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Exeter Civic University Agreement

University of Exeter

June 2021

Version 1

A University with and for Exeter

The Exeter Civic University Agreement recognises that the University is fundamentally linked to the place and people of Exeter. At the heart of this Agreement is a belief that partnership is the catalyst that sets progress in motion. Partnerships within our City are now more important than ever, as we seek to ensure a thriving yet sustainable economy, healthy and happy people, a vibrant culture and a spirit that connects us all with a pride of place and a determination to keep moving forward together.

The University is a major regional employer and important economic contributor to the local economy. A vibrant knowledge hub with global connections, it plays an important role through the impact of education, research and knowledge exchange activities underpinning the economic, health, social and environmental fabric of our region.

Working together as Exeter partners our ambition is to generate benefits for our City, its businesses, and its people. This Agreement builds on already strong partnership foundations, and a history of mutual engagement. Yet the challenges we face are greater than ever before, and the time is now right to build on these foundations so that we can exploit opportunity, address challenges, and co-create and deliver solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created enormous challenges for our communities, for our economy and society. We hope that this Agreement will help underpin our collective efforts to drive forward local recovery and renewal, enabling us to face the challenges of the future together.

An Evidence-based, Mission-led Approach

The Exeter Civic University Agreement will build on the existing substantial engagement with partners and stakeholders in the City and will seek to make these relationships more strategic and productive.

Our priorities and activities are based on an analysis of local need, identified through an ongoing process of consultation with local stakeholders, partners and communities in the City.

Over 100 organisations have contributed their time, thoughts and ideas. Independent researchers, Red Box Research were commissioned to undertake consultation with key stakeholders in the City, through face to face interviews, themed workshops, and focus groups. Devon Community Foundation were commissioned to consult with the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Exeter and Devon. Finally, an online survey was sent to partners and stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sector in Exeter. A major public and community consultation is underway.

This consultation and evidence gathering identified five priority areas or “missions” where we believe that collaboration between the partners can add value. This mission-led approach,

supported by a Partnership Framework will enable us to make a step change in the way we collaborate. By identifying our shared priorities, as well as those of our stakeholders and communities in the City, we will try to understand the challenges, and aim to collectively find and deliver solutions together. Through this Agreement we will aim to make the most of our collective expertise and resources. Our commitment is to listen, learn and to deliver change.

Our Missions

Our missions present clear calls to action for the University and our partners. As partners we will work collaboratively to deliver positive change for the City.



Support the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth of the City...

Exeter plays a significant role as a driver for the wider regional economy, with a Travel to Work area that covers much of East Devon, Teignbridge and Mid Devon. Exeter functions as a hub for high value-added sectors and consequently highly paid jobs in the area, outperforming the wider region in terms of productivity and skills. Large employers dominate in the public sector – key employers include the Met Office, the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (RD&E), Exeter College, and the University of Exeter. Building a vibrant private sector will be important to the future success of the City.

Exeter needs to accelerate the transition towards a new economy that can attract and retain higher-skilled people, and drive growth in the wider county. Understanding Exeter's distinctive identity and potential for the growth of the wider region is vital to forging a path to a new economy that can successfully include surrounding areas, while offering real opportunities for access and advancement to all residents. This principle of sustainable and inclusive growth should be central to a bespoke devolution project for the city-region and

county. As partners we will work to ensure that the local economy is enhanced through access to research, innovation, support for business and skills.

Our Ambitions

- To launch a Net Zero Innovation Hub, supporting businesses and organisations with sustainable business transformation services, new R&D facilities and access to innovation support. This could provide a hub for entrepreneurs, companies, academics, students and citizens to share data, insight, ideas, and creativity.
- Exploit the University's knowledge assets to attract and support new business start-ups to the City and support existing businesses to grow and scale, bringing the University Enterprise Zone into the City.
- Support the economy with skills development, particularly for green and digital transformation and for health.
- Work collaboratively to enhance the reputation of the City as a place to do business and develop careers.

Deliver a Net Zero Exeter ...

In 2019, Exeter City Council declared a climate emergency, and its intention to be a carbon neutral city by 2030. In response, Exeter City Futures (ECF) curated a clear roadmap to carbon neutrality: the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan, which has now been officially adopted by Exeter City Council¹. The Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan sets out ways in which individuals and organisations can play their part in achieving the net zero ambition. However, collaborating magnifies the speed and scale at which change can be realised.

