

Tertiary Education Sector in Shetland

Strategic Plan 2017 - 2019

Introduction

This is the first joint strategic plan to be agreed for the tertiary education sector in Shetland. It has been developed after extensive consultation with staff and key stakeholders and lays out our priorities, intentions and aspirations for the next few years.

At the heart of the strategy are the key aims of delivering high quality education, training, research and other services to meet the needs of Shetland's economy, communities and people.

While the NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College and Train Shetland will remain separate organisations for the immediate future (at least) we are committed to cooperating and collaborating where possible to maximise efficiency and make the best use of available resources across the tertiary education sector in Shetland.

This plan shows how we intend to respond to the needs of Shetland, and to local and national priorities, over the next few years. We believe that this strategy will build on our strengths as high quality educational, training and research institutes, and lay the foundations for a stable and sustainable tertiary education sector in Shetland.

Context and Environment

The tertiary education sector in Shetland comprises three organisations: the NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College and Train Shetland. Together they provide most post-school education and training in Shetland¹, and carry out research and a range of other associated activities.

The **NAFC Marine Centre UHI** is an independent educational and scientific institute which provides a range of services relevant to the maritime industries, including training and education, research and development, and consultancy and advisory services. The Centre occupies modern, purpose-built buildings on a water-front campus in Scalloway. NAFC is operated by a charitable trust (the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust; SFTCT), which is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Shetland College UHI is one of six non-incorporated colleges in Scotland and delivers training and education and research in a wide range of disciplines. The College occupies modern-purpose built buildings on a campus in Lerwick, and also operates a number of local learning centres spread throughout the islands. Operationally, Shetland College is managed within the Shetland Islands Council's Development Services Directorate and is governed by a Committee (Shetland College Board) which reports to the Council's Education and Families Committee.

Train Shetland is a provider of vocational and workplace training in Shetland and delivers a wide range of short courses, as well as managing apprenticeships. It occupies a modern building adjacent to Shetland College in Lerwick and is managed by the Development Services Directorate of Shetland Islands Council.

Both Shetland College and the NAFC Marine Centre are partners in the **University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)**. As well as its education and research activities, which include validation and quality assurance, the UHI has a central role in planning, coordinating and funding further and higher education in the Highlands and Islands region.

Funding

The NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College and Train Shetland receive funding from a variety of sources, including course fees, central government funding for vocational training and further and higher education places, the Shetland Islands Council, charges for consultancy and commercial services and successful bids to external organisations for research and other projects.

¹ Some adult education services are also provided by schools and by the Shetland Islands Council's Adult Learning Service.

Under its Medium Term Financial Plan the Shetland Islands Council plans to reduce the budget of its Development Services Directorate by 12% over the five year period from 2016/17 to 2020/21 (3% annually). Shetland College and Train Shetland are directly managed by Development Services, which also provides some core funding to the NAFC Marine Centre. These three organisations are thus faced with similar reductions in their SIC funding over the next five years.

Integration

At the instigation of the Shetland Islands Council (SIC), work began in 2013 to integrate the NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College and Train Shetland into a single tertiary education, training and research organisation for Shetland. It was originally envisaged that a single new organisations would be created, independent of the SIC, but by early 2016 it had become clear that full integration would not be practical in the immediate future (primarily due to issues relating to staff pensions and property).

The SIC therefore proposed pursuing collaboration and partial integration of the organisations to maximise efficiency and use of resources across the tertiary education sector in Shetland. To that end, the Shetland Islands Council agreed in February 2016 to:

- ◆ Implement a single integrated management structure across NAFC, Shetland College and Train Shetland;
- ◆ Establish joint governance arrangements between the Shetland College Board and the Board of Trustees of the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust;
- ◆ Promote collaborative working on the ground across and between staff and students; and
- ◆ Establish as much confidence as possible about medium term funding from all of the key public funding bodies for tertiary education in Shetland.

The Board of Trustees of the Shetland Fisheries Training Centre Trust agreed in March 2016 to accept three of these proposals, but deferred agreeing to implement a single integrated management structure until a strategic plan was in place along with a more detailed proposal for how an integrated management structure would work.

The SFTCT Board did, however, approve the appointment of joint senior managers on an interim basis, and an interim Joint Principal and an interim Vice-Principal – Teaching and Learning were appointed during 2016. A joint integration panel comprising representatives from both the Board of Management of Shetland College and the Board of Trustees of the NAFC Marine Centre has also been established to oversee the joint management arrangements.

It is against this background that this strategic plan has been developed to provide a road-map for Shetland's tertiary education sector over the next few years.

Shetland

Shetland is an island community that forms the most northerly part of Scotland and of the United Kingdom, lying roughly equidistant from Mainland Scotland, Norway and the Faroe Islands, at the juncture of the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea.

The islands have a rich history and culture with a strong Nordic influence, and are famed (amongst other things) for their natural environment, knitwear, music and ponies. Shetland is surrounded by productive seas and lies at heart of rich fishing grounds and the sea has had a strong influence on the islands culture, heritage and economy.

