

Chief Executive's Annual Report 2014/15

Despite a challenging fiscal climate, 2014/15 was a very successful year for Landex and for the majority of its members. An overall growth in student numbers at both further and higher education level, accompanied by a range of good Ofsted inspection and QAA higher education review outcomes reinforced the high quality of the programmes delivered by the sector.

As always during General Election years, there was considerable uncertainty about policy direction and funding priorities. The outcome was generally unexpected and the new government, without the moderating effect of coalition, heralded further challenges and downward pressures on funding.

Landex Strategic Direction 2014-17

In November 2014 a revised Vision and set of Strategic Priorities were approved to reflect the priorities determined by the membership.

Vision

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.

Strategic Priorities

Landex through its membership and resources will focus on improving the quality of service delivered by all members to that of the very best in the sector by focussing on the 4 strategic priority themes of:

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

Landex Board

The 2014 AGM usually held in November, was postponed until January 2015 when Tim Jackson was re-elected as Chair, and Andrew Counsell was re-elected as Vice-Chair.

Steve Handford, Director of Finance at Sparsholt College was appointed as both Finance Director and Company Secretary of Landex. However, following his retirement mid-way through the year, Stephen Horrobin his successor at Sparsholt succeeded him in the role.

National Directors

Tim Jackson, Principal, Sparsholt College

Mike Johnson, Director, Bedford College (Shuttleworth).

Des Lambert OBE, Principal, Plumpton College.

David Llewellyn, Vice-Chancellor, Harper Adams University.

Russell Marchant, Principal, Hartpury College.

Ann Turner, Principal, Myerscough College.

Regional Directors

Yorkshire and North East: Liz Phillip, Principal, Askham Bryan College.

South West: Andrew Counsell, Principal, Duchy College.

London & South East: Paul Hannan, Principal, Hadlow College.

North West: Meredydd David OBE, Principal, Reaseheath College.

West Midlands: Jackie Doodson, Principal, North Shropshire College.

East & East Midlands: David Henley, Principal, Easton & Otley College.

N.Ireland, Scotland and Wales

David Jones OBE, Principal, Coleg Cambria

Landex Committees

The Landex Board continued to be supported by a committee structure:

- 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 Finance and Administration

The Landex finance function continues to be administered by Sparsholt College, and the human resource function by Hadlow College.

As the organisation now undertakes less activity that is subject to VAT, the decision was taken that the trading subsidiary Landex Commercial and Education Services Ltd. should become dormant with effect from 31st December 2014. The shares that Landex CES held in the joint venture company, Land based Learning Ltd. will be transferred to Landex Ltd.

We expect the annual accounts for Landex Ltd. for the year ending 31st July 2015 to be approved at the November AGM: the financial outturn comfortably exceeded the projected budget surplus, and reflected both the additional services provided for members and the range of funded activity carried out for external organisations. The Company continues to maintain significant reserves to underpin the ever increasing range of activities undertaken.

Subscriptions

The revised subscription methodology adopted for 2014/15 reflected a new joint membership agreement with the Association of Colleges (AoC): this proved fit for purpose and consequently the Board approved its continued use together with a modest increase in net subscriptions for 2015/16.

Membership

During the year Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) transferred from associate to full membership and Bicton College merged with Cornwall (Duchy) College. At the year-end Landex had 36 full, 1 affiliate and 2 associate members.

Landex Staffing

The Quality Improvement team continues to be ably led by Quality and Qualifications Manager, Lynn Hart, whose teacher education background has proved of real benefit to members.

Lynn has been assisted by Associate Quality Advisors Mike Ridout, Pauline Williams and Robert Pheasant – and latterly by an additional full-time member of the team, Petra Williams who joined Landex from Brooksby Melton College in May.

Specialist Land based Funding

In July 2014 we reported that following a lengthy campaign by Landex and its member colleges, the newly appointed Minister of State, Nick Boles MP had announced an increase in the specialist (G) weighting for 16-19 learners from 1.6 to 1.75.