Exeter has access to unparalleled expertise in climate science to develop the green skills and jobs our country needs for the future. We are a world leading hub for environmental science, with the highest concentration of climate scientists in any world city, including 5 out of the world's top 21 climate scientists. As the home of the Met Office and over 1,500 companies operating in the environmental business sector, environmental science is not just an academic pursuit but the beating heart of the local economy – something which is enabled by trail blazing partnerships between public partners, businesses and the University.

Meeting our Net Zero commitments will require new and innovative approaches, but we have the ability to bring together as a city, our unparalleled expertise and R&D assets in environment and climate research to meet this challenge.

Our Ambitions

- Create a vision for Exeter that leads the way in Net Zero innovation, creating a blueprint that the Government can use to set the rest of the UK on a quicker path to net-zero.

¹ <http://www.exetercityfutures.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Net-Zero-Exeter-2030-Plan-PU.pdf>

- Work with partners to attract further green investment, support transformation of the city of Exeter's infrastructure and help SMEs manage their climate transitions.
- Work with partners through the vehicle of Exeter City Futures to deliver the Net Zero Roadmap.

Build a City of Aspiration and Opportunity...

Our City now boasts both a high level of educational attainment, excellent education institutions that include Exeter College (OFSTED outstanding and Rated Top College twice in five years by FE Week's annual NICDEX), and a Top 15 Russell Group University (ranked 149 in the QS World Rankings and 12th in The Times and the Sunday Times Good University Guide (2020)), both are rated as Gold in the Teaching Excellence Framework. Through a unique partnership between the University of Exeter and Exeter College we have developed one of the first two dedicated Mathematics Schools nationally (Ofsted rated outstanding at first appraisal) and helped forge the creation of the Ted Wragg Multi-Academy Trust.

Through initiatives such as the skills escalator for data analytics, we have sought to create pathways to data analytics skills and in doing so have developed a model which could be replicated for other strategic skills needs in the City and beyond. The prominence of the University of Exeter and Exeter College in the development of the South West Institute of Technology will also see a step change in the delivery of data, digital and advanced manufacturing skills in the City, including in green transitions, facing the government's 10 point green industrial plan.

Yet graduate retention is an ongoing challenge in Exeter with only 28% of University of Exeter students remaining in the South West region and 13% in the City. This represents a loss of talent for the City and wider region.

By working together as partners we have already demonstrated what can be achieved, but there is more we can do to truly transform the prospects of our population, providing access to skills and access to high paid employment.

Our Ambition

- Create a more formalised education alliance to accelerate the progress that has been made and build an Exeter Education Ecosystem that is truly exceptional.
- Work through the new alliance to address the future of skills and workforce needs, ensuring that we build a City of aspiration and opportunity, and gain true national and global recognition of our alliance. In doing so we will seek to become a national and global beacon for an exemplar education ecosystem.
- Work with partners to develop and deliver an effective City Skills Plan.

- Seek to retain our graduates in the City through opportunities for work experience, student projects linked to the needs of Exeter businesses and community, and support our students to establish their own businesses in the City.

Support an Ambitious Culture and Tourism Offer for the City...

Regionally, tourism is an extremely important sector and a key driver of productivity. Exeter has many of the assets required to develop a thriving and vibrant culture and tourism offer. It has a wealth of heritage and cultural assets, an impressive independent arts scene and a City Council which prioritises culture. The University of Exeter is a research intensive university with its own ambitious Arts and Culture Strategy.

Exeter Culture supports the city's arts ecology, and creating new strategic connections to other sectors. Hosted by the University of Exeter, in partnership with Exeter City Council, Exeter College, inExeter and the Arts Council England, it aims to ensure arts and culture are integrated within the city's broader strategic planning and to attract and retain creative talent. Exeter's place-based Cultural Strategy outlines five key themes: Environment; Wellbeing; Heritage Innovation; Creative Place making and Learning and Literacy.

Covid-19 has hit the visitor economy particularly hard with all businesses involved in tourism and hospitality being asked to close for prolonged periods.² The impact on events and venues, has been calamitous thus there is a clear challenge for partners to work together to support the revival of the City's cultural and heritage assets and businesses, both in the short term but also as a critical part of Place making.

