

Initial Call for Evidence & Contributions RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response. To find out how we handle your personal data and any other information submitted, please see our [**privacy policy**](#).

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

Colleges Scotland

Phone number

01786 892 100

Address

Argyll Court
Castle Business Park
Stirling

Postcode

FK9 4TY

Email

shona.struthers@collegesscotland.ac.uk

Infrastructure Commission *for* Scotland would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
 Do not publish response

Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for us to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
 No

Scottish Government Infrastructure Commission for Scotland

Introduction

Colleges Scotland is the membership body representing all 26 of Scotland's colleges based across 13 regions across the country. Sited in our local communities, colleges offer education, skills, and training in the right place and at the right time to support the needs of individuals, their communities, and the labour market. Colleges are the first-choice destination for school leavers and provide the second opportunity at education including for adult returners. Our response is set out below.

As an organisation, we wish to express our support for the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland and acknowledge the valuable role that the commission will play in ensuring that Scotland will be able to meet future economic growth and societal needs.

We welcome the publication of the remit and guiding principles, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to share our thoughts on how the commission can advise and inform the development of a long-term strategy for infrastructure in Scotland.

Key Points

1. Colleges and Inclusive Growth

The colleges have an important role to play in supporting inclusive growth and a low carbon economy, and colleges are currently lynchpins in both areas, through actively developing projects in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Therefore, it is important that colleges are a key component of conversations as the commission develops its work going forward.

We say this because as the national organisation for colleges in Scotland we believe that the sector has a vital role to play in both the development and delivery of infrastructure in Scotland. Across the sector our members are large users of infrastructure, in terms of the college learning estate and the wider digital infrastructure underpinning wider learning on digital and virtual platforms.

Of equal importance, colleges are a key delivery partner for the workforce who construct and maintain infrastructure across Scotland, delivering high-quality technical education courses to provide workers with the skills that are required for them to hold successful careers in infrastructure related roles.

Subsequently we feel that colleges need to be adequately involved in discussions moving forward, especially with regards to the possible creation of a Scottish National Infrastructure Company. If such a body was created in order to oversee the delivery of infrastructure in Scotland, then we believe it would be highly beneficial for both the industrial and educational sectors for there to be college representation, given the proximity of colleges to infrastructure-related activity, and to ensure that college representatives could bring their skills and experience to direct the work of any potential national body.

In relation to representation, in line with our comments below, we believe that the commission could be strengthened by incorporating greater digital and energy representation, which could make the

wider conversation more inclusive of connectivity and the need for greater energy efficiency in doing so.

2. Current Infrastructure

Whilst the college sector has received considerable capital investment over recent years, the recent Estates conditions survey commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) identified £360 million over five years was required to bring all current college buildings simply up to an acceptable standard.

The survey identified approximately £77 million of high priority items, which need to be addressed within the next two years. Taking this into account, Colleges Scotland is seeking the funding (£38.5 million) to start to address the high priority items in 2019/20. In addition to this, the SFC has calculated a requirement for life cycle maintenance funding of £22 million per annum.

Going forward, given the key role colleges play in providing the skilled workforce and in driving inclusive economic growth, it is vital that a sustainable framework of capital investment for future needs for the sector is identified.

3. Digital and Connectivity

From our perspective there is a wider question running throughout the document, concerning where the wider digital and connectivity agenda fits within the remit of this commission. Given the significance placed upon digital connectivity in Scotland, and the role this can play in supporting economic opportunities moving forward, we would expect greater emphasis to be paid to this subject within the paper.

Whilst we agree with the Scottish Government's definition of infrastructure as provided in the commission remit, we would recommend that the digital and connectivity agenda is given greater consideration in order to ensure that the commission adopts a more balanced approach which incorporates both physical and digital infrastructure considerations on a comparable level.

We say this because we know that digital and connectivity is about more than the ready movement of people, goods and services, and instead should be seen as a key driver which possesses the potential to reshape thinking with regards to physical infrastructure. Moving forward, the digital and connectivity agenda should incorporate a focus on the purpose of physical infrastructure and the delivery of services, such as the upgrading and replacement of transport networks, and physical aspects of digital infrastructure.

4. 30-Year Time Horizon

We welcome the intention to develop a 30-year time horizon, as we believe we need to avoid short-term decision making in this context, and therefore would want to see the focus on longer-term decision making. Looking more closely at the evaluation and assessment of infrastructure in Scotland, to give one example, we believe that there is a need for a longer-term view of infrastructure requirements.

As part of this proposed time horizon we would suggest that there needs to be a greater focus on the wider partnerships that could be developed across learning estates, and in making use of the most appropriate physical and digital infrastructure links that are available, in both creating learning estates and developing the capacity of existing estates.

5. Regional Needs

We welcome the development of a national approach to infrastructure; however, we would recommend that any national approach should not be overly restrictive. Any future approach should

allow for adaption to local and regional needs, and to enable the development of partnership working to meet such need.

6. Conclusion

As the Infrastructure Commission receives responses with which to inform its initial evidence gathering and analysis we would hope that the knowledge and thinking of the college sector, a sector which uses, plans, manages, maintains, finances and delivers both physical and digital infrastructure across Scotland, is taken into consideration in shaping the work of the commission moving forward.

Given the unique role colleges play in developing both physical and digital infrastructure, and the wider infrastructure workforce, we would welcome the opportunity to share this practical experience with the commission.

At this stage, our specific requests would be:

- Representation for the college sector on the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland, and on the Scottish National Infrastructure Company when this is established.
- Greater representation of digital infrastructure and energy focused organisations on the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland.
- Acknowledgement from the commission that there is a role for partnership working across key infrastructure stakeholders, and in utilising existing physical and digital infrastructure links.
- An assurance that a future national approach to infrastructure is responsive to local and regional needs, and allows for partnership working that can meet those needs.

Colleges Scotland
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