During the current year the EfA has confirmed that plans are in place to reflect this decision in funding allocations for 2016/17. It is to be hoped that this planned increase in the weighting is not adversely affected by the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Quality Improvement

Quality improvement is the cornerstone of Landex activity and sets it aside from all other membership organisations in the sector. Each member is offered 4 days of on-site officer support each year as part of their membership entitlement.

The primary vehicle for improvement continues to be the 2-day peer review process linked to quality improvement plans (QIPs): the review is carried out 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, which was extended during 2014/15 to reflect the increased emphasis upon activities such as English and maths.

During 2014/15 all full members completed the mandatory peer review exercise. Following completion of the annual review visits, a number of areas for further improvement were identified. These included:

- Improving the capture and recording of career destinations
- Improving initial assessment and outcomes in English and maths (functional skills and GCSE), including those for Work Based Learners
- Embedding the development of English and maths within vocational lessons
- Stretch and challenge – developing the enquiring minds of learners (Ofsted cite this as 'curious' in the 2015 CIF). Including increased differentiation in practical settings.
- Increasing learner autonomy in tutorials and the use of ILP's
- Increasing the use of blended learning and use of technology to enhance learning including strategies (flipped learning). Increasing use of VLEs.
- Planning and implementing strategies to respond to external policy changes.

A further 144 days of improvement activities were delivered, with strong demand for 'Stretch & Challenge' workshops, 'English and Maths Strategy' reviews, and 'Teaching Observation Validation' activities in particular.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

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 that had been

identified during peer review visits. Events delivered during 2014/15 were well attended and proved to be popular with specialist staff who valued the technical updating provided by external speakers as a means of advancing their own performance.

Eleven CPD activities were delivered with an average of 19 delegates per event. Staff from 34 member institutions attended these development activities, which was almost double the number of participating institutions during the previous year. Activities were designed specifically for staff working in the following area:

- Animal Management
- Residential Services
- Teaching and Learning Coaches
- Funding and Programme Management
- Work based Learning & apprenticeships
- Course Mangers (3 events)
- Blended Learning
- Quality Improvement
- Equestrian
- Farm Management & Agriculture
- Livestock production

Ofsted Inspections

In July 2015, the Ofsted grade profile for the English members indicated that 88% of institutions were judged to be good or better with 12% (4 institutions) 'requiring improvement'. No members were judged to be 'inadequate'. However, two of the four colleges which were graded overall as requiring improvement, had land based provision that was judged to be good. The two remaining colleges had new management teams in place and both institutions actively engaged with Landex to help drive up improvement, and particularly with respect to teaching, learning and assessment.

Table 3: the current grade profile as of 1st July

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
No. of Institutions	4	25	4	0

Estyn and ETI profile

At year end member colleges from Wales and Ireland were awaiting inspection by Estyn and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) respectively. However, both institutions are currently judged as good, or very good by their inspectorate processes of annual review.

Outcomes from Quality Assurance Agency

During 2014/15, six Landex members were reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and 100% met UK standards. Over the two years since the Higher Education Review (HER) was introduced, 11 commendations have been awarded to the 15 members visited, and only one institution has received a judgment of 'requires improvement'. Of the 16 commendations awarded to date, 11 of these were awarded to Landex members.

Overall the profile of judgements was considerably better than those awarded to the further education sector as a whole.

	Academic Standards	Quality of Learning Opportunities	Quality of Information	Enhancement of student learning opportunities
Commended	n/a	4	0	7
Met UK standards	15	9	15	8
Requires Improvement	0	1	0	1

Partnership with GuildHE

Landex members continue to benefit from an annual agreement with GuildHE: the advice provided by the GuildHE team was invaluable and members responded positively to the access that this arrangement provides to GuildHE publications. The availability of high quality meeting space for Landex meetings within the GuildHE offices in Tavistock Square is an additional benefit of the partnership.

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 represents Landex members very effectively on the AoC Board and we are grateful for his efforts on behalf of members.

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.

