

Chief Executive's Annual Report

2011/12

My first full year in post has coincided with one of the most challenging educational environments I have experienced: a time when almost no aspect of the education and training environment has remained unchanged.

In the further education sector in particular we have become accustomed to continual change, but not to the prospect of new ground rules for almost every aspect of activity simultaneously. Reducing budgets for all further education students: 'simplified' and differentiated funding methodologies for 16-18, adult and apprenticeship learners: revised Ofsted frameworks for the inspection of both 'further education and skills' and 'residential standards': the preparation for all 16 and 17 year olds to remain in education or training: increased freedoms for colleges under the 2011 Education Act: and the switch from public to loan funding for higher education are all challenging our members at the same time.

To provide Landex members with information about support and activities available through Landex our website was remodelled this year to make it more useful and easier to navigate. Password protected areas were introduced to allow confidential material to be made available only to directors and members.

Landex Strategy and Structure

In order to support members during the many changes and to influence policy for the benefit of their students, a new strategy ('Vision, Values and Aims') for the organisation is now in place and with it a committee structure that allows members to have the maximum influence over Landex policy and activities.

Five committees have been established each reporting direct to the Board:

- HE Strategy Committee chaired by Chris Gaskell, principal of the RAC
- The HE Curriculum and Quality Committee chaired by David Llewellyn, principal of Harper Adams University.
- The FE Curriculum and Quality Committee chaired by Tim Jackson, principal Sparsholt College.
- The Finance and Funding Committee chaired by Mark Lumsdon –Taylor, Finance Director Hadlow College.
- Membership Committee chaired by Paul Hannan, Landex chair

We are grateful to the chairs and their convenors for the work that they have undertaken in establishing and maintaining the committees.

Landex

Land Based Colleges
Aspiring To Excellence

Landex Finances

Hadlow College assumed full responsibility for our finance function at the beginning of the year. Appropriate financial policies and operating procedures were put in place together with robust mechanisms for accurate monitoring of all activities. We are grateful to Mark Lumsdon Taylor and his team for their work in putting this aspect of our activity on a more secure footing.

In order to effectively 'tax plan' and to offer services to members in the most cost-effective manner the Board established a wholly owned trading company, Landex Commercial and Educational Services Ltd. This did not reflect a change of policy or focus for Landex, simply a move to operate the organisation in a more business-like manner.

Following a growth in turnover and the complexity of the services offered by Landex, the Board decided that a formal audit process should in future be completed each year. Invitations to tender were issued to a number of potential audit firms and an appointment made in time for the year end audit.

The financial outturn for 2011/12 was broadly in line with budget and the increased turnover reflected the additional services provided for members.

Membership

We welcome Guildford College (Merrist Wood) and Nottingham Trent University (Brackenhurst) into membership during the year, taking the tally to 37 full and 8 associate members.

A new category of 'affiliate member' was also introduced: this will cater for providers with significant land based provision that is of high quality, but which covers less than the 6 Sector Industry areas required for full membership. The first applications for Associate membership will be considered by the Board this autumn.

Whilst there was no desire to substantially increase the membership of Landex, there are significant advantages for all members if Landex is able to represent all the larger players and the vast majority of learners in the sector when talking with funding agencies, government departments and quality assurance bodies.

Office Accommodation

Landex established a permanent office and increased staffing to allow it to operate more efficiently and provide a more professional image. Temporary accommodation on the Northampton Business Park was replaced by more permanent, but lower cost offices, at the University of Northampton's Sunley Conference Centre. This provided a good support infrastructure without further investment by Landex. Since year end a personal assistant Helen Gonzalez has joined Paul Murphy in the Landex office to ensure that we are able to respond promptly to all initiatives of benefit to the membership.

Landex Patrons

To help raise the profile of Landex Colleges, we are delighted that Baroness Byford, Lord Boswell and Lord Curry have agreed to become Patrons of Landex.

Lady Byford is a former student of Moulton College, a poultry farmer and as a member of the House of Lords was the Opposition Spokesman for Food, Farming and Rural Affairs from 1997 to 2007.

Lord Boswell is an Oxford classics graduate and has a diploma in agricultural economics: he is a partner in the family farming business near Banbury, and was MP for Daventry from 1987 until 2010. He was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Education at the time that FE Colleges were incorporated and was raised to the peerage in 2010.

Lord Curry is a Northumberland farmer and businessman, who until 2011 was chair of the NFU Mutual. He is the non-executive chair of the Better Regulation Executive, and Chairman of the Royal Veterinary College. He was Chairman of the policy commission on the 'Future of Farming and Food' from 2001 and was created an independent life peer in October 2011.

