

# OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

on the Proposed Merger  
and Name Change of  
Exeter College and Petroc

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**NOVEMBER 2025**



# BACKGROUND

Exeter College and Petroc are proposing to merge to form a new College Group. This merger aims to create the best place-based college group in England, which works for students, staff, the community, and businesses to support ambition in Devon.

The Corporations of Exeter College and Petroc held a joint public consultation from 1st to 30th September 2025 on the proposed merger between the two organisations. The rationale for the merger, an outline of the merged College Group, and an explanation of how the merger would benefit stakeholders were all set out in a consultation document.

During the consultation period, views were welcomed from all of our stakeholders, including staff, students, parents and carers, employers, education establishments, local government and partners. This document sets out, analyses and responds to the feedback received during the consultation period for the proposed merger.



# CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Message from the Chairs   | 4  |
| Message from the Principals and CEOs  | 5  |
| The Merged College Group  | 6  |
| Responses to the Public Consultation  | 8  |
| Summary of Responses  | 8  |
| Engagement in the Consultation  | 10 |
| Summary of responses received to the question <b>Do you support the merger?</b>   | 11 |
| Summary of responses received to the question <b>Do you wish to pass any general comment on the merger, or identify an emerging skill need, or a community need that the new group should consider?</b> | 12 |
| Summary of responses received to the request for <b>Comments on the proposed Corporation name: Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group</b>  | 16 |
| Summary of responses received to the request for <b>Comments on the names of the proposed Colleges within the newly formed College Group: Exeter College and North Devon College</b>                    | 17 |
| Next Steps  | 19 |

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRS

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the public consultation on the proposed merger of Exeter College and Petroc and the proposed naming of the merged entity the 'Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group', which is currently proposed to take effect on 5th January 2026.

During the consultation period, we welcomed the valuable input of our stakeholders, recognising the importance of the success of this merger to everyone involved.

The feedback received was encouragingly positive and has reaffirmed our commitment to deliver a merger that we believe will provide a brighter future for education in Devon. Where concerns or questions have been raised, we will ensure they inform our implementation plans and strategic planning going forwards.



**Adam Watt**  
Chair of the Corporation  
Exeter College



**Patricia Denham OBE**  
Chair of Board  
Petroc

**“The feedback received  
was encouragingly positive”**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPALS AND CEOS

We are delighted to have had such constructive, rich and insightful feedback from our stakeholders during the Public Consultation period.

Over the course of the last few months, the colleges have been working closely together to understand our strengths and the areas we can work on together to learn from each other's best practice. During this period we have already seen the benefits from working closely together and pooling our resources and knowledge.

We recognise the merger will be the start of a journey, not the end and we are committed to ensuring successful implementation of our future plans, which we will be developing in detail in the coming months, for the benefit of our students, staff, partners and other stakeholders.



**John Laramy CBE**  
Principal and Chief Executive  
Exeter College



**Kurt Hintz**  
Interim Principal and CEO  
Petroc

**“We are committed to ensuring successful  
implementation of our future plans”**

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# THE MERGED COLLEGE GROUP

**The guiding principles of the merger will ensure learners, staff, Devon communities, local skills needs and employer needs are at their core. Maintaining financial stability whilst being consistently outstanding will be overarching aims.**



The merger will create a new, ambitious group, with a commitment to aspiration for learners through inspirational teaching and learning.

The merged college group will have outstanding place-based sixth forms in Barnstaple and Exeter, ensuring a coast-to-coast College Group that can be accessed across Devon, offering an aspirational and inclusive curriculum.

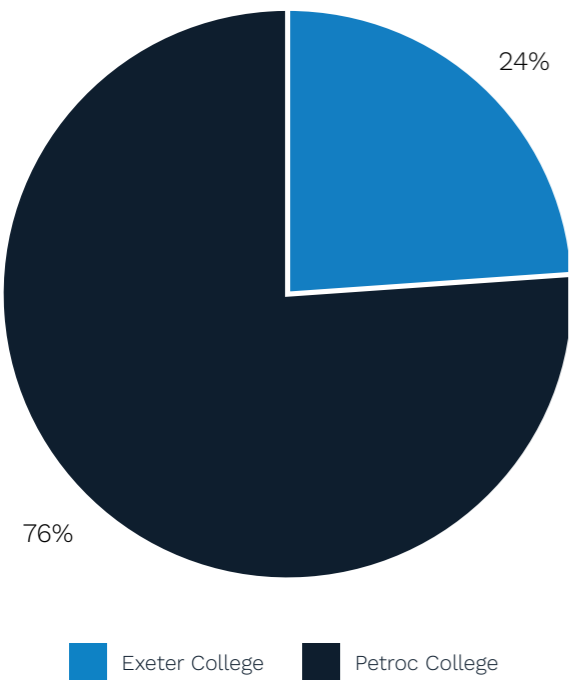
The Group will continue to build partnerships that positively impact students and their community. There will be a co-ordinated Devon-wide Apprenticeship, Adult and Higher Technical offer, partnering local employers, and other stakeholders to deliver education and skills training that is closely aligned with local needs, improving social mobility and economic prosperity.