Our Ambition

- To support the City in enhancing the visitor experience; becoming a leading sustainable visitor destination; and with its place-based cultural investment and development.
- Support Exeter as a UNESCO City of Literature³. A collaboration between the Exeter City Council, University of Exeter, Libraries Unlimited, Literature Works, Exeter Cathedral, Exeter Culture and Exeter Canal & Quay Trust this venture is jointly supporting the creative, social and economic potential of literature development for the city and the Greater Exeter area.
- Deliver a new Creative Arc for the City bringing together the University, the City Council and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) into a new strategic collaboration that will represent a new model of cultural partnership. This will act as a catalyst for economic development, support social change and build our global reputation as a Liveable City.

² Heart of the South West LEP Tourism and Visitor Economy Recovery Plan 1 (2020)

³ <https://www.exetercityofliterature.com/>

Enhance the Health and Wellbeing of our Citizens...

Exeter is a discrete healthcare geography with 147,000 patients living within 5 miles of the city centre. As elsewhere, the healthcare system in Exeter comprises a number of different NHS organisations as well as a number of charities which provide NHS funded services, and play a key role in healthcare provision. Primary Care provision is delivered via 16 GP Practices which in 2014 formed Exeter Primary Care (EPC), while the main provider of Secondary Care in the city is The Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust.

Exeter has long taken an integrated approach to the delivery of care and wellbeing services. Across wider Devon, as elsewhere, we are moving towards an Integrated Care System (ICS) with Together for Devon representing a partnership of health and social care organisations working together with local communities across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay to improve people's health, wellbeing and care across the region.

Wellbeing Exeter is a partnership of public, voluntary and community sector organisations who have come together to explore better ways of working to reduce the call on professional health services, integrate health with social care and community, and improve wellbeing for individuals. One of the biggest health and wellbeing charities, Exeter City Community Trust (ECCT) works in partnership with Exeter City Football Club.

The University engages with and supports the sector in the city in myriad ways. The College of Medicine and Health works closely with the NHS to train the next generation of clinicians, to build clinical research excellence capacity and deliver health improvements in a regional context. It also works closely with the community and vounteray sectors.

As the city emerges from the pandemic and moves towards recovery, the challenges such are to securing funding to sustain and expand the successful networks and partnerships across the city, while meeting the skills needs of the health and care sector will be critical.

Our Ambition

- Work with regional stakeholders to co-develop solutions to everyday challenges and contribute to addressing health and wellbeing policy challenges that impact on the region.
- Work closely with NHS to attract the world's most talented clinicians and healthcare workers, training and retaining local talent to develop their careers in Exeter and Devon.
- Enable communities and VCSE organisations to access the University expertise through our research centres such as the Wellcome Centre for Cultures and Environments of Health, and initiatives such as the Community Law Clinic.
- Encourage active and healthy lifestyles through working closely with local organisations, and ensuring that where possible University facilities are open and accessible to the public.

Community and Student Engagement

Underpinning these missions will be a commitment to ongoing community consultation and engagement of the City's students, including:

- Establishing a new Community Panel to identify issues, challenges and opportunities, and support the development of an annual plan of community engagement.
- Hosting an annual Public and Community Engagement conference, The Exchange, to celebrate the positive influence of community and public involvement on university research.
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in our community through engagement and leadership.
- Supporting opportunities for student volunteering in the community and for “community engaged learning” to co-produce knowledge with and for the community.
- Supporting business and VCSE partners through student projects, professional pathways, internships and work experience.
- Promoting opportunities for students and researchers to work on regionally-identified challenges and work with local communities to develop solutions.

Governance

Central to this Agreement is the Partnership Framework, which sets out the ways in which the partners will work together to develop, deliver, monitor and refresh the Civic University Agreement.

The Partnership Framework is the outcome of discussion with individual partner representatives and with the Exeter Civic University Steering Group. It builds on best practice nationally and internationally and will be subject to ongoing review as the Partnership matures.

The aim is that this will embed close and strategic joint working both now and in the future and will provide a vehicle for co-creating solutions that will bring benefit to the City of Exeter and the wider sub region.

The Partnership Framework will provide the governance which will oversee the process of shared agenda setting by the four partner organisations.