Partnership with GuildHE

Landex entered into a new annual agreement with GuildHE during the year: under the new arrangement GuildHE prepares and/or advises on the preparation and content of Landex HE Strategy papers and policies, and provides advice on the completion of responses to consultations by Government Departments, Funding Bodies and other relevant organisations. It also provides accommodation for a range of Landex meetings at Woburn House, and a small meeting room (2-4 persons) is also provided, subject to availability, free of charge for use by members who wish to hold a meeting in London.

GuildHE also actively lobbies on behalf of Landex members in relation to HE issues, where this does not present a conflict with the interests of other GuildHE members, and copies of all GuildHE Briefing Papers are made available to Landex members.

We are grateful to Andy Westwood for the exceptional briefings he has provided on HE policy and a variety of related issues.

Partnership with LSIS

Early in the year Landex signed a partnership agreement with LSIS, which provided funding for us to further develop the range of Improvement Activities and CPD events available to members. After Graham Patrick met with the LSIS Regional Development Managers as group, joint meetings took place between Paul Murphy, the relevant LSIS Regional Development Manager and senior managers from the member colleges in each Region. These meetings provided the ideas for a range of successful funding applications made to the LSIS Regional Response Fund this autumn. The agreement also provided funded support for our LSIS council member, Andrew Tyley, and allowed us to make more effective use of the Excellence Gateway in promoting support services for members.

We are grateful to Rob Wye and the team at LSIS for the support provided for Landex through this partnership.

Partnership with AoC

Landex has an arrangement with AoC, whereby Landex members, who also belong to the AoC, are eligible to receive a reduction in their AoC subscription to recognise:

- i) the significant commercial and residential income included in their turnover
- ii) the substantial work undertaken by Landex that is not replicated by the AoC.

For AoC members who have paid their subscription through Landex, the turnover used to calculate AoC subscriptions was reduced by 25% to reflect commercial income and 20% to reflect the work undertaken by Landex: the maximum annual subscription being £18,000.

This reflected a significant saving for all members who paid their subscriptions through Landex.

Tim Jackson represented Landex members on the AoC Board

We were grateful to Martin Doel and his team for providing free accommodation for Board meetings and our AGM during the year.

Rural Services Network and SPARSE- Rural

Landex re-joined this group for a very modest annual fee, which as a consequence now offers free membership to all Landex Colleges and Universities. Individual subscriptions were returned to those of our members who had joined individually.

Representative Activities

Landex Directors and the Chief Executive have established regular dialogue and programmed meetings with a wide range of organisations during the year to represent the interests of members, these include:

- EfA - '16-19 Funding Formula Review'
- EfA - 'Learner Support Consultative Forum'
- SfA- 'A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills'
- EFA & SFA - 'Specialist College Status and Qualification Programme Weighting' Factors
- Ofsted – 'Revised Frameworks and the Inspection of LBCs'
- Agriskills Forum – 'Agriculture Industry CPD Schemes'
- Farm Safety Partnership – 'College contributions to improving H&S in agriculture'
- NIPB – 'Continuous Improvement in Post-16 Vocational education & Training'
- LEE-TEC – 'Land based Engineering Partnership'
- Grow Initiative – 'Recruitment to Horticulture Programmes and Careers'

Mike Atkinson (Plumpton College governor) has represents land based interests on the AoC Governors' Council and is also a member of the BIS Project Board.

Alastair Taylor has represented Landex as an Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning commissioner in his capacity as a Landex Quality Advisor.

In addition Meredydd David has represented Landex on the EfA Technical Funding Group and David Lawrence has chaired the SfA Technical Funding Group: a wide range of principals and staff have represented Landex on other industry and education groups.

Funded Projects

A wide range of funded projects were successfully completed during the year

- 'Supporting FE and Skills in Difficult Times' (LSIS).
- 'Efficiency Indicators for the FE Sector' (SfA via the NIPB)
- 'Peer Review & Development - Care Standards' (LSIS)
- 'Peer Review & Development - Student Support' (LSIS)
- 'Peer Review & Development - 'Improving teaching, learning and assessment in land-based provision' (LSIS)

All the LSIS funded projects involved a wide range of Landex members who were enthusiastic about the outcomes, which were published both on the Excellence Gateway and the Landex website.

A number of the initiatives developed as part of the Supporting FE and Skills in Difficult Times project are now enshrined in the Landex Strategy and should provide substantial financial and quality improvement benefits during the coming years.

