

Summary of benefits of Recommended Strategic Option:

- ✓ Better integrated curriculum offer, improved curriculum planning, development and delivery.
- ✓ Better access to funding to support capital investment on the Folly Lane site.
- ✓ Reduced running costs and management costs.
- ✓ Improved long-term financial viability.
- ✓ Improved integration of accommodation usage.
- ✓ Improved employer engagement and development of responsive provision.
- ✓ Improved accessibility of provision and learner integration and easier student progression.

Reasons for decision to support the double dissolution model

- Not enough migration between the two colleges.
- Lack of common matrix of curriculum offer.
- Pre entry level/special needs requires strengthening at Herefordshire College of Art and Design.
- Reduction in overheads through central services - savings on Principal, Finance, Marketing Central Services.
- Need for better strategic planning and self-assessment reports for the campus.
- Need to improve/increase progression opportunities.
- Benefits of joint marketing and publicity and promotional opportunities, e.g. joint open days, awards events, careers events, enrichment opportunities etc.
- Benefits of combined market research to meet local and regional objectives.
- Benefits of shared student support services eg student accommodation, guidance and career information.
- Sharing of the Learning Resource Centre.
- Benefits of best practice sharing to tackle local initiatives linked to local LSC priority objectives of employer engagement, basic skills and the 14-19 agenda.
- Benefits of sharing lesson observations teams and best practice teaching and learning.
- Development of a Quality and Standards Unit with best practice opportunities shared across the campus, lesson plans etc in order to meet OfSTED and QCA requirements.
- Benefits of a common system for monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of programmes and student perceptions.
- Benefits of developing a joint Quality/Curriculum Review Panel, which would assist in improving curriculum planning and development.
- Benefits of developing a common virtual learning environment for student access - includes development of website access across the two college areas.

- Benefits of sharing retention and achievement strategies and Educational Maintenance Allowance systems and procedures to improve services to students.
- Benefits of joint staff development opportunities and joint curriculum development.
- Benefits of pooling part-time staff resources - register of part-time staff availability.
- Opportunity to develop a co-ordinated response to higher education needs in Herefordshire.
- The opportunity to change an operating deficit in each of the 10 years since incorporation for the Herefordshire College of Technology into a balanced budget or even a surplus through balancing the accounts of the College of Technology and the College of Art and Design, reduced overheads and new opportunities for curriculum development.
- To help remove the block on funding capital development of the Herefordshire Learning Village. Current block on grounds of financial viability, lack of coherence and integration of curriculum offer - funding from AWM, Europe and LSC currently on hold.
- Improved decision making by having one Board of Governors to make decisions not two thus leading to speedier and more strategic decision making.
- The ending of Specialist College uplift funding in 2006/2007 will provide greater pressures to the funding of the College of Art and Design.
- The proposed review of Specialist Colleges and their links to regional and local strategies creates a further concern for a small self standing college such as the College of Art and Design. The proposed development of FE Colleges with specialisms is likely to be of benefit to larger sub-regional colleges such as the merger of the College of Technology and the College of Art and Design.
- The College of Technology has only survived through the exceptional support funding that has been made available from the Learning and Skills Council. From 2005/2006 this funding will no longer be available, thus putting even greater pressure on the College of Technology to survive. This would have major implications for the residents and businesses of Herefordshire and surrounding areas.
- Less confusion for public and employers about the college provision. This would also assist Connexions staff in promoting further education for 14-19 group in particular.
- Herefordshire College of Technology is not able to subsidise its higher cost provision with standard classroom based courses that can attract higher group sizes and therefore more income because these are provided by the Hereford Sixth Form and the Herefordshire College of Art and Design.
- The Herefordshire College of Technology and the Herefordshire College of Art and Design have suffered from a lack of investment in the estate in recent years because of funding difficulties and this has effectively diminished

the asset base. A merged college would provide a better opportunity to address this shortfall.

- A merged college has the potential to offer improved working conditions for staff and harmonised terms and conditions.
- Merged colleges would provide better utilisation of capital assets and accommodation.
- Currently the College of Technology is considered to be a small to medium sized college and the College of Art and Design a small college, but both carry the fixed overheads of larger colleges.
- Demographic factors such as sparsity of population contribute to low class sizes which are difficult to operate economically. Demographic forecasting shows a reduction in the size of the main cohort in future years.
- Both colleges have much more to do in meeting the needs of local employers. A merged college would provide a greater opportunity to make a bigger impact on the agenda.
- The development of ICT based learning materials and their associated support systems is expensive. Pooled resources would enable more work to be undertaken in the development of this area if the colleges were merged.
- There are potential benefits of purchase and implementation of common MIS and Finance systems. The two colleges would enable a better system to be purchased at a more competitive price. This could be improved even further if linked to the Hereford Sixth Form College.
- A merged college would offer a new opportunity for re-branding of the campus and therefore a better opportunity to increase participation by both individuals and employers.
- Because of the financial difficulties there has been a focus on micro-management that prevented the colleges from taking a strategic view and reforming of provision.
- With a total county population of 170,000 sparsely distributed in a rural area, the College of Technology can only sustain its range of vocational programme by running small and low contribution courses in several curriculum areas. A static and future reducing 16-18 population with an existing participation rate of 84.6 per cent leaves the college little prospect of funded growth. Without major changes to the portfolio through merger or a revised funding mechanism, its long term viability is very questionable.