

Committee	Finance and General Purposes Committee		
Agenda Item	6		
Date paper prepared	13/03/2023	Date of committee meeting	22/03/2023
Subject	Whalsay Learning Centre – proposal for ongoing support		
Author	Andrew Anderson		
Action requested	For discussion and approval		
Purpose of the paper	To set out a proposal for continued provision at the Whalsay Learning Centre.		
Brief summary of the paper	<p>Following the retiral of the lecturer at the Whalsay Learning Centre a review of the provision has been carried out including a survey and discussions with the community. The existing provision has had very little take up over the last few years, probably due to COVID. However, this is a timely point to review and refresh the provision with a view to enhancing the provision in the community and setting it on a sustainable footing. Three options are discussed and:</p> <p>F&GP sub-committee are invited to approve option 2, the appointment of an additional lecturer for 7-10 hours per week for a trial period of one year up until June 2024 whilst making use of existing lecturing resources to cover the remaining required hours. This would effectively be a saving of £16,875 per annum salary costs and £3375 O/H costs.</p>		
Consultation	As outlined in the paper several engagements with the community have been carried. The outcome of the survey was reviewed at LTR and SMG.		
Resource implications	If the recommended option 2 is approved this will result in a reduction of the previous resource allocated to the Centre. We are recommending this is a one year trial to provide a review point regarding sustainability next year.		

Risk implications	The community are very keen to maintain the centre on the Island so there is a reputational risk if we elect to 'do nothing' to move things forward.
Link with strategy	The provision of the centre links to a number of elements of our strategy linked to inclusivity and work with communities. It also links to our commitment to working with islands with small populations. Continued provision of learning and qualifications at the learning centre would support UHI Shetland to meet its charitable aims and objectives, in particular objectives 1,2,5,6 and 7.
<u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</u>	The centre provides provision that is particularly of help to those unable to travel due to caring commitments so strongly contributes to our commitment to EDI
Island Community Impact	Positive impact on the Island of Whalsay
Paper status	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Open – The paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted – The paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential - The paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. [Please note papers may still be subject to Freedom of Information requests – see below].
<u>Freedom of information</u>	Open If closed/ withheld, select date this will become 'open': Enter a date.

Whalsay Learning Centre - Background

The Whalsay Learning Centre was the first learning centre to be introduced in Shetland, in 2002. It became established relatively quickly and has provided learning opportunities and enabled the local population to gain knowledge, skills, confidence and qualifications for the past 20 years. The learning centre has been located in a number of different settings including the community room at the leisure centre and its current location, the secondary library at the Whalsay school in Symbister.

Interim Cover Arrangements

Following the retiral in October 2022, of a long-standing learning centre lecturer, interim arrangements have been put in place, that provide some cover for the Whalsay Learning Centre. They provide availability of classes on Mondays from 1:30 - 5pm and Tuesdays from 1:30 - 8:30pm.

Current Learning and Qualifications Being Offered

Current learning and qualification opportunities are:

Course / Class / Support	SCQF level	Number of SCQF credits
PDA's in IT; Accounting; Book-keeping; Office Administration	7	4
SAGE Accounting / Payroll Software	7	1
Support for IT, Job Seeking and Learning	3-7	0.5
Communication / Numeracy / ICT units	3-6	1 (per unit)
Maths National 4	4	4
Employability related qualifications	3-5	1 (per unit)
ICDL (International Computer Driving Licence)	5-6	7
iPads / Tablets / Digital Media	3-4	0.5
Support for UHI students studying online FE/HE courses	5-11	1

Whalsay Demographics and Employment

Whalsay, with a population of around 1060¹ and around 410+ households² is an island to the east of mainland Shetland. Its primary industry is fishing³, and it is home to many large trawlers. It is not as fertile as other islands, so crofting is not a major industry⁴.

Other main employers in the island are the SIC (Fernlea care centre, Whalsay JHS and the ferries); and the leisure centre. There are a substantial number of people employed in support roles in the schools setting (cooks, cleaners, supervisory, learning support and early years). People employed in the early years and adult care settings have used the learning centre to support progression towards achieving SVQ's and SSSC registration. Support has also been provided to ferry crews in relation to numeracy skills to gain tickets.