The proposed name of the merged College Group is Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group (ENDC). The proposal is for Petroc's Barnstaple Campus to become North Devon College, ensuring there is a closer link between its name and the community it serves. Emphasising the importance of place-based education, whilst meeting the needs of the broad and diverse Devon communities it serves will be crucial. Exeter College will retain its name, as it already celebrates its place in the community. The Petroc Tiverton Campus will have a new focus, supporting student progression and individuals with additional learning needs, as a result this will become the Centre for Progression, Tiverton. We believe the new group can be a skills powerhouse for the region.



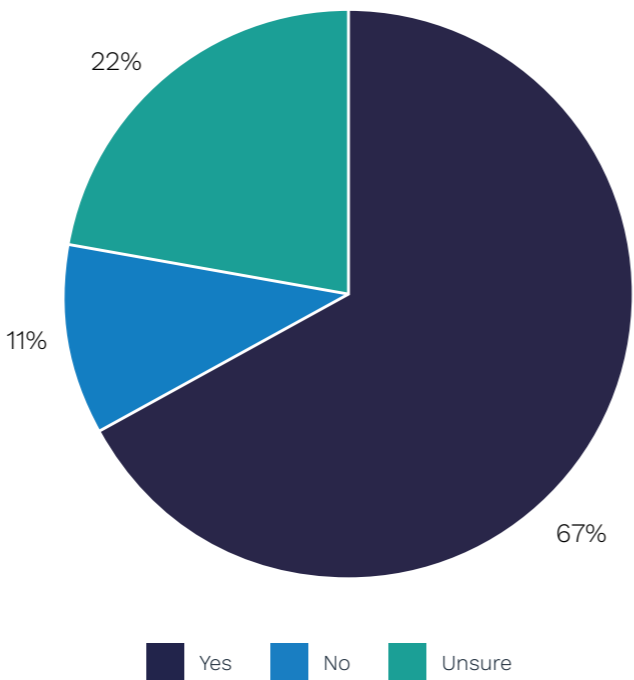
# RESPONSES TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

## Summary of Responses



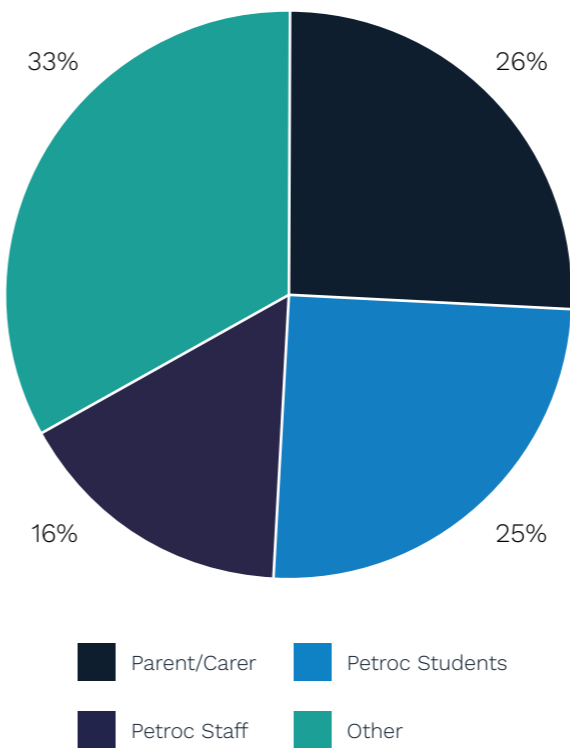
### RESPONSES RECEIVED

303 responses were received, of which 229 were by Petroc and 74 by Exeter College



### SUPPORT FOR THE MERGER

203 of respondents agreed with the proposed merger, 33 of respondents disagreed with the proposed merger, 67 of respondents were unsure



### TOP RESPONDENTS

The top 3 respondents out of 15 potential respondent categories were Parent/Carer, Petroc Students and Petroc Staff, representing two thirds of total responses

Support was received for the change of Corporation name to Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group and for the names of the proposed Colleges of Exeter College and North Devon College.

