



Chief Executive's Annual Report

2012/13

It has been a challenging but successful year for both Landex and its member Colleges. Whilst the educational environment remained challenging the increased interest by Government Departments and Agencies in the AgriFood agenda produced significant opportunities for our sector, both in terms of improved recruitment to agriculture programmes and potential engagement with applied research and technology transfer activities.

Landex Strategy and Structure

The strategy published in 2012 moved to the implementation stage.

The five committees, established by the Board are now operational and are beginning to generate ideas and projects that will be of long term benefit to all members:

- HE Strategy Committee chaired by Chris Gaskell, principal of the Royal Agricultural University.
- 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 Ann Turner
- 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 Finances

Hadlow College continued to provide our finance function.

Landex Commercial and Educational Services Ltd. has completed its first full trading year and will become an increasingly important vehicle for providing an enhanced range of membership services cost-effectively.

The financial outturn for 2012/13 was broadly in line with budget and once again the increased turnover reflected the additional services provided for members.

Membership

We welcomed Abingdon & Witney College and Solihull College as our first affiliate members during the year, and at year end had 36 full, 2 affiliate and 6 associate members: two mergers having taken place during the membership year.

Whilst there is still 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. As a consequence enquiries by several significant providers currently not in membership will be pursued in the autumn.

Office Accommodation

The Landex office is now well established within the University of Northampton. This has provided a good support infrastructure without direct investment by Landex. Since year end we have

temporarily relocated within the University, from their Park Campus to the Portfolio Centre on their Avenue campus. This move allowed the University to accommodate a new UTC on a temporary basis, and we shall relocate to our more permanent home in January 2014.

Since year end, Lynn Hart has been appointed as the Landex Qualification and Quality Manager and will work out of the Northampton office. The offices will also be shared by Land Based Learning Ltd. staff, spreading the cost of providing this office accommodation.

Landex Reception at the House of Lords

Baroness Hazel Byford hosted a very successful reception in the Cholmondsey Room at the House of Lords in February 2013. The reception took the form of afternoon tea and the focus was upon promoting the range of landbased further and higher education and related services delivered by Landex members. Brief speeches were made by Paul Hannan, Lady Byford and Further Education & Skills Minister, Matthew Hancock. The event was attended by over 100 representatives of member colleges and universities together with our patrons and a wide range of members from both Houses.

Partnership with GuildHE

Landex Colleges continued to benefit from our annual agreement with GuildHE: the advice provided by Andy Westwood and his team is invaluable. We will seek to further develop this arrangement during 2013 to ensure that membership of both organisations is available to our members with significant higher education provision, without duplication of cost.

Partnership with LSIS

Landex signed a second annual partnership agreement with LSIS during 2012/13. This once again provided funding for us to develop the range of Improvement Activities and CPD events available to members. Paul Murphy met with the relevant LSIS Regional Development Manager and senior managers from the member colleges in each region. These meetings provided the ideas for three successful funding applications made to the LSIS Regional Response Fund.

- ‘Towards Outstanding; improving teaching, learning, and assessment in land based education’.
- ‘Improving Engagement with BME Population within land based Education’.
- ‘48 Hours and Counting! Preparation for short inspection’.

All three projects involved wide participation by members and were completed successfully during the year.

It is a great pity that LSIS was dissolved at a stage when it was possibly at its maximum effectiveness. We are grateful to Rob Wye and the team at LSIS for the support provided for Landex through this partnership and we wish them well in the future.

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 the substantial work undertaken by Landex that is not replicated by the AoC.

Most AoC members have now opted to pay their subscription through Landex and we hope that the saving for those members will be perpetuated in some form under the revised AoC subscription methodology.

Tim Jackson has continued to represent Landex members very effectively on the AoC Board and we are grateful for his continued efforts on behalf of members.

We are 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 continues to belong to this organisation, which as a consequence offers free membership to all Landex Colleges and Universities.

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'
- Ofsted – 'Revised Frameworks and the Inspection of LBCs'
- EfA/SfA/Lantra - 'G' weighting and specialist college status meeting
- DfE Ministerial Working Group on implementation of reforms to post-16 education and funding
- DfE Ministerial Working Group: Large Programmes subgroup
- AgriSkills Forum – 'Agriculture Industry Professional Development Schemes'
- Farm Safety Partnership – 'College contributions to improving H&S in agriculture'
- NIPB – 'Continuous Improvement in Post-16 Vocational education & Training'
- FoSCO – 'Collaboration between sector membership bodies'
- LE-TEC – 'Land based Engineering Partnership'
- AFCP - Agrifood Charities Partnership
- Defra - (David Heath MP, George Freeman MP) - the important part that specialist land based providers can play in delivering the agri-tech strategy
- Defra - Future of Farming Group
- IoH Grow Initiative – 'Recruitment to Horticulture Programmes and Careers'
- RHS 'Horticulture Matters' project
- CHES – Environmental Studies Higher Education Forum

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 continued to represent Landex as an Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning commissioner in his capacity as a Landex Quality Advisor.

