MINISTER RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR FURTHER EDUCATION SUCCESS

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Bill Rammell MP, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, will today announce the findings of new research which links capital investment with increased participation levels at Further Education colleges. The Minister will make the announcement at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) annual conference.

At a time of record government investment of £750 million in the Further Education (FE) estate, this latest research further indicates the importance of investing capital in new colleges, skills academies and the renewal of the existing estate. This capital investment will support the 14-19 and skills reform agendas; ensuring learners are equipped with high-quality skills for productive, sustainable employment and personal fulfilment, and employers have the right skills for their business to succeed in a competitive global economy.

This positive relationship between learning environments and excellence in FE is to be supported by the continuation of the ‘Design Excellence in Further Education’ competition, also announced by the Minister today.

The Design Excellence award is a joint LSC and RIBA initiative, recognising the most effective and innovative learning environments in the FE estate. The competition ran for the first time last year when the award was won by North Manchester Sixth Form College and North City Public Library. Further details of the 2007 competition will follow later this year.
To celebrate the world-leading facilities in the FE system, Bill Rammell is hosting a Ministerial Reception at the House of Commons later today. With guest speakers from across the sector, the Minister will formally acknowledge the significance of modern learning environments in which today’s teaching now takes place and reaffirm the importance of top facilities in the delivery of world-class education.

Bill Rammell said:

“This Government is fully committed to transforming the FE estate, and has repeatedly demonstrated this commitment through the unprecedented capital investment we have made in the past decade.

Our aim is to make the UK FE estate the best in the world, delivering learning in buildings that are innovative and inspirational and that are designed to fully meet the needs of individuals, employers, and our communities, both for the challenges we face today, as well as for those we will face in the future.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to announce the intention of LSC and RIBA to run another competition to formally recognise and award excellence in FE college design.

The importance of good design cannot be stressed enough. Indeed, latest research into the impact of capital investment shows that colleges that undertake capital projects will expect to see increased participation levels.”

Since 2001, the LSC has approved over £1.8 billion of capital investment in 632 projects, costing over £4.5 billion. More than half of the FE estate has already been renewed, but there is much more work to be done.

Mark Haysom, Chief Executive of the LSC said:

“One of our main priorities between now and 2010-11 is to maximise the scale of FE
development, making world-class, 21st century facilities available to all learners. Our aim is to make England’s FE estate a world leader – so that learning is delivered in innovative, energy efficient and inspirational buildings.

“Students will be more responsive, attentive and enthusiastic in bright, airy and stimulating ‘state of the art’ learning environments. The positive effects of rebuilding a college can be staggering, both on the individual learner, but also on the wider community.”

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

Learning and Skills Council:
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

FE capital investment
In 1996-97, the earmarked Government expenditure on FE capital was nil. In 2007-08, planned Government expenditure will be just under £500m. On top of this, Budget 2005 announced additional capital funds of £100m in 2008-09 and £250m in 2009-10. Firmly establishing this Government’s genuine commitment to FE, the Chancellor – at the Pre-Budget Report at the end of last year – announced a further £250m of capital funding in 2010-11. This will take the planned annual FE capital budget to just under £750m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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