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Convener
Education, Children and Young People Committee
Scottish Parliament
By email: ECYP.committee@parliament.scot

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Dear Convener

UHI Colleges Merger

The Scottish Government's consultation into the proposed merger of UHI colleges: West Highland College, North Highland College and Lews Castle College will go public today and will last for 10 weeks. <https://consult.gov.scot/lifelong-learning-and-skills/rural-and-islands-college-merger-proposal>

The proposal which is being consulted on is for the three colleges to merge, to form one single, incorporated college, by transferring the assets and liabilities of West Highland College and Lews Castle College to North Highland College. The boards of the existing colleges have proposed that the name of the new college is 'UHI West, North and Hebrides' and this proposed name also forms part of the consultation.

The merging parties have undertaken two consultations, as part of their merger plans, and have assured the Scottish Government that these views have been reflected in the proposal put forward to Ministers.

The three colleges which propose to merge believe that this will allow staff, students, communities and stakeholders to be better supported, by collectively addressing many of their shared challenges; which include student recruitment, funding, a declining youth demographic, overlapping curriculums, the need for estate investment and lack of capacity to respond to regional opportunities.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



This is a proposal that has been developed by the three colleges. The Scottish Government has not taken a view on the merits of it, and in coming to any conclusion I will carefully consider the responses received to this consultation before determining whether to grant permission for the merger to proceed. I will keep the committee informed of my decision and the reasons for the decision that I make.



JAMIE HEPBURN

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