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

Responses to Consultations

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

- Richard Review Consultation - Sept 2012
- CAVTL Call for Evidence - Excellence in Land-based Vocational Training and Education - Landex - Oct 2012.
- BIS consultation - Shaping a UK strategy for Agri-Tech - Nov 2012
- DfE & BIS - Traineeships Key Questions - Landex consultation response - Jan 2013
- BIS FEGuild Consultation - Feb 2013
- DEFRA consultation - Future of Farming Review - Mar 2013

- DfE - Consultation on 16-19 VQ Reform - May 2013
- The future of apprenticeships in England: next steps from the Richard Review - May 2013
- Independent Review by Sir Andrew Witty of Universities in their Local Communities: Enabling Economic Growth - May 2013
- Funding Reform for Apprenticeships in England - September 2013

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)
- An analysis of Success Rates in Landex member Colleges (In house)
- High Education Provision in Land based Colleges (RCU & John Landeryou)
- Case for the Retention of SfA Funding for Qualification with No or Low Numbers of Registrations (in house)
- The case for Funding Large Programmes in Agriculture Subjects (in house)
- Supplementary Evidence Submitted to the Ministerial Sub-committee on 'Large' Programmes.(in house)

Peer Review

The purpose of Landex review visits is to support member colleges with their own arrangements for development and improvement of the service they offer, to help all members work towards continuous improvement, and ultimately outstanding performance. It also provides an early warning of members that will potential experience financial difficulties or a poor Ofsted inspection outcome: thus allowing Landex to suggest or support early intervention measures.

Until 2012 visits focussed mainly on quality related issues, however during the last year the established peer review methodology was used to support members in other parts of their work.

The range of possible peer review activities that colleges were invited to engage with in addition to the traditional quality issues, focussing on FE and WBL, included:

- Quality issues, focussing on HE, possibly by observing quality processes within member colleges.
- Joint observations of teaching and learning between member colleges.
- Care standards and quality of residential accommodation and student services for residential learners.
- Support and service areas such as HR, MIS, IT, Registration, Finance.
- Commercial areas (including farm but possibly also other areas such as sport, horticulture).
- Estates and resource development.
- Governance or governor involvement in peer review of one or more areas above.

Those members that engaged in additional peer review activities during 2012/13 appear to have found them helpful and productive.

The Director of Quality Improvement, Graham Patrick, resigned his post with Landex in February 2013. Graham did an excellent job for Landex over the six years from its formation, but his resignation provided the opportunity to review the arrangements in place and the future needs of the membership.

For the remainder of the year, we were grateful to Alastair Taylor for planning and monitoring the Peer Review programme and leading the remaining review visits, and are pleased to congratulate him upon his appointment as Chief Executive of the Institution of Agricultural Engineers.

Lynn Hart will take up a full-time post as Quality & Qualifications Manager with effect from 1st January 2014 and will be supported by a team of self-employed Quality Advisers.

Continuous Professional Development

An increased range of CPD activities were delivered in response to demand from members, largely identified through peer review, and 14 events were attended by 259 delegates representing an average attendance of more than 18/event.

The Annual Landex Conference took place over 3 days and was attended by over 100 delegates representing member institutions. The conference attracted some excellent high profile speakers as well as focussing upon contributions by members on particular areas of good practice including:

- Physical Resource Developments (Bicton, Moulton & Sparsholt Colleges)
- Initiatives in Agricultural Education (Askham Bryan, Harper Adams University, Plumpton College)
- Preparation for a successful Ofsted Inspection under the New Inspection Framework (Capel Manor, Hartpury and Brooksby Colleges)
- Good practice in Agricultural Engineering and Mechanisation (Myerscough & Reaseheath Colleges)
- Blended and Distance Learning (Hartpury & Myerscough Colleges)

Land Based Colleges National Consortium (LBCNC)

The LBCNC has been in existence since 1995 and was recognised as important support for delivering the curriculum within land based colleges. However it had become apparent in recent years that the challenges facing the Consortium were two fold. The first was sustaining itself and the second was continuing to develop so that it remained relevant and of maximum value to member colleges.

Part of the challenge of sustaining the Consortium was finding individuals from member colleges who would be willing to take on the role of Directors.