Shetland has a relatively stable population of just over 23,000 people, spread across 15 inhabited islands though with the majority on the main island (Mainland), and in Lerwick, the islands' capital. About one-quarter of the population (24%) is under 20 years of age and 18% is over 65.

At the local government level, Shetland is governed by the Shetland Islands Council, one of 32 unitary authorities in Scotland.

Shetland's economy is dominated by maritime industries, which together account for about 40% of local economic output, and especially the seafood sector (fishing, aquaculture and seafood processing), which accounts for more than one-quarter (28%). Other important sectors of the local economy include transport (9%), health and social care (8%), construction (7%), the oil industry (7%), public administration (6%) and retail (5%)².

Traditionally, post-school educational opportunities in Shetland were very limited, requiring many people to leave the islands to pursue further or higher education. Both Shetland College and the NAFC Marine Centre were established primarily to enable Shetlanders to receive post-school education and training without having to leave the islands, and to make it available to those who were unable to do so.

Given the importance of retaining and attracting young people to live and work in Shetland, that purpose remains as important today as ever. The development of the University of the Highlands and Islands, in which both institutes are partners, is greatly expanding the range of educational opportunities available to Shetlanders of all ages.

However, the relatively small size of the local population represents a continuing challenge for the tertiary education sector in Shetland through its effect on class sizes and the viability of courses and services that may, nevertheless, be of great importance to local people and local employers.

² *Shetland in Statistics 2014*. Shetland Islands Council, 2014.

Regional Priorities and Skills Needs

We aim to respond to the regional priorities and needs identified for Shetland through the Community Planning Partnership, and by the Shetland Islands Council.

Shetland Community Planning Partnership Priorities

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| <p>Shetland is the best place for children and young people to grow up</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a wide range of in-school and post-school education opportunities for young people in Shetland and to support these learners to succeed (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p>Shetland has sustainable economic growth with good employment opportunities and our people have the skills to match...</p> | <p>We will make a key contribution to Shetland's economic success by providing the skills and training needed by employers, and by carrying out research and providing other services to support key local industries (Goals 1, 2 & 3).</p> |
| <p>We have tackled inequalities by ensuring the needs of the most vulnerable and hard to reach groups are identified and met, and that services are targeted at those most in need.</p> | <p>We will continue to provide educational and training opportunities, and support, to learners from all backgrounds and of all abilities (as far as is reasonably practical). (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |

Shetland Islands Council Priorities

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| <p>Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds and in care, will be getting the learning and development opportunities that allow them to fulfil their potential.</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a wide range of in-school and post-school education opportunities for young people in Shetland and to support these learners to succeed (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p>Shetland Learning Partnership will be providing opportunities for young people to gain workplace experience and vocational qualifications while at school, giving them the skills they need to get jobs or continue into further education.</p> | <p>We will continue to participate in the Shetland Learning Partnership and other relevant partnerships to provide workplace experience opportunities and vocational training opportunities for young people in Shetland (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p>We will have an economy that promotes enterprise and is based on making full use of local resources, skills and a desire to investigate new commercial ideas.</p> | <p>We will make a key contribution to Shetland's economic success by providing the skills and training needed by employers, and by carrying out research and providing other services to support key local industries (Goals 1, 2 & 3).</p> |
| <p>People, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds, will be getting access to the learning and development opportunities that allow them to best fulfil their potential.</p> | <p>We will continue to provide educational and training opportunities, and support, to learners from all backgrounds and of all abilities (as far as is reasonably practical (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |

National Priorities

We aim to respond to the national priorities and needs identified by the Scottish Government, including:

Scottish Government National Outcomes

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| <p><u>Business:</u> A skilled, educated and adaptable workforce</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a range of training relevant to employers, and to individuals in employment or seeking employment, in Shetland (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p><u>Employment:</u> the wider attainment of higher skills, the removal of barriers to work... and a continuing commitment to innovation and the application of knowledge in our economy.</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a wide range of post-school education opportunities for people in Shetland and to support these learners to succeed (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |
| <p><u>Research & Innovation:</u> We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a wide range of in-school and post-school education opportunities for people in Shetland and to support these learners to succeed, and to carry out research relevant to Shetland's businesses (Goals 1, 2 & 3).</p> |
| <p><u>Young People:</u> Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens</p> | <p>We will continue to provide a wide range of post-school education opportunities for people in Shetland and to support these learners to succeed (Goals 1 & 2).</p> |

Our Vision

“NAFC Marine Centre, Shetland College and Train Shetland will work together to help build the future of Shetland through education, training and research”.

Goals

We have set ourselves six strategic goals to guide our plans towards 2019.

