

Chief Executive's Annual Report 2013/14

Whilst the environment in which Colleges operate remain challenging, there have been significant achievements during the year, both by individual members and by the sector collectively.

With a general election looming, whatever the outcome, the prospect of maintaining the level of public sector funding in real terms is not encouraging, and so much of our work during the year focussed upon ways in which members might exploit collaborative opportunities that would not be possible individually.

Landex Strategy and Structure 2014 - 2017

To reflect the changing environment a revised 'Vision' that all our members will be:

- *Recognised by their learners and stakeholders as providing high quality cost-effective land based (Agri-Food, Land and Animal Sciences) education, training and professional development.*
- *Valued by their communities and employers for their contribution to the sustainability of businesses, the well-being of society and the prosperity of rural economies.*

This vision now defines the territory within which Landex will operate and is underpinned by four strategic priorities, each with a set of aspirational targets.

- Quality, Staff Development and Student Experience
- Leadership and Management
- Governance and Reputational Management
- Funding – Protecting and Enhancing through Influencing.

The Landex Board will continue to be supported by a committee structure, which combines the two previous Higher Education committees and sees the establishment of a Learning Materials and Technology Committee to help inform the development priorities for Land Based Learning Ltd.

- Higher Education Committee chaired by David Llewellyn, Vice Chancellor of Harper Adams University.
- Further Education Curriculum and Quality Committee chaired by Tim Jackson, Principal Sparsholt College.
- Finance and Funding Committee chaired by Ann Turner, Principal of Myerscough College.
- Learning Materials and Technology Committee chaired by Des Lambert, Principal of Plumpton College.
- Membership Committee chaired by Tim Jackson, Chair of Landex.

We are grateful to the chairs and their convenors for the work that they undertake in managing the committees.

Landex Board

At the AGM in November 2013 Tim Jackson was elected as Chair to replace Paul Hannan who had held the post for three years. Andrew Counsell, David Henley and Andrew Tyley were re-elected as Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

Board membership during 2013/14 was:

National Directors

Mike Johnson, Director, Bedford College (Shuttleworth).
Des Lambert, Principal, Plumpton College.
Ann Turner, Principal, Myerscough College.
Andrew Counsell, Principal, Duchy College.
David Llewellyn, Vic-Chancellor, Harper Adams University.
Russell Marchant, Principal, Hartpury College.

Regional Directors

Yorkshire and North East: Liz Phillip, Principal, Askham Bryan College.
South West: David Henley, Principal, Bicton College.
London & South East: Paul Hannan, Principal, Hadlow College.
North West: Meredydd David, Principal, Reaseheath College.
West Midlands: Andrew Tyley, Principal, Walford & North Shropshire College.
East & East Midlands: Chris Ball, Principal, Brooksby Melton College.

Later in the year the Board decided that the officer structure which reflected that inherited from Napaeo in 2006, was both unwieldy and no longer appropriate. As a consequence the posts of secretary and treasurer were discontinued with effect from Autumn 2014 and Steve Handford, Director of Finance at Sparsholt College was appointed as both Finance Director and Company Secretary of Landex.

The decision was also taken to invite those full members of Landex from N. Ireland, Scotland and Wales to elect a director to represent their interests with effect from the 2014 AGM.

Landex Finance and Administration

In February 2014, the Landex finance function was moved from Hadlow College to Sparsholt College reflecting the change of chair. The human resources function remains with Hadlow College.

Although the annual accounts had not been finalised at the time of writing this report, the financial outturn for 2013/14 is expected to exceed the budgeted surplus and reflect both the additional services provided for members and the range of funded projects carried out for external agencies. The Company now holds substantial reserves to underpin the range of activities undertaken.

Landex Subscriptions

After detailed consideration by the Landex Board a revised subscription methodology for 2014/15 and beyond was approved. This was triggered in part by a new agreement with the Association of Colleges (AoC) on the way in which a discount for joint membership would be calculated, and by a desire to reflect more accurately the level of support offered to members.

Membership

During the year Abingdon & Witney College and CAFRE (Northern Ireland) transferred from affiliate/associate to full membership, and Craven College was welcomed into full membership. At the year-end Landex had 35 full, 1 affiliate and 4 associate members.

Landex Staffing

In January 2014 Landex welcomed Lynn Hart as Quality and Qualifications Manager. Lynn joins Landex from Moulton College having worked as Head of Teacher Training and development for 7 years.

Lynn was assisted in providing quality improvement activities to members by Landex Quality Advisors, Keith Boulnois, Mike Ridout, Pauline Williams and Robert Pheasant.

