**Submission Name: Moray College UHI**          **Submission Number: 132**

**Moray College UHI: Response to Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill**

This paper provides Moray College's response to the call for evidence by The Scottish Parliament in consideration of the proposed Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill.

This call for evidence focusses on the following 5 key aspects:

1. To what extent do you consider the Bill will empower communities, please give reasons for your answer?
2. What will be the benefits and disadvantages for public sector organisations as a consequence of the provisions in the Bill?
3. Do you consider communities across Scotland have the capabilities to take advantage of the provisions in the Bill? If not, what requires to be done to the Bill or to assist communities, to ensure this happens?
4. Are you content with the specific provisions in the Bill, if not what changes would you like to see, to which part of the Bill and why?
5. What are your views on the assessment of equal rights, impacts on island communities and sustainable development as set out in the Policy memorandum?

1. **To what extent do you consider the Bill will empower communities, please give reasons for your answer?**

   It is considered that the Bill will assist communities in becoming more empowered with regards:

   - Community ownership of land and assets;
   - Reduction of barriers currently preventing communities taking on more responsibility for assets;
   - Enhanced support  to provide communities with the potential to own and deliver key local services in the right place, at the right time and which more effectively meets the needs of the community;
   - Provision of mechanism to support community capacity building and resilience
   - Strengthens relationships and communication between communities, public sector organisations and the Community Planning Partnership.

2. **What will be the benefits and disadvantages for public sector organisations as a consequence of the provisions in the Bill?**

   Benefits:

Framework in place to enable and empower communities to provide more local service provision, where appropriate;

- Public sector organisations being able to more effectively support remote, or disadvantaged communities to build capacity, resilience and skills;
- More effective use of local assets to deliver services;
- Improves the effectiveness of the Community Planning Partnership through partnership working and stronger link with local communities.

Disadvantages:

- There is the potential that this Bill could introduce additional threats, complexities and disadvantages which could reduce our ability to serve the wider community;
- Delivering the aims and ambitions of the Bill could have significant impact on our costs and current resources to support the management of local community engagement.   Further detailed information would be required to provide a more detailed response, and in particular in relation to:

  - Definition of an appropriate community body
  - Grounds for refusal of request
  - The necessity to provide detailed information on request; this could potentially increase the already heavy burden on providing information through The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2005
  - Requirement to assess community bodies proposals.

- This is a time of far reaching, unparalleled change in both the college and university sector and careful examination should be given to ensuring that this Bill enhances and does not detract from our current aims and objectives. Similarly, it introduces another framework to operationally embraced when other new frameworks are still being implemented and evaluated, e.g. implications of The Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013.

3. **Do you consider communities across Scotland have the capabilities to take advantage of the provisions in the Bill? If not, what requires to be done to the Bill, or to assist communities, to ensure this happens?**

Communities vary in that they have different attributes, characteristics, capacities, capabilities which impacts upon the confidence, aims and objectives of each community.  Well promoted and understood frameworks would need to be developed to support public sector organisations to engage effectively with individual communities to meet the aspirations of the Bill.  These should be

developed, implemented and supported in an integrated manner by the Community Planning Partnership

**4. Are you content with the specific provisions in the Bill, if not what changes would you like to see, to which part of the Bill and why?**

Moray College concerns are outlined in Section 2 of this response.

**5. What are your views on the assessment of equal rights, impacts on island communities and sustainable development as set out in the Policy memorandum?**

No specific response.