The LSIS 'Lead Provider Register' has now been renamed the 'Improvement Partner Framework Register'. The Landex application, submitted in collaboration with Hartpury College, was accepted to be placed on the register.

As with all framework registers, there was no guarantee of funded work, but as this register is now to be used by Ofsted in conjunction with LSIS to affect improvement, it is likely to assume greater importance.

Responses to Consultations

During the year formal responses were provided to a range of consultations and 'calls for evidence' including:

- New Challenges, New Chances (BIS)
- "16-19 Funding formula review" (DfE)
- A New Streamlined Funding System for Adult Skills (SfA)
- Common Inspection Framework 2012 (Ofsted)
- Inspection of residential provision for students under eighteen years of age in further education colleges (Ofsted)
- Richard Review of Apprenticeships (BIS)
- Apprenticeship Funding (SfA)
- Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning on the characteristics and features of excellent adult vocational teaching and learning (CAVTL)

Landex also contributed to response by Lantra and the AoC to these and other consultations.to the call for evidence, and also responded separately on behalf of members.

Research

A range of research projects were undertaken on behalf of members both by Landex staff and external contractors. These included:

- MiDES project to provide sub-sector analysis for land based programmes. An extension of the AoC funded project for the wider FE sector. (RCU)
- The current volume and proportion of Land based higher education delivered by Landex members in England (RCU)
- An Analysis of Land based Providers in the UK (In-house for DEFRA)
- Landex Members Links and Work with Companies and Education Providers in China (In-house for DEFRA)
- An analysis of FE & HE Horticulture Provision in the UK (In house for the RHS Careers Initiative)
- Land based providers' links with land based industries through members of College Boards, Committees and Advisory Groups who have links with the land based industries. (In house for LANTRA/DEFRA)
- An analysis of Success Rates in Landex member Colleges (In house)

Peer Review

Peer review activities, under Graham Patrick's leadership, were completed for all members and performance assessed against the membership criteria using the published 'Grey to Green' methodology. The contribution to continuous improvement is now recognised as a key strength of Landex membership by a wide range of agencies, and the process will be further refined and extended to embrace a wider range of activities, including governance, during the next year.

Continuous Professional Development

An increased range of CPD activities were delivered in response to demand from members, largely identified through peer review, and all events recruited significant delegates.

The **Annual Conference**, incorporating both the traditional "Principals' Conference" and "Governors' Seminar", took place over 3 days and attracted a total attendance of over 80 representatives of member institutions. Highlights of the conference were an after dinner speech by England Rugby Coach, Stuart Lancaster, and contributions by members on particular areas of good practice: the latter activities will be a focus of future conferences.

A 'Managing Residential Support and Services for Learners' conference, organised jointly with Natspec, was held at Wiltshire College in January and attracted particularly strong support with 52 delegates attending.

LBCNC (Land Based Colleges National Consortium)

Following a due diligence exercise, it was agreed to purchase LBCNC. This will allow the company to make an appropriate investment in infrastructure, so that current and future materials can be

interactive and available to subscribers through a web portal. The total payment made to LBCNC will be invested in the company, with no monies passing to either the shareholders or current directors. The company will become a wholly owned subsidiary of Landex. Existing subscribers to LBCNC will be the voting members of the subsidiary.

Awarding Body Partnership

Discussions took place with the major examination boards with a view to helping Landex members procure land based qualification registration and certification more cost- effectively, and to allow them to collectively have greater influence over qualification content, assessment and the support materials available.

Substantial progress was made towards the end of the year and it is anticipated that pilot activities will be in place for first registrations in 2013 or 2014.

Visit by Party from Serbia

Modernisation of the VET System in Serbia is a project funded by the European Union. The project objective is to support modernisation of the education and training system in order to contribute more efficiently to national economic recovery and social cohesion, and meet labour market and student needs. A group of twenty principals from Agriculture schools (two of whom were also members of the National Education Council of Serbia) plus interpreters visited Hadlow, Plumpton and Merrist Wood Colleges and local employers that work with each of the Colleges.

Landex co-ordinated the educational part of the visit and we are grateful to the Colleges that committed their time and energy to the project.

National Hedgelaying Society

An application for financial support to the Prince of Wales's 'Business in the Community' Trust, was made by Landex on behalf of the National Hedgelaying Society. This will fund the delivery of 9 Regional 'Train the Trainer' hedgelaying courses over the next 3 years; the courses will be hosted by one Landex College in each Region.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Graham, Paul, all the officers, directors and members of Landex for their support during a very busy and successful year.

Chris Moody
November 2012