**"Seems sensible, place-based approach that recognises the location of the group whilst recognising all who contribute"**

**"Love the name, it says what it is and who we are"**

**"North Devon college had a brilliant reputation when I was a teenager, and it was a core part of the community. I think it's a good idea."**

**"Perfect!"**

# ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONSULTATION

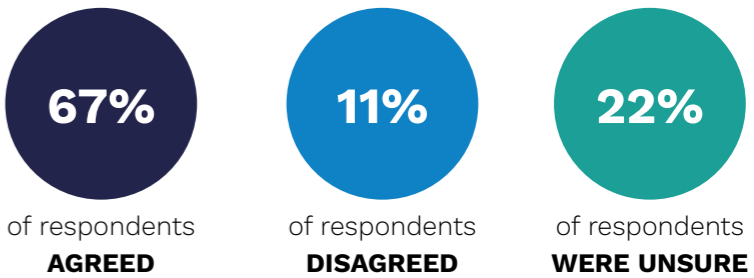
In total, 303 responses were received (74 by Exeter College, 229 by Petroc), including 24 formal letters of support from our stakeholders. Letters of support were received from a cross-section of stakeholders, including Colleges, Schools, MPs, Partners, Councils and Universities.

| CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT               | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Employer/local business              | 16    |
| Exeter College staff                 | 6     |
| Exeter College student               | 10    |
| HE Institution                       | 6     |
| Local government                     | 6     |
| Other FE Institution                 | 8     |
| Parent/Carer                         | 78    |
| Petroc staff                         | 48    |
| Petroc student                       | 77    |
| Prospective student or parent/carers | 21    |
| School                               | 14    |
| Other                                | 13    |

# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED TO THE QUESTION "Do you support the merger?"

| Category of respondent               | YES | NO | UNSURE | TOTAL |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----|--------|-------|
| Employer/local business              | 14  |    | 2      | 16    |
| Exeter College staff                 | 4   |    | 2      | 6     |
| Exeter College student               | 5   | 3  | 2      | 10    |
| HE Institution                       | 5   |    | 1      | 6     |
| Local government                     | 5   | 1  |        | 6     |
| Other FE Institution                 | 8   |    |        | 8     |
| Parent/Carer                         | 56  | 7  | 15     | 78    |
| Petroc staff                         | 37  | 1  | 10     | 48    |
| Petroc student                       | 42  | 11 | 24     | 77    |
| Prospective student or parent/carers | 9   | 5  | 7      | 21    |
| School                               | 13  |    | 1      | 14    |
| Other                                | 5   | 5  | 3      | 13    |

In Summary, in respect of the proposed merger:



# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED TO THE QUESTION "Do you wish to pass any general comment on the merger, or identify an emerging skills need, or a community need that the new group should consider?"

A wide-ranging and diverse breadth of responses were received in respect of general comments on the merger. In summary, the themes in support of the merger were as follows:

- The merger was welcomed as a positive step for Devon and an opportunity for improvements in education in North Devon to continue
- The vision of strong, high quality and consistent learning across the new Group was supported
- The ability to share best practice across the Group and to raise standards, enabling access to better quality education was seen as positive
- Transport difficulties (bus and train) due to frequency and the rural nature of Devon results in a greater need for consistent and high-quality education across Devon, not just in one location
- In a challenging funding environment, the ability to create resilience as part of a larger group and to share resources was identified as a key benefit
- The ability to collaborate widely and formulate a strategy for SEND provision across Devon in light of increasing demand was seen as positive.



"Great opportunity to create strong, high quality, consistent academic learning for learners across Devon"

"Exeter College has an incredible reputation – if this success can filter through the region it would be a good thing."