Land based Funding Campaign

Following the lengthy campaign by Landex and its member colleges, on 22nd July 2014 an increase in the specialist (G) weighting for 16-19 learners was announced by the newly appointed Minister of State, Nick Bowles.

“Today the government is also securing funding for specialist land-based courses, such as agriculture, land-based engineering and environmental conservation, who also receive funding through FPF. From 2016, we will increase the funding premium that recognises the extra cost of such provision delivered in a specialist setting (known as the programme weighting) from its current 60% premium to 75%.

This will ensure these providers will continue to be able to support their students when the present formula protection funding arrangements end in 2016, meaning vital industries such as agriculture continue to benefit from skilled young people in the future”.

In practice this means that core funding for a full-time land based programme delivered by a specialist land based provider will increase from £6,400 to £7,000/annum. (c.f. £5,200/annum when delivered by a non-specialist provider).

Whilst Landex has been successful over its lifetime in establishing with Government the concept of specialist land based provider status and an enhanced (G) weighting for land based programmes delivered by those providers, in the present fiscal climate it will remain important to ensure that the ILR evidence submitted by all members demonstrates that the premium funding is being applied appropriately by members.

Peer Review

Quality improvement is the cornerstone of Landex activity and sets it aside from all other membership organisations. The primary vehicle for improvement is the peer review process linked to improvement plans and focussed staff (CPD) development activities. Each member is offered 4 days of on-site officer support each year as part of their membership entitlement. Two of these days involve peer review by a senior member of staff from another member institution supported by a Landex Quality Adviser. The remaining 2 days may be selected from a menu of activities.

During 2013/14 all but 2 members completed the mandatory peer review exercise, the 2 remaining reviews being postponed due to staffing issues within the institutions. Following completion of the annual peer review visits a number of areas requiring improvement were identified and considered by the Landex FE Quality and Curriculum Committee. These included:

- The effective use and analysis of available internal and reference data.
- The effective identification of strengths and weaknesses from the available evidence.
- The planning and implementation of strategies to respond to external policy changes.
- The effective implementation of health and safety standard, and the adoption of safe working practices.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Specialist CPD events were complemented by a range of topical events born out of the major Education Training Foundation projects covering Initial Teacher Training and Equality Diversity and

Innovation with 13 events attended by 245 delegates representing an average attendance of 19 delegates.

A substantial review of CPD programme development was undertaken during the year to ensure that specialist events now include a wider range of contributions from external professionals who are experts in their fields, to complement examples of best practice from within the sector. The first tranche of events delivered during 2014/15 has proved to be popular with specialist staff who value the technical updating provided by external speakers as a means of advancing their own performance.

Partnership with GuildHE

Landex Colleges have continued to benefit from our annual agreement with GuildHE: the advice provided by Andy Westwood and his team is invaluable and members respond very positively to the access that this arrangement provides to GuildHE publications. The availability of meeting space within the GuildHE offices in Tavistock Square for Landex meetings is an additional benefit of the partnership.

We wish Andy well as he takes up new positions with Winchester University and the University of Manchester early in 2015.

Partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC)

Landex has an arrangement with the 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 the saving for those members is evident in the revised subscription methodology referred to above.

Meredydd David has replaced Tim Jackson in representing Landex members very effectively on the AoC Board and we are grateful for his 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'
- 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'
- National Improvement Partnership Board (NIPB) – 'Continuous Improvement in Post-16 Vocational education & Training'
- Federation of Sector Chief Officers (FoSCO) – 'Collaboration between sector membership bodies'

- LE-TEC – ‘Land based Engineering Partnership’
- AFCP - Agrifood Charities Partnership
- Defra - Future of Farming Group
- IoH Grow Initiative – ‘Recruitment to Horticulture Programmes and Careers’
- IoH - Training and Education Providers Group (HorTEPG)
- Defra/RHS – Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable and Employment Working Group
- CHES – Environmental Studies Higher Education Forum
- Leadership Conversation – Steering Group (ETF funded project)
- Further Education Trust for Leadership – Grants Panel
- Green Gown Awards – Grants Panel

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

Tim Jackson has represented Landex on the ‘SfA/EfA Advisory Forum’.

Meredydd David has represented Landex on the EfA ‘Post-School and FE Funding Group’.

Ann Turner has represented Landex on the SfA ‘Further Education Technical Advisory Group (FETAG)’

A wide range of principals and staff have represented Landex on other industry and education groups.

A National College for the Agri-Tech Industry

In early September 2014, Landex submitted, on behalf of land based employers an expression of interest in establishing a National College in line with the BIS prospectus issued in June 2014. The expression of interest was championed by Lord Don Curry, and supported in principle by the AgriSkills Forum, Agri-tech Forum Leadership Council, NFU, AHDB and DEFRA.

