

INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

2026
2030

INTRODUCTION

West College Scotland delivers high-quality learning and vocational training across the West Region, serving a population of approximately 436,200 and engaging across seven local authority areas. With deep-rooted community connections, a strategic regional role, and a commitment to educational innovation and sustainability, the College seeks to modernise its infrastructure and focus capital investment to bring the aging estate up to a reasonable condition in support of student success, operational efficiency, and regional economic regeneration.

This Infrastructure Strategy outlines a four-year plan to modernise and optimise West College Scotland's physical and digital infrastructure, aligning investment to our new Strategic Plan We are West 2026 to 2030 (add link), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Infrastructure Strategy, and national sustainability and net-zero ambitions.

COLLEGE STRATEGIC AMBITION AND THEMES

The Infrastructure Strategy aligns to our college mission of "Empowering people and communities to thrive" and our strategic vision of "Unlocking potential and enabling success".

Our college strategic themes focus on a commitment to:

1. **OUR PEOPLE**
2. **OUR PARTNERSHIPS**
3. **OUR PLACE**
4. **OUR PERFORMANCE**



PHYSICAL ESTATE

The College operates a 74,677m² estate (replacement value £370m) across Renfrewshire, West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde, providing vital access to education and supporting regional regeneration. Appendix 1 outlines the college's detailed estate profile.

Our campuses play a pivotal role in supporting local regeneration, providing accessible pathways to education and employment, and contributing to the socio-economic development of the communities we serve. The College faces significant challenges due to ageing infrastructure and inflexible learning spaces. These issues limit our ability to deliver modern, adaptable, and inclusive environments that align with the evolving needs of industry and learners. Addressing these estate challenges is essential. To support this, the College maintains a continuous programme of estate monitoring and evaluation. In Spring 2024 an external condition survey review confirms significant investment is required to bring the majority of buildings to a safe, modern, and sustainable standard. While newer facilities perform well, most of the estate requires essential upgrades over the next five years to ensure:

- learner-ready, inclusive environments
- regulatory compliance and safety
- energy efficiency and operational sustainability



CAPITAL PRIORITIES AND EXCLUSIONS

The College has developed a comprehensive Physical Infrastructure Capital Priority Plan to ensure that facilities across all campuses remain safe, fit for purpose, and operationally sustainable. The Plan is informed by a detailed external condition survey and extensive stakeholder consultation.

All project proposals were assessed against robust criteria, including health and safety risk, legal compliance, space utilisation, and long-term value for money. This process identified a total capital requirement of £42 million over five years, with £30 million categorised as urgent. These urgent works are essential to maintaining safety, compliance, business continuity, and a positive student experience.

The College receives £4 million annually in SFC capital funding, of which £1.4 million is ring-fenced for essential maintenance. This leaves £2.6 million per year or £13 million over five years available for capital improvements. A prioritised programme has therefore been defined to focus available funding on the most urgent categories:

- Lighting
- Water systems
- Mechanical and Electrical (heating and ventilation)
- Roofing
- Security infrastructure

However, priority works, including plumbing, windows, cladding, internal and external upgrades, car parking, and teaching space modernisation cannot be undertaken within the required timeframe. Based on current funding levels, it would take 12 years to complete urgent works and 16 years to complete the full programme.

Without additional investment, the condition of the estate will continue to decline. Deferred maintenance will accelerate the deterioration of critical systems, increase long-term costs, heighten operational disruption, and negatively affect the learner and staff experience.

To mitigate these risks, the capital plan has been rigorously reprioritised to direct limited funds toward the highest-impact areas. Investment decisions are guided by the following principles:

- Statutory compliance and health and safety
- Operational continuity and risk mitigation
- Energy efficiency and carbon reduction
- Fitness for purpose and transformation of learning environments
- Long-term value for money

Delivery will follow a phased programme governed through an annual action plan, approved by the Executive and Senior Leadership Team, with regular monitoring and defined milestones. To maximise affordability, the College will also pursue:

- Asset rationalisation and campus optimisation
- Lease reviews and potential disposals
- Shared use and co-location opportunities with partners
- Reduction of non-essential estate footprint

Given the scale of the funding gap, external support is essential. The College has formally raised concerns with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and is actively seeking increased support to prevent further deterioration and rising long-term costs.