As a consequence and in view of the commonality of membership between Landex and the Consortium, discussions took place around moving the Consortium under the "wing" of Landex as a recognised entity. The proposal was approved by the 2013 AGM of LBCNC and in July 2013 the voluntary liquidation of LBCNC Ltd. and the Asset Transfer Agreement to Landex were completed. The Consortium will be a distinct entity within Landex and membership will continue to be by subscription. Only the subscribing members will have access to the resources and materials, although this may be difficult to sustain once the materials are available on line. On-going subscriptions will provide access to new materials and updates; these should be more interactive and greater in number in the future. Current member colleges not associated with Landex will still remain members of LBCNC.

LBCNC also wholly owned a trading subsidiary LBCNC (Development and Consultancy) Ltd. The Directors of this company have passed a resolution that the company be 'struck off' and the financial resources of the company will now be transferred to Landex.

The LBCNC Steering Group comprising nominated members of subscribing Colleges will be convened during the autumn term. This group will become a committee of the Landex Board and the committee will initially be chaired by a member of the Landex Board.

Development and publishing work currently undertaken by Learners First Ltd. will continue under contract to Landex until the end of February to ensure continuity of service and to allow a full business plan to be developed.

Land Based Learning Ltd.

Following the successful acquisition of LBCNC, the Landex Board approved investment in a joint venture company with the University of Northampton (UoN) to develop a range of electronic learning materials, using the inherited paper based materials as an initial resource for further development. The advantages of working with UoN centre on a common desire to increase expertise and capacity in the design of interactive teaching materials. The fact that UoN does not have in-house land based expertise or a desire to develop it, removes any element of internal competition that would be associated with working with a single land based provider (Landex member).

The Joint Venture Company 'Land Based Learning Limited' was incorporated on 1st July 2013 and 2 directors from each partner organisation have been appointed.

Alec Turnbull has been appointed as Business Manager for the Company with effect from 1st November 2013. Alec is an experienced Project Development Manager and was most recently Project Manager to the Scottish Dairy Academy, based at SRUC Barony campus.

Awarding Body Partnership

In March 2013 the Landex Board approved, after discussions with all the major awarding bodies, the development of a strategic partnership with Pearson plc to develop a suite of land based qualifications that will:

- Improve the quality and industry relevance of land- based qualifications. To retain and develop industry confidence and maximise the benefit to students there is a need to recognise the importance of vocationally competent staff delivering courses in a location where they have the right facilities.
- Identify where Pearson can add value to Landex's services to its members - with enhancements to products and services and value for money - not just in Land-based areas but possibly across the curriculum.
- Provide a range of qualifications, which have credibility both with the University sector and with employers, maximising the progression and career opportunities for students.

In the future of Farming Review, published in July 2013, a Key recommendation was that:

'We consider that the development of highly rated and regarded vocational qualifications by the industry itself is essential, working closely with educational institutions and course designers (including LANTRA and LANDEX) to develop courses that are understood by the industry and are taken up by students'.

This recommendation highlighted the significance to the sector of the Board's decision to work in partnership with an awarding body.

A Joint Venture agreement between Landex and Pearson for the development has now been agreed. This incorporates a rebate scheme for growth in land based qualification registrations with Pearson/Edexcel against a 2012/13 baseline.

National Hedgelaying Society

A successful 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 was to fund the delivery of 9 Regional 'Train the Trainer' hedge laying courses over the next 3 years; the courses to be hosted by one Landex College in each Region.

The first stage was to recruit Hedge Laying Society members as instructors to deliver the Regional training. Eight members from across England and Wales were recruited to be trained as National Hedge Laying Society Instructors.

To ensure that the quality of instruction was appropriate and that common standards were applied across the Regions, an 'Instructional Techniques and Standard Setting' course was designed and delivered on a residential basis to all NHLS Instructors over 2 days in October 2012. As this activity was not included with the original proposal, the NHLS secured funds over and above the grant to help fund the programme.

The next stage was to plan in detail the 'Train the Trainer' programmes. This was completed between October 2012 and January 2013 and included detailed aims, objectives, syllabus, lesson plans and assessment schedules.

Three programmes were planned for delivery during 2013. These were to be hosted by Moulton College in Northamptonshire, Hartpury College in Gloucestershire and Plumpton College in Sussex.

The courses in Gloucestershire and Sussex were completed successfully, but the Northants course was deferred on health & safety and environmental grounds, due to the harsh winter conditions, until autumn/winter 2013.

Going Forward

Whilst 2012/13 was a very successful year for Landex, much of the work undertaken will only bear fruit in future years. The increased opportunities to influence the conduct of Ofsted inspections through the 'Action Learning Project'; the prospect of enhanced funding for land based programmes through extensive lobbying; the support work with members facing specific challenges; and the development of Land Based Learning Ltd. will all provide real benefits, but only if they receive wholehearted support from all our members.

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

Chris Moody
November 2013