address the needs of learners and employers;
- the proposal is likely to increase opportunity for learners to exercise choice and encourage diversity in the education and training available;
- the proposal is likely to increase local participation rates and result in improved quality and success;
- the proposal is likely to develop innovation and improve access to learning for the community;
- the proposal ensures the embedding of all aspects of equality and diversity;
- the proposal is likely to promote effective community cohesion through community presence and representation within governance structures; and
- the proposal is likely to provide better value for money.

Public Consultation Document

For the Exeter College and Bicton College Reorganisation

November 21st 2009 – December 21st 2009