Looking ahead, the College will strengthen engagement with:

- SFC, to advocate for enhanced capital allocations, targeted investment in critical systems, and access to national estate improvement programmes
- Local authorities and regional partners, to explore collaborative estate solutions
- Government agencies, to leverage funding for carbon reduction, energy efficiency, and innovative learning environments
- Industry partners, to secure co-investment and harness wider development opportunities
- Community stakeholders, to ensure that estate development supports regional needs and maximises economic impact

This coordinated approach aims not only to secure additional investment but also to position the College to capitalise on strategic opportunities, including shared infrastructure, estate redevelopment partnerships, and sustainability funding streams.

RAAC (REINFORCED AUTOCLAVED AERATED CONCRETE) REMEDIATION IMPACT

Due to the significant health and safety risks associated with RAAC, the College has prioritised essential remediation works at the Finnart Street campus. These repairs were unforeseen, outside the College's control, and not included in our planned capital investment. Had these works not been undertaken, the building would have deteriorated to the point of closure, posing serious risks to both staff and students.

As a direct consequence, the College's infrastructure strategy has been revised, with numerous planned projects either postponed or cancelled. This necessary reprioritisation has broader implications for the maintenance and development of our remaining ageing estate portfolio. Moreover, the scale and urgency of the RAAC repairs have had a material impact on the College's operating cash flow.

DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

West College Scotland's digital infrastructure faces several key challenges, including ageing network equipment, rising operational costs, and an increasingly complex cyber threat landscape.

Historically, the College has relied on incremental upgrades rather than a comprehensive refresh of its network infrastructure. As a result, critical components, such as network switches and server platforms are approaching obsolescence. Costs for digital systems and services continue to rise, with particularly sharp increases in licensing (e.g. VMware), placing pressure on existing budgets. Simultaneously, cyber threats are evolving rapidly, necessitating ongoing vigilance, enhanced security protocols, and staff awareness.

These technical challenges coincide with shifting expectations from students, staff, and external partners. The College must deliver a digital environment that supports cutting-edge curriculum delivery, efficient operations, and enhanced collaboration. There is a growing expectation that learning and working spaces are equipped with modern, intuitive technologies that facilitate hybrid delivery, digital inclusion, and flexible working.

Beyond teaching and learning, the College aims to improve data utilisation, strengthen decision-making capabilities, and advance the use of smart technologies, such as integrated building management systems to drive efficiency.

To address these needs, the College has defined a structured Digital Infrastructure Framework under four key pillars: Governance, Infrastructure, People, and Data & Reporting. Over the next five years, the College will focus on the following strategic outcomes:

1. Governance

- Enhance change management processes across digital operations
- Adopt the National Cyber Security Centre's (NCSC) Cyber Assessment Framework
- Progress adoption of Jisc's Digital Elevation Tool and re-establish the College Digital Group

2. Infrastructure

- Deliver a phased renewal programme for network equipment across all campuses
- Establish robust reporting on the utilisation of IT assets and print resources
- Rationalise the College's server estate by migrating away from VMWare and expanding cloud-based infrastructure

3. People

- Embed the new IT team structure following the recent reshaping programme
- Upskill staff to increase digital fluency and resilience
- Strengthen liaison mechanisms across departments (e.g. Senior Leadership Team engagement)

4. Data & Reporting

- Establish a cross-college Data Reliability Group
- Develop and embed Power BI dashboards to support data-informed decision-making
- Evaluate the use of AI and automation technologies to drive operational efficiency

