

Hello Everybody

I've promised to update on progress good or bad with the decision to close Seale-Hayne. Please, if you'd rather not be included let me know and I'll take your name out of the group.

Much of this is written by Dr. Eirene Williams who joins me on the SHF group. She had another email list of concerned people so if some of you read this twice we're sorry! Hope it's worth it!

As you know, the University Governors voted (unanimously) December 13th, approving the Vice-Chancellor's plans to restructure the University and so by association, voted to eventually close the S-H faculty. Various 'sops' have been proposed by the University as to a future use of S-H. Conference centre, research centre, field station (whatever that is) and so on. The University has now set up several planning groups internally, and various drafts are beginning to circulate. In particular first year students are being asked to vote if they want to do their final year alone at S-H in 2004-5 rather than move to Plymouth. The threat of staff, library facilities etc being moved to Plymouth that year is a consideration. Morale amongst staff and students at S-H is pretty low at present as you might expect.

A group of people with serious concerns for the future of Seale-Hayne, has been drawn together by the former Governors, under the Chairmanship of Jim Hosking, himself a former Governor and student of the College. The group, known as "Seale-Hayne Future" includes individuals from Newton Abbot Town Council, Teignbridge District Council, Devon County Council, previous Governors, staff and students. This group has, as its main objective, the retention of the undergraduate teaching at Seale-Hayne. In parallel with other groups, "Seale-Hayne Future" is proposing development and expansion of Seale-Hayne and pursuing constructive ideas to bring other relevant interests to Seale-Hayne, notably a Centre of Rural Excellence for the South West. The group is also still examining the legality of the University's acquisition of the assets of the S-H charity, but please don't hold your breath on this one!

18th February saw an article in the Daily Telegraph, page 9, which highlighted the low take-up of degree courses in agriculture. Although the mention of the Dean of Seale-Hayne was not accurate (it was in fact ex-Dean Fred Harper who resigned his Emeritus Professorship), the general tone of the article reflected the concerns that many people have about the future of land-based higher education in general and Seale-Hayne in particular.

We were particularly glad to see this Telegraph article as there have been a

number of articles in the local press recently put out by the University management emphasising positive aspects of the relocation to Plymouth. These have added to the publicity surrounding the death threat to the Vice Chancellor that made the national press. The latter has now largely been dismissed by police as a Rag Week error of judgment by a few students, although the University authorities still seem very disturbed.

We think that the time is right for another concerted onslaught on the press about Seale-Hayne, possibly in the national context raised in the Telegraph, or with any other positive ideas you may have for the future of S-H. I know most of you wrote to the VC and Board of Governors before Christmas in admirable style but together we failed to change their decision. I would like to urge you to write very soon to the local and national press, MPs etc and continue to speak to people of influence, so that they are well aware that our concern remains alive and that we have not yet consigned S-H's considerable reputation and attributes to history.

Thanks for all that you are doing everyone and please keep in touch especially if you have any bright ideas!

Regards

Ian