¹ [Shetland in Statistics 2017](#) pg 12

² [Shetland in Statistics 2017](#) pg 19

³ [Whalsay.pdf \(shetland-heritage.co.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Shetland island guide to Whalsay | NorthLink Ferries](#)

Whalsay Learner Survey

UHI Shetland undertook a learning survey in the island of Whalsay. The purpose of the survey was to gather opinions on the provision of learning in Whalsay. The learning centre has seen fewer student numbers over the past 3 years, and it is important to understand what the needs are of the Whalsay population. There were 155 surveys completed and returned, with 118 of these being online respondents. The majority of respondents were over 25 with a fairly even split between those who had used the centre with those that had not.

Summary Findings from Learner Survey

- 91% of respondents indicated they would consider undertaking courses / qualifications at the Whalsay learning centre.
- 77% of respondents stated they would not consider travelling to either Lerwick or Scalloway to attend a course.
- 93% of respondents stated they would prefer either solely in person delivery or some in person delivery.
- It has been over 3 years since a significant majority of those who completed the survey, have attended a course at the Whalsay learning centre
- Time pressures is the most common reason for not attending a course at the learning centre. However, it is worth highlighting that the next most common reason for not undertaking learning was the respondents did not know what was on offer.
- Over half of the respondents were from the 26-50 age bracket

It is clear, that the learner survey results strongly indicate there is potential ongoing demand for courses being delivered in Whalsay. There are clear indications that “in person” delivery, supported by online delivery where appropriate, would be the way forward. The survey results also offer distinct possibilities for the learning centre in the future, particularly given the large number of respondents who were not aware of the courses / qualifications on offer at the moment.

Learning / Qualifications Identified in the survey

Respondents identified a very wide, diverse range of courses and learning that they would like to see being offered. With confirmation that some of the existing provision was popular.

It is interesting that there is a high percentage of learning needs identified are currently provided by the learning centre, but the current student numbers are relatively low. It is also worth noting that the “in person” learning preferences coupled with a mixture of “in person” and online learning is desirable.

Meeting with Local Employers and Community Representatives

The Depute Principal, Tertiary and Head of Section for Community Learning and Business met with local employers and community representatives on Monday 13th February in Whalsay. At this meeting, there was a good discussion on the provision that has been available up until now and the requirement for learning centre provision in the future. Issues raised were:

- 100 hours of new care staff at the Fernlea Care Centre. They need to obtain their SVQ H&SC level 2 to enable registration with SSSC. Without appropriate support real risk of care workers leaving and SIC having to employ agency staff – very costly to Shetland as a whole
- SDS adviser stated, “given the employment opportunities within the isle are limited, folk often need to pick up initial qualifications and core skills in order to apply for the next level of learning or work opportunities”.
- Employability - support with completing relevant forms, obtaining relevant qualifications etc
- Ensuring the accessibility of courses / qualifications locally on a face-to-face basis and providing academic support
- Gateway to learning / building the confidence and capacity of the local population
- Having learning / qualification opportunities locally helps to address fuel poverty problems
- Lack of connectivity / broadband width in Whalsay outwith Symbister is an issue that proves a barrier to online learning
- Lack of appropriate access to IT facilities
- Number of local employers require staff to do ilearn modules / health and safety / first aid type training
- Customer care and managing challenging behaviour courses are possibilities for the Leisure Centre
- Availability of the Learning Centre for peer learning / support
- It was discussed that there are folk moving to Whalsay who need to improve their English
- There are frequent restrictions on travel to/from the island, due to the weather
- There are many wider community benefits of the learning centre, such as reducing social isolation and improving mental health and well-being

Further to this meeting and the learning centre lecturer’s meetings with local employers and groups, the following 3 options have been further developed. All are based on 20% O/H costs

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Option 1 - Employ lecturer for 17.5 hours / week			
Option 2 - Employ lecturer for 7-10 hours per week			
Option 3 - Employ facilitator for 7-10 hours per week			
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
FE Credit Income	13200	16000	4800
HE Income	2400	2400	2400
Course Fees	2576	3465	2095
Sub Total	18176	21865	9295
Staff Costs	39375	15750	10920
Venue Hire	0	0	0
Travel / Subsistence	0	0	0
O/H Costs @ 20%	7875	3150	2184
Sub Total	47250	18900	13104
Difference	-29074	2965	-3809