Sector Representation

Landex Directors and the Chief Executive established and maintained a regular dialogue and attendance at meetings with a wide range of organisations during the year to represent the interests of members, these included:

- AgriSkills Forum – Agriculture Industry Professional Development Schemes
- Agrifood Charities Partnership (AFCP) Board
- Defra - Future of Farming Group
- Defra – Apprenticeship Group
- Defra – Biosecurity Group
- Defra/RHS – Ornamental Horticulture Roundtable and Employment Working Group
- DfE - Ministerial Working Group on implementation of reforms to post-16 education and funding
- EfA - Post-16 School & FE Funding Group
- EfA/SfA/Lantra - 'G' weighting and specialist college status group
- EfA/SfA Advisory Forum
- Education and Skills Improvement Forum (ESIF)
- Environmental Studies Higher Education Forum (CHES)
- Farming and Countryside Education (FACE) - Countryside Education in Schools
- Farm Safety Partnership – 'College contributions to improving H&S in agriculture'

- Federation of Sector Chief Officers (FoSCO) – ‘Collaboration between sector membership bodies’
- Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) – Grants Panel
- Green Gown Awards – Grants Panel
- HSE - Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee (AIAC)
- IoH Grow Initiative – ‘Recruitment to Horticulture Programmes and Careers’
- IoH - Training and Education Providers Group (HorTEPG)
- Leadership Conversation – Steering Group (ETF funded project)
- LEAF – Linking Environment & Farming.
- LE-TEC – ‘Land based Engineering Partnership’
- Ofsted – Inspection issues related to specialist land based provision
- SfA - ‘Further Education Technical Advisory Group (FETAG)’
- Vetnet Council – progression and CPD for animal management & veterinary nursing.

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

Meredydd David represented Landex members on the ‘*AoC Board*’ and Des Lambert has represented Landex principals on the ‘*PPC Board*’.

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

We are grateful to them all for the work that they carry out on behalf of the sector.

A National College for the Agri-Tech Industry

The National Land based College was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 11th June 2015. An application for charitable status is currently with the Charity Commissioners.

Agreement was reached with BIS officials in July that the proposal for a National Land based College meets the criteria as laid down in the prospectus, and that the draft financial projections appear appropriate. Whether or not BIS endorsement (and funding) is finally achieved is likely to hinge upon the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. However, this is not regarded to be Mission Critical.

31 Specialist Land based Colleges and Universities pledged their support to the National College and provided some initial development funding. Development work will also be supported using funding provided by the Landex Board. Discussions with potential sponsors for specific aspects of the development work are currently taking place.

The guarantors (founder members) of the company are:

Abingdon & Witney College
 Askham Bryan College (York & Newton Rigg)
 Bedford College (Shuttleworth)
 Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA)
 Bridgwater College (Cannington)
 Capel Manor College
 Coleg Cambria (Llysfasi & Northop)
 College of West Anglia (Milton)
 Cornwall College (Bicton & Duchy)
 East Durham College (Houghall)
 Easton & Otley College
 Guildford College (Merrist Wood)
 Hadlow College
 Harper Adams University
 Hartpury College
 Hereford & Ludlow College (Holme Lacy)

Kingston Maurward College
Moulton College
Myerscough College
Northumberland College (Kirkley Hall)
Nottingham Trent University (Brackenhurst)
Plumpton College
Reaseheath College
Royal Agricultural University
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
Sparsholt College
University of Lincoln
Warwickshire College (Moreton Morrell & Pershore)
Wiltshire College (Lackham)

The 2 remaining Colleges that have committed will become guarantors once they have satisfied the final requirements.

A Development Board has been appointed to oversee the initial development of the College. It will have a finite lifetime and amongst other things will put in place arrangements for the appointment of a smaller and more permanent Board.

Members of the Development Board are:

Employer Directors

Sally Bendall
Joe Cottingham
Lord Don Curry (Chair)
Andrew Davies
David Gregory (Vice-chair)
Jane King
Richard Longthorp OBE
Charles Matts
Richard Ratcliffe
John Shropshire OBE
Ian Youdan

Provider Directors

Andrew Counsell - Duchy College
Meredydd David OBE – Reaseheath College
Stephen Davies – Moulton College
Tim Jackson – Sparsholt College (Vice-chair)
Russell Marchant – Hartpury College
Liz Philip – Askham Bryan College
Michael Robbins – Bridgwater College
Janet Swadling - SRUC
Ann Turner – Myerscough College
Stephen Waite – Writtle College

The first two meetings of the Development Board took place in July and September 2015.

