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Joint press release: Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Inverness College UHI, Scottish Funding Council

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For immediate release

New college campus for Inverness gets underway

Work to develop a brand new campus for Inverness College UHI in the Scottish Highlands got underway in earnest yesterday (Monday) at an inaugural meeting between its three key stakeholders.

Inverness College UHI chair Mo Shepherd met with Mark Batho, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) Chair, William Roe, and Director of Regional Competitiveness, Alex Paterson. HIE is developing the Inverness Campus site on which the new College will stand.

The College is scheduled to open in 2014 providing a full range of further and higher education courses. It will share the prestigious location on the eastern edge of the city with new northern headquarters for the Scottish Agricultural College, Phase IV of the Centre of Health Science, a social enterprise hotel and top class sporting facilities.

The College board is now moving to finalise the design of the building, expected to cost around £75 million, and is preparing a full business case to submit to SFC. If approved building work is planned to get underway in 2012.

Following the meeting which confirmed the partners' objectives HIE chair William Roe said: "The economic benefit that all 13 campuses of UHI - the prospective university for the Highlands and Islands - can bring to the region should not be underestimated. At the heart of these devolved learning centres we will have a state-of-the-art college at which students can mix and gain experience from other institutions involved in high level research and with life science companies which can offer educational and career opportunities."

"We are committed to working in close partnership with SFC and Inverness College UHI to deliver a campus capable of attracting ambitious students from around the world."

Currently around 7,000 further education students study at Inverness College with a further 1,700 studying full or part-time for high education qualifications.

Mo Shepherd, Chair of Inverness College UHI said: "This year the College is celebrating its 50th anniversary and so it is fitting that we are planning a new college able to deliver a 21st century curriculum. We have received supportive overtures from MSPs, Highland Council and HIE. Now is the time for these stakeholders to take action to ensure that the infrastructure and transport links can be delivered to meet our funding deadlines. We have an exciting time ahead of us and everyone at Inverness College UHI is looking forward to moving to an iconic building that is the pride of the Highlands."

Mark Batho, Chief Executive of SFC said: "We're delighted to be a partner in this innovative three-way project that will create an exciting new college campus at Beechwood. Our funding will represent a major investment in teaching, learning and research and will benefit Inverness and the Highlands and Islands for many years to come."

Ends

For further information, please contact:

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Pictured (L-R) in attached photo: Alex Patterson, Chief executive designate, HIE; Mark Batho, Chief executive, SFC; William Roe, Chair, HIE; John Spencer, Principal, Inverness College; Mo Shepherd, Chair, Inverness College