Guiding Principles

The Partnership Framework will enable partners to work together to ensure that relationships are optimised, intelligence is shared, that innovative solutions to agreed challenges can be co-created, focusing resources on what matters most. The Partnership Framework aims to:

- Enable better communication between the partners and the community, setting out a clear mechanism for day to day working;
- Harness research expertise to address Exeter challenges, supporting priority setting and supporting co-production of solutions, providing a clear route to local impact;

- Be dynamic and organic – adapting to circumstance;
- Provide routes to global engagement;
- Actively engage students in the public and community realm, matching student interest to community need and supporting engaged learning⁴;
- Embed collaborative public engagement based on the principle of reciprocity, involving the flow of knowledge, information and benefits between the parties;
- Embed clear evaluation and review processes;
- Be transparent and accountable.

Partnership Framework

Governance Structure	<p>The Civic University Agreement will be overseen by a Civic University Partnership Board, chaired by the University.</p> <p>The Civic University Agreement will have a simple operating structure with leads from each institution comprising the coordinating team, with quarterly meetings at which lead members from each institution can bring issues/concerns to the table or share their current activity.</p> <p>Regular information updates will be provided for the Liveable Exeter Place Board.</p>
Mission	<p>The mission/s will be jointly agreed by the partners, taking on board alignment with existing City strategies.</p>
Agenda Setting	<p>The partners will identify areas of “common ground” where it is expected that joint working will add value to the core mission of each institution.</p> <p>The agenda will be shaped by participants on an ongoing basis and everyone commits to attending and listening respectfully to partners when they bring issues and ideas to the group.</p>
Brokerage	<p>Partners will identify lead connectors in each organisation that can broker wider relationships and be a point of contact across the partners, connecting them to wider networks. Over time we would expect to have a visible and transparent set of institutional networks that will facilitate the sharing of knowledge.</p>

⁴ Engaged learning” facilitates students to apply theory to real-world contexts outside of the University and to co-produce knowledge with and for the community. Engaged learning provides students with the skills which increase their employability, and improve their personal and professional development, while communities gain access to skills to help develop, evaluate or communicate their work.

Sharing Intelligence and Horizon Scanning	An annual “Exeter Horizons” conference will allow each institution to widen engagement across their workforces, identifying important issues, share intelligence, and identify the potential for a collective response.
Co-creation	<p>The Partnership will embrace a ‘social enquiry’ approach to working on identified issues or challenges that are brought to the CUA team. This would enable the identification of staff from each partner organisation best placed to engage in time-limited enquiry to: collate information about the issue, research best practice elsewhere, identify possible solutions, test them, and develop policy proposals for action (which could involve all the partners working together or applying for additional resources to deliver change).</p> <p>The CUA could access limited additional resources to support this enquiry work – paid for via a collective pot to cover essential staffing – and scrutinised by the members.</p>
Responding to opportunities	The partnership should have provision to develop Task and Finish Groups or Mission Groups to enable development of action plans and rapid responses from the partnership.
Community engagement	The partnership should adopt ways of working that support effective community engagement, set out clearly in the annual planning process.
Resourcing	<p>The University of Exeter’s Innovation, Impact and Business Department will provide resource to initiate and support the partnership.</p> <p>As the partnership develops and identifies new initiatives and projects, there will need to be agreement on how this is resourced, including provision for joint bids for funding.</p>
Communications	The partnership will adopt clear guidelines for promoting the partnership and its work and managing communication protocols.
Annual Planning Cycle	The key components of the Framework will need to be accompanied by a planning cycle which enables progress to be monitored, new issues and challenges to emerge and the CUA subject to formal review and update.

We will begin immediately by establishing: a Healthy Exeter Panel; a Stakeholder Task and Finish Group for Innovation and Business; an Exeter focused School-College-University Education Alliance; enhanced support for delivery of our Net Zero Roadmap; and; partnering a unique new Creative Arc to help support Arts and Culture in the City.

The University and its anchor City Partners, as signatories of this Civic University Agreement, are committed to working together to help overcome the major social, economic and environmental challenges that we all face, together for Exeter. We are bound by the

Partnership Framework set out in this document to seek to improve levels of prosperity, equal opportunity, sustainability, health and wellbeing for Exeter's citizens, families and communities.

Signatories



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Cllr Phil Bialyck, Leader, Exeter City Council



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John Laramy, Exeter College Principal and Chief Executive