During the period of this plan we will:

- 1) Respond to the needs of Shetland**
- 2) Deliver high quality learning experiences and successful outcomes for all learners**
- 3) Carry out high quality research**
- 4) Provide high quality governance, leadership and management structures**
- 5) Grow our business**
- 6) Build sustainability**

Goal 1: Respond to the needs of Shetland

- ◆ Understand the educational and research needs of Shetland, including its people, businesses and industries, through meaningful engagement and dialogue with stakeholders, partners and local people.
- ◆ Become an innovative and reliable partner delivering priority outcomes for Shetland.
- ◆ Develop strong and effective partnerships and communications with Shetland Islands Council and other relevant local and national agencies.
- ◆ Develop and deliver provision to widen access to education and reduce inequalities, and to meet local and national priorities including through initiatives to Develop the Young Workforce.
- ◆ Support economic development and business growth through training, research, advice and other appropriate activities, including the delivery of recognised workplace qualifications, bespoke and effective knowledge transfer activities, research and other relevant activities.
- ◆ Support our community to build capacity, increase opportunity and reduce inequality.
- ◆ Deliver efficient and successful learner journeys through a modern, relevant and coherent curriculum which provides appropriate pathways to positive destinations.

Goal 2: Deliver high quality learning experiences and successful outcomes for all learners

- ◆ Deliver a range of training and education opportunities to meet the needs of individuals and employers throughout Shetland.
- ◆ Provide appropriate targeted support to learners of all backgrounds and experiences to ensure that opportunities for success are available to all.
- ◆ Deliver a range of employability skills for all learners to support success and progression.
- ◆ Generate a high expectation culture for learners which raises aspiration and creates confident individuals.
- ◆ Deliver innovative, effective and engaging teaching which enables and supports effective learning.
- ◆ Create a range of definitions and measures for learner success which recognise the achievements and destinations of all students.
- ◆ Support our teaching staff to reflect on and improve their teaching practice.
- ◆ Deepen student representation, strengthen the student voice and support the students' associations.
- ◆ Provide access to the widest range of technology enhanced learning opportunities.
- ◆ Strengthen our engagement with, and contribution to, the University of the Highlands and Islands, increase the range of UHI courses available to learners in Shetland, and take maximum advantage of the learning and teaching opportunities offered by the UHI

Goal 3: Carry out high quality research

- ◆ Undertake high quality academic and commercial research relevant to Shetland, including its environment, history, culture, and industries.
- ◆ Maintain existing research centres and examine the opportunities to establish new specialist research centres in topics relevant to Shetland.
- ◆ Secure external funding to make our research activities, so far as possible, self-sustaining.
- ◆ Undertake meaningful dialogue with partners, stakeholders and others to understand their research needs, priorities and opportunities.
- ◆ Nurture a scholarly spirit amongst all academic staff and students and provide research opportunities for learners.
- ◆ Develop collaborative research partnerships with other institutes and organisations.
- ◆ Promote and encourage the use of our facilities by visiting researchers.
- ◆ Integrate our research into our teaching where appropriate.
- ◆ Develop a community of postgraduate-research students in Shetland.
- ◆ Encourage our research staff to publish their work in peer-reviewed publications and participate in academic conferences.
- ◆ Promote our research activities to the Shetland community through public engagement and outreach activities.
- ◆ Strengthen our engagement with, and contribution to, the University of the Highlands and Islands and take maximum advantage of the research opportunities offered by the UHI.

Goal 4: Provide high quality governance, leadership and management structures

- ◆ Establish a joint Senior Management Team that will provide high levels of strong and effective governance, leadership and management, and develop and implement effective management systems.
- ◆ Develop joint governance arrangements to provide effective support for the joint Senior Management Team.
- ◆ Promote a collaborative and cooperative culture across the partner organisations.
- ◆ Create and retain a well-supported, valued and confident workforce.
- ◆ Discover and develop talent in our workforce.
- ◆ Create a positive organisational culture and deliver open, honest and effective communication.
- ◆ Strengthen approaches to quality improvement for all our activities,
- ◆ Develop clarity of roles for all our staff, including responsibilities and accountability.
- ◆ Consult with our staff and students and engage them in matters of mutual interest.
- ◆ Create culture of Alumni from Shetland's Colleges.

Goal 5: Grow our business

- ◆ Build on our positive local and national reputation.
- ◆ Develop our public profile through effective promotion of our activities and engagement with the local community.
- ◆ Build a systematic approach to market research and business development.
- ◆ Identify and develop new markets and opportunities for all our activities, including those arising from Shetland's unique selling points, including niche markets and specialist products.
- ◆ Deliver a strong voice in the sector and for the sector to lobby effectively and build the case for further investment and core growth.
- ◆ Build our commercial portfolio to increase non-SFC funding streams.

Goal 6: Build sustainability

- ◆ Develop and agree with our partner agencies a stable and sustainable, long-term financial plan for our organisations.
- ◆ Maintain and develop our estate to provide high-quality facilities and infrastructure for our teaching, research and other activities.
- ◆ Manage our operations to make best use of our estate, facilities and infrastructure.
- ◆ Develop and maintain a strong and transparent financial management system to operate a balanced budget.
- ◆ Engage with funding bodies and build the case for appropriate and sustainable levels of local and central government funding, given the contribution of Shetland's key industries to the national economy.
- ◆ Increase income from commercial and other sources.