

## **UHI Evaluation report – ICPF capital project.**

### **1 Overall aim of the capital project:**

The aim of the project as defined at the start of the programme was to deliver a facility on the new Beechwood (now Inverness) Campus which would significantly expand and enhance research and education activities in Inverness, as part of the overall purpose of the programme to achieve university status. Several models to achieve this purpose on the campus were explored during the development and delivery of the programme.

The ICPF project, as finally agreed and delivered, fully achieved this ambition. It also delivered a collaborative building model on the campus which is unique in Scotland, and which will add depth and value to the on-going development of the university.

The ERDF budget released £4m of co-investments, which delivered a facility housing a wide range of new academic teams and activities, all of which strengthened the university portfolio in education and research.

### **2 Lessons learned**

This evaluation focuses on the development, delivery and benefits realisation phases. These top level comments are designed to capture the larger issues, which are covered in detail in the paperwork. It should be read in conjunction with the lessons learned commentaries from the individual work-stream leaders.

#### **2.1 Development phase**

Creating several new teams and the task of designing and funding a new facility to accommodate them was done in parallel. This required detailed work with the University Court to assess and gain approval for the capital project, for the co-location with HIE, and for the chosen academic activity in the building. This had a very positive effect on the partnership's collective strategy setting and decision making.

The development phase of this model of the capital project had a relatively late commencement within the programming period. The time available for initial discussions through the concept phase to producing detailed funded plans, relative to the time available to the end of the ERDF spending window, made the contractor procurement process more compressed than would be expected under normal circumstances.

The process relied on a very close partnership between UHI, HIE, and the Managing Authority, to ensure that the spending window was as long as was needed. This close

partnership made the project possible and sets the minimum benchmark for any future partnership projects. These lessons are already influencing new collaborative capital projects on the campus.

## **2.2 Governance**

Project governance used a Prince 2 approach, with governance detached from project management, which worked well.

The delivery of the new revenue projects in parallel with a complex partnership based capital project, necessitated close working links between different governance mechanisms within UHI itself. This included connecting with the college capital project, the campus infrastructure project, the UHI strategic planning for growth and financial sustainability, the SDB programme board etc. Externally the governance focused on the partnership agreement board with HIE, and the Inverness Campus Forum.

The project owner having responsibility for the development phase including business planning for the revenue activities, and then stepping back to a governance role with others leading on operational implementation worked well. In future projects this should start as early as possible but should also include more of a shadowing period for the project manager. This would allow the project manager to take full control of operational delivery with less initial confusion of roles.

## **2.3 Management of delivery**

Professional, dedicated project management is important for a project of this complexity, despite this being a fairly small capital project.

The project owner – project director – project manager triumvirate worked well, with each bringing their own contribution to the delivery process.

The role of the EU technical specialists in helping to support the other technical specialists in issues like procurement and claims was invaluable.

## **2.4 Procurement**

Undoubtedly this is the crux of the learning, as captured in the main commentary in the feedback pro-formae. Each theme of procurement had its own unique set of risks and issues. The key lesson learned was that the central resource needed was underestimated, and this should be noted for future projects.

## 2.5 Benefits realisation

This is the critical phase of the project as we deliver the new activities in a way which is commensurate with main aims of university status.

This is a live and developing process for this still very new facility, and naturally is focused on maximising the benefits of firstly the new revenue activities in the building and secondly from the collaborative aspects of the building.

The revenue activities are thematically exactly as planned. However enormous structural change in key markets have changed the current mix and the pace at which the different activities are developing. A successful campaign of grant proposals means that we have started extensive recruitments for the new staff who will occupy some of these areas.

The main outputs from the activities in the building are summarised below.

### Research

Plans included new research in pedagogy, rural and digital health, fish genetics, offshore engineering, and low carbon policy. These are now underway, and the following gives a short commentary on how the benefits of these teams is being delivered and supported by the facility.

UHI's core learning and teaching is based on blended learning taking education out to our many communities, rather than the traditional centralised campus approach. Excellence in pedagogy underpins this whole approach to learning and teaching, and UHI now has a team and facility which will keep us at the leading edge of this approach to education.

The rural and digital health research activity has now doubled in size relative to the original utilisation plan, with the facility helping us to attract public sector investment in research to support health care delivery across the region. This is a hugely positive benefit to which the building has contributed, and which continues to underpin our partnership with the NHS on the campus and beyond. A very tangible benefit to which the building has contributed is the emerging plans for UHI to develop a new shared building with the proposed NHH elective care centre, focusing on commercialisation of our joint life science research, funded by Westminster.

### Education

One of the key activities in the building is postgraduate level education for laboratory skills for the life sciences industries and in surveying (initially for offshore).

The laboratory skills course is ready to launch despite the closure of some key local users, with a system of fee waivers in place to ensure good initial take up. The area is entitled the

Life science education and research facility (LSERF) and we are making use of the space to build up the planned academic research activities.

The offshore industry has had the worst downturn in its history, and training budgets have been practically terminated for the present. The space for this team was developed to deliver the ESF funded Masters course. However each area also had a range of secondary uses, which would form useful extensions to the teaching itself, and provide a source of knowledge exchange, such as contract research and CPD. These secondary activities are commencing. We have launched a small part of the Masters course as an introductory on-line CPD course in surveying science, and we are receiving enquiries for the first summer school intake for the second phase. We are also finalising the release of the next module for our first formal PGT awards. In addition we are also developing the other markets we planned to support with the facility, such as the offshore renewables sector. However the industry repeatedly asks us to stick to our plans for the master course, which they are confident will be required when the oil price picks up.

STEM promotion to schools STEM is proceeding, with support from a wide range of local and national stakeholders. In addition, the facility has underpinned a successful funding bid to the Inverness City region deal with funds from Scottish Government to expand the functionality of the STEMHUB (formerly termed the Science Academy)

## **Summary**

It can be seen above that the ICPF capital project has, amongst other things, helped to establish UHI as the main higher education presence on the campus, and opened up a wide range of fruitful collaborations with HIE, NHS and other boards, SRUC, other universities, Highland Council and other local authorities.

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