Option 1

- Continuing with existing provision of a dedicated learning centre lecturer for 17.5 hours per week. Calculations are based on employing an additional lecturer for this number of hours

- Could result in a shortfall of up to £30,000 per annum, taking into account any additional income from credits / course fees and depending on the uptake of short course delivery

Option 2

- Extend provision to 2 evenings per week, as more evening provision was identified as preferable, in the learner survey and would increase credit income
- Continue to employ the existing lecturer for the daytime provision and an additional lecturer for the evening provision.
- It is worth noting that 79% of learning / qualifications identified in the survey are currently available from the learning centre and UHI course offerings
- The total additional costs would be £15750 plus £3150 O/H costs = £18900 per annum. This is based on an additional 7 hours per week for 40 weeks provision
- Income projected to be between £18176 and £27065

Option 3

- Extend provision to 2 evenings per week, as more evening provision was identified as preferable, in the learner survey
- Continue to employ the existing lecturer for the daytime provision and employ a facilitator type post for the evening provision
- By employing a facilitator type post, the employment costs would be £10920 plus £2184 O/H costs = £13104 per annum. This is a difference of £5796
- However, a facilitator would not be able to plan, deliver and assess SQA / BCS qualifications, due to GTCS registration requirements and national agreements. The resultant reduction in credit income would be up to £11,200 per year and course fees up to £1370 per year, as per the details below:

Course	Number of credits	Course Fees (£)
Workplace Core skills	4	-
Generic Core Skills	3	189
ICDL	4	252
Sage / PDA's	4	344
SCQF approved credit rated courses	13	585
Total	28	1370

Recommendation

Based on the details for these three options then senior management's recommendation would be to proceed with option 2. To protect against the risk of future student numbers not achieving the forecasted numbers, we would recommend recruiting to a temporary contract of 7-10 hours per week to enable evening delivery of courses and qualifications. Existing staff resources can be utilised to provide cover for the daytime delivery hours required, and, depending on timetable commitments for 2023-24, may be available going forward.

F&GP sub-committee are invited to approve option 2, the appointment of an additional lecturer for 7-10 hours per week for a trial period of one year up until June 2024 whilst making use of existing lecturing resources to cover the remaining required hours. This would effectively be a saving of £16,875 per annum salary costs and £3375 O/H costs.

The aim will be for the learning centre to be closer to “breakeven”:

FE Credit Income	16000
HE Income	2400
Course Fees	3465
Sub Total	21865
Staff Costs	28750
Venue Hire	0
Travel / Subsistence	0
O/H Costs @ 20%	5750
Sub Total	34500
Difference	-12635

Future Opportunities to be followed up:

- Partnership working with Fernlea Care Centre to fully establish support required and availability of learning centre
- Providing entry level qualifications for the fishing / maritime industries – this could well result in investment in the learning centre from these industry areas
- Consideration to be given to offering further short courses such as Managing Challenging Behaviours and Autism Awareness
- Staff member to undertake the SQA Personal Licence Holder qualification to enable them to deliver the legally required 2 hour bar person training course to a range of local employers and groups
- Investigate the possibility of a “How to make a website” course
- Look to ensure learning centre facilities are available as widely as possible
- Establish what learning support required for Employability Pathway
- Promote qualifications and learning available at the learning centre, including blended learning options
- Recognise that the working environment has changed post COVID and we should look to ensure we meet potential untapped opportunities, such as developing people’s skills and qualifications which would enable them to work remotely. This would provide employment opportunities for the local community.

Further Explore Funding Options

Funding possibilities tend to be based on project-based work rather than covering existing costs. The CLDO for the Whalsay area has provided information on possible funding available, from a number of different sources. They are as follows:

- Shetland Community Benefit Fund
- Coastal Communities
- Shared prosperity Fund
- Garfield Weston Foundation

- Shetland Islands Council

Short Course Provision

In addition, there were several short course needs identified in the survey and subsequent community meetings. Therefore, initially, we will seek to offer the following courses over the coming months:

- Customer Care
- Bar person training
- First Aid
- Food Hygiene

Learning Centres

This process has been a good model for our review of other learning centres – engaging with the local community and enhancing our provision to ensure maximal use. Further detail regarding our plans related to other learning centres will be provided to the next LTR committee.