"I think this is a fantastic merger growing opportunities in north Devon and I am particularly excited about the proposed use of the Tiverton campus, and this feels like an area that is very much needed"

"This is great news for north Devon's youngsters to prevent them having to take long commutes to alternative colleges and cost of transport which is environmentally unsustainable as well as unreliable"

"The merger is a positive development for the two colleges, the education ecosystem in Devon, and for the local communities"

"A merger of resources seems a good way to prepare for the future"





**Comments questioning the benefits of the merger or suggestions to incorporate into plans for the future can be summarised as follows:**

- Quality of transport provision (bus and train) is too inconsistent and unreliable given the travel distances in Devon. In response to this theme, the merger intends to strengthen provision of education in North Devon, thereby reducing travel requirements
- Respondents were concerned about a perceived reduction in competition following consolidation in the sector. The intention of the merger is to retain the place-based provision currently in place and to improve consistency across the group, leading to an improvement in choice
- There was concern that strategic focus and / or personality of the Colleges could be lost following a merger. The development of strategy post-merger would aim to crystallise the benefits of being part of a group, whilst retaining the strengths and identity of the place-based college locations and curriculum provision
- Respondents expressed the importance of Exeter College not experiencing a dilution in quality or resource following merger. The plan following merger would focus on Exeter College retaining its Ofsted Outstanding reputation, whilst ensuring quality and standards across the group were aligned
- The focus on Petroc's Tiverton site as a Centre for Progression was considered detrimental to the area and concerns were raised that SEND provision would not be available at existing sites in Exeter and Barnstaple. It is the intention following merger to continue the high quality SEND provision at Tiverton, but SEND provision would continue at the other locations in the group (Exeter and Barnstaple).

**"The colleges must ensure that they offer an inclusive curriculum catering for those with special and additional needs equally"**

**"As organisations grow, they can become less personal – wouldn't want that to happen to Exeter College"**

**"Competition needed in the market. One monopoly will reduce choice. This will lead to reduced options"**

**"Make sure the supportive facilities for all students are better and students mental health is protected and students that need support don't slip through cracks from not being noticed"**

**"As part of the merger, I would hope to see investment on the site, so the young people of North Devon feel like they don't have to travel to Exeter to have access to decent facilities, courses and teachers"**



# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED TO THE REQUEST FOR "Comments on the proposed Corporation name: Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group"

The majority of feedback received supported the proposed corporation name Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group. Most respondents commented that the name was logical and retained the place-based college identity.

Some concern was expressed that the name was not ‘cutting edge’ or creative. However, it should be noted that the corporation name of Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group will be the legal name for the group entity, but the individual Colleges will be place-based with their separate identities of Exeter College and North Devon College.

Some respondents requested that the Tiverton location should be included in the Group name. It is intended following the merger that the Centre for Progression, Tiverton, will be overseen by leadership at Exeter College.

**"The name demonstrates a commitment to place-based education while meeting the needs of the community"**

**"I like that it is unambiguous"**

**"It sounds quite clunky but appreciate it is hard to find a suitable name"**

**"Thoughtful approach to retaining each college's identity is welcome"**

**"Not very imaginative but it's OK"**



# SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED TO THE REQUEST FOR "Comments on the names of the proposed Colleges within the newly formed College Group: Exeter College and North Devon College"

Most respondents supported the proposed names of Exeter College and North Devon College, recognising the importance of ‘place-based’ names and identification to the areas in which they are located. Some responses commented on the strong brand of Exeter College, with others suggesting that a return of the Petroc name to North Devon College would be important to improve its reputation.

**"Much prefer the name 'North Devon College,' ties to the local community and area"**

**"North Devon College is a name I love"**

**"I am glad that Exeter college will keep its name and therefore maintain its attached outstanding reputation the name connotes"**

**'Again, they seem sensible and meaningful in the context of their location'**

**"The best choice as it says who we are and North Devon College had a great reputation"**



## NEXT STEPS

Petroc and Exeter College are grateful for the responses received during the consultation process, including the letters of support from stakeholders. After careful consideration of the views of students, staff, parents and carers, local business, education partners and other key stakeholders, the Corporations have concluded that the merger and name changes are in the best interests of both colleges and local communities.

The colleges will continue to target the proposed date of 5th January 2026 for the completion of the merger.

On the day of the merger, all assets and liabilities previously held by Petroc will transfer to the Exeter and North Devon Colleges Group (the renamed Corporation of Exeter College).

We will continue to provide updates on the merger process on the Exeter College and Petroc websites.



**PETROC**