A panel was established by BIS to consider the applications and an initial list of successful applications was announced in December 2014. Although the Landex submission was not included, feedback on the Agri-tech application was positive and invited the submission of further detail.

Following development of the expression of interest, the Landex Board decided that the proposal should possibly be pursued regardless of whether the expression was eventually selected for support by BIS.

Land based Learning Ltd.

Landex has invested in Land based Learning Ltd. a joint venture company established between Landex and the University of Northampton (UoN): 50% of the company is owned collectively by Landex members and any resulting profits will be used for the benefit of members.

The company was formed to develop a range of interactive learning materials from both former Land based Colleges National Consortium (LBCNC) and new source materials that will support the delivery of specialist land based education and training. This will help members to adopt many of the proposals put forward by the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG) and in particular to develop blended and distance learning programmes.

Land based Learning’s objectives include:

- Developing interactive teaching and learning materials to support the delivery of specialist land based programmes
- Building upon the University of Northampton’s overseas contacts to develop new markets for land based materials.

The joint venture is overseen by a Board of Directors comprising representatives of Landex and UoN: a full-time Business Manager, Alec Turnbull, was appointed to develop the materials with effect from 1st November 2013.

House of Commons Reception

The event sponsored by Richard Benyon MP was attended by over 100 representatives of Colleges and their guests on 3rd March 2014.

All delegates were sent briefing papers in advance of the event, which appeared to be well received.

There was good attendance by MPs across the 2 hours of the reception including by the Skills and Enterprise Minister, Matthew Hancock.

The presentations by the Chair, and employers Paul Hovesen (Norfolk) and Simeon Morgan (Hampshire) were appropriately concise and relevant and reinforced the message well. Both employers had the opportunity to speak positively with the Minister.

Annual Conference

The annual Landex Conference took place between 7th and 9th May 2014 at Sedgebrook Hall, Northamptonshire and was particularly successful. The major sponsor was Pearson BTEC and the conference attracted a wide range of National speakers together with over 100 delegates from member colleges and universities, plus representatives of awarding bodies and other guests.

During 2014/15 the Conference will be held in London on 25th and 26th February to avoid the general election in May and the period of purdah.

Consultation Responses

During the year Landex responded to the following consultations on behalf of members:

- November 2013 – Ofsted: 'Better Inspection for All'
- May 2014 - BIS: The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Funding Reform Technical Consultation
- May 2014 – DfE: Proposed revisions to the framework for inspecting Initial Teacher Education
- June 2014 – Ofsted: Revisions to the framework for Inspecting of Residential Provision in Further Education Colleges
- August 2014 - BIS - Future Development of loans in Further Education consultation

Research

A range of research projects were undertaken on behalf of members:

- *“Post-graduate, Applied Research and Knowledge Exchange Activities in land based disciplines carried out by a range of Landex Member Colleges to complement that undertaken by and Specialist Land based Universities”.*
- *“Strategies to Support New Entrant Teachers and Teacher Development”* - Education and Training Foundation (ETF) funded Initial Teacher Education project
- *“An audit tool developed to assist providers in identifying areas for improvement”.* A joint Landex / Natspec Equality, Diversity and Innovation Fund project.

- “Ofsted Landex Action Learning Project” - an action learning project undertaken jointly by Ofsted and Landex to identify good practice in land-based studies and published by Ofsted.
- Landex / 157 Group “The road to employment: Learner voices”. A joint project to research and publish a series of learner profiles aimed at raising awareness of the success and achievements of vocational students. The project included profiles for 7 students from Landex Colleges and was launched at a House of Lords reception in November 2014.

Awarding body Partnership

Landex has built upon the awarding body engagement work, following the agreement with Pearson, and has engaged with all the main awarding bodies within the land based sector.

The best way in which Landex can work with awarding bodies to support the needs of members is currently under review, and may be influenced by discussions around a possible National College.

National Hedgelaying Society

Following the successful first year of course development and delivery, the National Hedgelaying Society’s train the trainer project was granted a second year of funding by the Prince of Wales’s ‘Business in the Community’ Trust.

The project is designed to train proficient hedgelayers to deliver a 3 day programme to provide Instructional Techniques to aspiring hedgelayers, ensuring sufficient instructors are available to perpetuate established hedgelaying techniques that establish boundaries and maintain the habitats created within hedgerows across the UK.

4 courses were successfully completed during 2013/14 hosted by Brooksby Melton College, Coleg Cambria, Northumberland College and Askham Bryan College.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Lynn, Paul, Helen, all the officers, directors, patrons and members of Landex for their support during another very demanding, but particularly productive year.

Chris Moody
Chief Executive
Landex
December 2014