



6 February 2007

Mr Jack McConnell, MSP
First Minister
The Office of the First Minister
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH
EH1 3DG

Glasgow University and higher education in Dumfries and Galloway

I am writing, in view of the urgency of the situation, to ask you and the Deputy First Minister (to whom I am copying this) to intervene to avert a decision by Glasgow University Court which would spell the end of the University's involvement on the Crichton campus in Dumfries.

The University unions were informed, in redundancy consultations yesterday, that Court will be asked to decide, at its meeting on Wednesday 14 February, to cease undergraduate admissions with immediate effect. If there is no undergraduate intake in the coming academic year then the threatened Glasgow University withdrawal from Crichton will have begun and will be hard, if not impossible, to reverse.

The trades unions have registered a formal failure to agree to the proposal to cease admissions. Within the statutory redundancy consultation process, which is intended to avoid redundancies wherever possible, the University as employer is bound to consult with a view to reaching agreement with the unions. We shall be supporting our resolute opposition to unnecessary redundancies with wider campaign activity.

We were, however, left in no doubt that Court is likely, in the absence of any indication of further support from the SFC or government, to take the axe to Crichton student admissions. Part of the context is that protracted discussions between the University and SFC have resulted in a refusal to support more than the current 88 funded student numbers.

Dumfries and Galloway faces population decline and a severe crisis of loss of younger people over the years ahead. Local higher education provision, including the mainly liberal

arts education which Glasgow has been offering at Crichton, is of key importance to the economy and culture of the region.

A comparison has been drawn between higher education funding support (along with other types of support from the Scottish Executive and elsewhere) for the area served by the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute and that served by the Crichton campus (table enclosed). This shows very clearly that there is scope for further targeted support to develop higher education provision in Dumfries and Galloway. That would flow naturally from your policies of support for wider access, social inclusion and reversing demographic decline in Scotland.

Finally, let me anticipate and rebuff a response that Ministers cannot intervene in the decisions of autonomous higher education institutions. The problem here is that there has been an ongoing row between SFC and Glasgow University about what the University has expected and can legitimately expect by way of funding support for the undoubted investment the University has made at Crichton. The SFC now seem content to allow Glasgow University to walk away from Dumfries, on the basis that the University must allocate internal funds as it sees fit. Glasgow University take the view that there is a campus deficit (£879K in 2005/6) at Crichton and that this cannot be subsidised from the wider University. So as things stand, they will walk away. But, just as it took a political initiative to develop higher education in the Highlands and Islands, there is clearly scope for Ministers to intervene now to knock heads together and to provide the necessary financial support and guidance so that the wider economic and social needs of the region can be properly supported by higher education provision.

I am copying this to the local MSP, Dr Elaine Murray, who I know shares our concern about the potential loss of Glasgow University's involvement at Crichton.

David Bleiman
Assistant General Secretary

Encl

cc Nicol Stephen
Elaine Murray MSP
Glasgow UCU
UCU Scotland Executive

Per Head of Population	Highlands and Islands/University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)	Dumfries and Galloway/ Crichton Campus	A Comparison
Population (2001 Census)	433,745 (HIE area)*	147,765	
Density of Population	10.9 people per sq km	24 people per sq km	
Gross Value Added (GVA) 2002	£10,524	£11,207	
Gross Weekly Pay (2004)	£304.60 (HC)	£287.40	
Population change 2002/18	-4%	-7.2%	
Change of school age 2002/18	-26.5%	-36.7%	
Total HE Students at 2005/06	1 per 69 population	1 per 133 population	2 times
Current European Funding	_ 886 per head	_ 298 per head	3 times
Proposed European Funding	_ 437 per head	_ 121 per head	3.5 times
Enterprise Company Budget	£246 per head	£69 per head	3.5 times
Relocation of Scottish Executive Jobs	0.6 jobs per 1,000 population	0.12 jobs per 1,000 population	5 times
HE Capital Investment from Central Sources	£85 per head	£15 per head	6 times
Fully Funded HE Student Places	8 per 1,000 population	1 per 1,000 population	8 times
Recurrent Funding for HE	£38 per head	£3.50 per head	10 times