Through this strategic approach, West College Scotland aims to create a secure, resilient, and future-ready digital infrastructure that empowers staff and students, improves service delivery, and strengthens organisational agility.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

| OBJECTIVE | KEY DELIVERABLES |
|--|--|
| 1. Align estate with educational needs | Strengthen contribution to regional development by delivering fit-for-purpose facilities. Modern, tech-enabled spaces aligned to curriculum hubs and regional skills priorities. |
| 2. Enable flexible learning and engagement through high quality estate | Align estate provision with evolving educational needs. Agile learning, working and social environments supporting hybrid delivery, student experience and staff collaboration. |
| 3. Deliver a pathway to achieve net zero by 2040, while acknowledging that achieving the target will require increased government investment beyond current resources. | Publish the College's environmental sustainability action plan and net zero commitment, with a focus on low-carbon technologies, energy efficiency, and sustainability embedded in design and operations. |
| 4. Maintain cost-efficient estate | Maintain a high-quality, cost-efficient, and financially resilient estate, maintained to high standards of operational efficiency and readiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Implement a comprehensive planned and reactive maintenance programme● Asset optimisation● Opportunities to generate income through estate utilisation will be explored and promoted |
| 5. Leverage collaboration and shared services | Explore and implement opportunities for collaboration: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Shared services and co-located delivery models with stakeholders, including public sector bodies and third-sector partners |

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

West College Scotland's Infrastructure Strategy is guided by the principles rooted in the College's Strategic Plan, ensuring estate decisions directly support its mission, values, and long-term ambitions. The strategy is also informed by careful consideration of the following key factors:

Learning Teaching and Student Experience Strategy Alignment

West College Scotland's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy sets the direction for learning and teaching over the next four years. To support its delivery, the Infrastructure Strategy must enable and align with the following priorities:

- Realignment of curriculum delivery around three strategic hubs: STEM, Health and Social Care, and the Foundation Economy
- Flexible estate planning to support evolving subject areas and respond to employer demand

This approach ensures our curriculum remains responsive to regional skills needs, supports inclusive economic growth, and enables learners to access the qualifications and training required for emerging job opportunities. High-quality, adaptable facilities will be central to delivering improved learning outcomes, employer engagement, and long-term strategic impact.

SFC COLLEGE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN

West College Scotland's Infrastructure Strategy aligns with the Scottish Funding Council's national approach to modernising college estates and digital infrastructure. In early 2024, the College submitted detailed baseline data to support SFC's sector-wide planning for the next 5-10 years.

In its July 2025 update, the SFC confirmed this data will guide investment prioritisation, estate rationalisation, shared services, and collaboration. This marks a shift from a place-based model to outcome-focused investment, ensuring resources directly support learner success, economic growth, and long-term sustainability.

Future priorities will be shaped by the College Transformation Framework, including curriculum reform. Updated asset-disposal guidance provides greater flexibility, allowing colleges to retain up to £1m from asset sales and, with ministerial approval, 70% of proceeds beyond that.

As key community anchors, colleges support regional economies and widen access to skills and training. Delivering a strong national infrastructure plan, with sustained investment in modern, flexible learning environments is essential to prepare Scotland's workforce for emerging industries.

SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO PLAN

The Infrastructure Strategy is closely aligned with Scotland's net zero ambitions, prioritising reduced environmental impact through efficient energy use, low carbon technologies, and sustainable construction. Future estate development will focus on improving building performance, increasing renewable energy generation, and embedding carbon reducing innovations across campuses.

Sustainability will be integrated into all stages of the infrastructure lifecycle, from planning and procurement to design, delivery, and long-term operation. Key actions include intelligent space planning, phasing out fossil-fuel heating systems, and enhancing insulation and thermal efficiency. The College will also drive behavioural change through staff, student, and partner engagement to foster a culture of environmental responsibility.

Performance will be continually monitored and reported, enabling adaptation in line with new technologies, evolving climate targets, and emerging funding opportunities. However, full delivery of these ambitions will only be achievable with significant additional government investment and/or access to enhanced sustainability grant funding to support the scale of transformation required. Through this institution wide approach, the College aims to deliver high-performing, sustainable infrastructure and support Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy.

LEGISLATION

West College Scotland's estate development is governed by a wide and evolving legislative framework, including planning regulations, fire safety, building standards, health and safety, accessibility, and community empowerment laws. Navigating this complex landscape requires forward-looking estate planning to ensure long-term compliance across all regulatory areas.

