

**Press Release**

**For immediate use**

### **Scotland's colleges are ready for business**

The support, provided by colleges to businesses across Scotland, was recognised at the launch of an initiative to highlight the sector's very positive impact on the national economy.

The launch held today (Monday, 22 March) brought together Scotland's leading business and skills organisations to mark the start of the week-long campaign.

In its second year, the Scotland's Colleges Mean Business campaign, is supported by the Scottish Funding Council and Scotland's Colleges – the organisation which supports Scotland's 43 colleges – and is being backed by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, Business Gateway, CBI Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the business support available from colleges through highlighting the many companies which have seen real benefit from their work with their local college.

Throughout the week, colleges will host campus events designed to engage with the business community, promoting locally available expertise, experience and facilities.

The campaign also features a 'Business to College Awards' on Wednesday, 24 March, recognising outstanding partnership working between businesses and colleges, and a Big Business Breakfast on Friday, 26 March, involving colleges throughout Scotland.

Renfrew-based company Teknek was chosen to host the launch in recognition of its commitment to staff skills training and its work with Cardonald College. The company, which is the global leader in contact cleaning equipment for a number of manufacturing sectors, nominated the College in the Impact category at last year's Scotland's Colleges 'Business to College Awards'. The College won the award for the difference made to business performance through skills training to Teknek's service engineers.

In recognition of the college knowledge transfer and employer engagement agendas, Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, said: "Our colleges have a crucial role to play in helping Scotland recover from the current economic downturn. The country's future economic prosperity will be achieved not just by the capacity of our people, but by the excellence and professionalism of our colleges in helping Scots to reach their potential.

"We always listen closely to what colleges tell us before we take policy and spending decisions. We know - and businesses know - that colleges have their finger firmly on the economic pulse and understand completely the needs of both businesses and individuals.

"This campaign offers companies throughout Scotland the chance to develop their business support services and take advantage of the extensive expertise our colleges have to offer. I would encourage all businesses to take full advantage of what our colleges have to offer."

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) has provided funding of £14 million for colleges to further develop their knowledge exchange and support services to businesses as part of a three-year development programme running from August 2007 until July 2010.

Mark Batho, Chief Executive of SFC, is very supportive of the Scotland's Colleges Mean Business campaign. He said: "Across Scotland we have 43 colleges that are full of talented individuals who not only help students to gain skills and knowledge for the workplace, but also offer a range of services including consultancy support and advice that businesses can tap into.

"Colleges are highly responsive to the needs of their communities. I would encourage businesses to get in touch with their local college if they have a problem they need solving, whether that is advice on business strategies, how to go about diversifying their products or services, or on how to address their training needs."

Stephen Mitchell, Teknek Managing Director, said: "We are very pleased to support this initiative. Teknek has a strong commitment to skills and training development both internally and to the wider community. The Scottish colleges do an excellent job in transferring the type of skills which make enterprises more successful."

Joe Mooney, Chair of Scotland's Colleges Knowledge Action Group and Principal, Reid Kerr College, said: "A recent independent survey confirmed that there are significant benefits for businesses engaging with colleges in terms of increased turnover, employment and productivity.

“Companies which provided detailed turnover figures for the survey showed an increase of £38.8 million between 2006 and 2008. In addition, over 800 jobs were created or safeguarded over the same period by 21 organisations alone. Both results were attributed as a direct result of working with colleges.”

Ends

#### **Notes to editors**

#### **Photo captions:**

The second **Business to College Awards** will be held at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh on Wednesday, 24 March 2010. The eight award categories are: Impact (public sector), Impact (private sector), Innovation, Business Start-Up, Relationship, Workforce Development (companies with less than 50 employees) Workforce Development (companies with more than 50 employees) and College of the Year.

**The Scotland’s Colleges Mean Business** marketing campaign was launched in March 2009. It aims to make business more aware of the support services that exist from colleges which can help achieve a step change in performance and profit. [www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com](http://www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com)

Independent research published in November 2007 showed that as a network, colleges in Scotland are in regular contact with more than 10,000 businesses and are providing support services worth almost £40million.

**The Scottish Funding Council** is responsible for allocating £1.7 billion of public funds each year to colleges and universities in support of Scottish Government priorities. The Council’s funding contributes towards the costs of learning and teaching, skills development, research, innovation and other costs such as staff, buildings and equipment in Scotland’s 20 universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) and 43 further education (FE) colleges. The £14 million funding SFC provided for knowledge transfer and developing employer engagement was announced in circular [SFC/30/2007](#).