An executive search practice, Harvey Nash, has been appointed to work with the Board to recruit a Chief Executive for the National College. Whilst I have been closely involved with the development of the National College on a voluntary basis thus far, that direct involvement will cease once the

Chief Executive takes up post, reducing the possibility of any potential conflict of interest between the two organisations.

The goal of developing a comprehensive set of fit for purpose qualifications that embrace both the current and future needs of the land based industries is being investigated in partnership with an existing Awarding Organisation. It is anticipated that the partner organisation will joint fund aspects of the development of the National College.

We are grateful to John Landeryou for the work that he undertook in helping to develop the National College expression of interest, and during subsequent discussions with BIS officials.

Land based Learning Ltd.

Landex invested in Land based Learning Ltd. a joint venture company established between Landex and the University of Northampton (UoN) in order to convert the materials inherited from LBCNC into interactive electronic format: 50% of the company is owned collectively by members and any resulting profits will be used for their benefit.

The conversion of printed materials into interactive electronic format is a fairly slow and potentially expensive exercise, nevertheless it is beginning to gather pace through the use of external agencies. The approach to the development of content is incremental with continuous improvement taking place as new materials are created and presented through Moodle.

Currently there are 120 live topic areas which can be accessed through the LTI Link covering agriculture, animal management and equine. All topic areas are referenced back to the originator of the base material and new contributors of material.

To provide additional functionality the topic areas are being made available as individual bite size pieces of learning. This allows staff to quickly assemble material to meet their specific course requirements. Content is also available as a download where there are issues with external broadband connectivity.

Annual Conference

The 2015 Annual Conference took place on 25th and 26th February 2015 at the Danubius Hotel, Regents Park. This was a change from the usual date in May to avoid a clash with the General Election and associated purdah.

The highly successful 2-day conference attracted a wide range of National speakers, including Agriculture Minister George Eustice MP and SfA/EfA Chief Executive Peter Lauener, together with around 80 delegates from member colleges and universities, plus guests.

The conference will revert to the Sedgebrook Hall venue on 04th and 05th May 2016, retaining the 2 rather than 3-day format.

Consultation Responses

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

- August 2014 - BIS – *'Future Development of loans in Further Education'*.
- December 2014 – Ofsted – *'Better Inspection for All'*.
- June 2015 – BIS – *'The dual-mandate for Adult Vocational Education'*.
- June 2015 – Ofqual - *'After the QCF'*.

Research

A range of research projects were completed during the year:

- *“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
- 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.

AgriFood Charities Partnership (AFCP)

The annual forum of the AFCP was held at the Farmers Club in November 2014 and was entitled *“New approaches for charities to support modern FE colleges”*.

Charities and their trustees are not always aware of the diverse range of activities that takes place within specialist land based colleges. Because higher education and research activity is not always associated with further education colleges, the work undertaken by colleges and their students tends to have a lower profile and securing funding is often difficult.

This forum sought to ensure that relevant charities were better informed about the applied research and knowledge transfer activity within Colleges and the opportunity this offers Charities to pump prime activities and support students and staff in a way that can have maximum benefit to individuals and industry for relatively modest investment.

Excellent presentations by Askham Bryan, Plumpton, Reaseheath and Sparsholt Colleges did much to promote the superb specialist resources available, the excellent work being carried out and the potential opportunities available.

National Hedgelaying Society

Following the successful first 2 years of course development and delivery, the National Hedgelaying Society's 'train the trainer' project was granted a third 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.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank Lynn, Paul, Helen, Petra, all the Officers, Directors, Patrons and members of Landex for their support during another challenging, but productive year.

Chris Moody
Chief Executive, Landex
October 2015