Alongside legal obligations, the College operates in a dynamic environment shaped by shifting relationships with students, staff, employers, local communities, and national partners. As engagement with the Scottish Funding Council and Scottish Government evolves, the College must adopt a responsive and future-focused approach to infrastructure management.

INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

In recent years, funding allocations from the Scottish Funding Council have either remained static or decreased, placing sustained pressure on the College's financial planning. Additionally, ambiguity surrounding the accounting treatment of capital transfers has contributed to uncertainty.

This financial landscape is further compounded by rising staff costs, which in turn creates a pressing need to reduce non-staff expenditure across operational budgets. The Estates budget, representing a substantial proportion of the College's overall spend, has consequently been subject to significant scrutiny and constraint. This is despite the urgent and ongoing requirement to invest in an ageing estate to maintain safe, fit-for-purpose facilities that meet institutional and regulatory standards.

MONITORING AND GOVERNANCE

To ensure robust governance and effective oversight delivery of the Infrastructure Strategy will be overseen by the Vice Principal of Operations, reporting and oversight through the Corporate Development Committee and the Board of Management. Delivery will feature:

- Six-monthly progress review and reporting
- Strategic alignment across Estates, Digital, Finance, Curriculum and Workforce plans
- Stakeholder engagement with students, staff and partners
- Clear prioritisation and disciplined investment control

To remain attractive, accessible, and fit for purpose, the College's Infrastructure Strategy must retain sufficient flexibility to adapt to emerging priorities and changing expectations. It must also be subject to regular review and refinement to ensure alignment with strategic outcomes.

Above all, the College must continue to harness every opportunity to transform its existing estate into a forward-looking, high-performing environment. This will be critical to enabling the delivery of outstanding teaching, learning, and support services reinforcing West College Scotland's position as a sector leader and driver of regional development.

APPENDIX: 1 CAMPUS ESTATE OVERVIEW

| BUILDING | CONSTRUCTION/ STRUCTURE | FLOORS/ AREA |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Paisley | | |
| Oakshaw Building | 1960s, concrete frame, brick, low-pitch roof | |
| Renfrew Building | c.1980s, concrete frame, roughcast | |
| Renfrew North Building | Modern steel frame, clad panels | |
| Abercorn Building (C-Listed) | 1902 red sandstone; pitched slate roof | |
| Inchinnan Building | Brick, flat roof, roof lights | |
| ICE Building | 2010 steel frame; blockwork | |
| Renfrew Sports Centre | Shared facility | 202m ² exclusive + shared access |
| Ferguslie Community Centre | Community facility | 100m ² |
| Greenock Campus | | |
| Finnart Street | | |
| Main Tower | 1970, reinforced concrete, flat roof, single glazing | 7-storey |
| Workshops | Concrete frame; north-light roof | 2 levels |
| Waterfront | | |
| Waterfront Building | 2000, modern build | 3,721 m ² |
| Clydebank Campus | | |
| Queens Quay Campus | 2008, steel frame, clad, double glazing | 17,806 m ² |

KEY FACILITIES**SERVICES/ SUSTAINABILITY RECENT WORKS/NOTES**

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Workshops, offices (1st & 2nd floor vacant) | Gas roof heaters, fluorescent lighting | 2018 electrical upgrade; 2024-25 window/cladding replacement, fire exits, removal of lean-to, new social space |
| Training kitchens, classrooms, offices, lift | | Fully double-glazed |
| Classrooms, offices, refectory | Recessed fluorescent lights, A/C, radiators | |
| Office & teaching spaces | | 2023; £1m roof & stone repairs |
| Dance studios, theatre, offices | | 2021; £1.5m refurbishment |
| Teaching & support spaces | Biomass boiler, wind turbine, solar, backup gas heaters | |
| Games hall, dance studio, fitness suite | | Partnership with Renfrewshire Leisure |
| Classroom | | Used for Prince's Trust & essential skills |
| Classrooms, training kitchens, salons, refectory, reception | | |
| Engineering & vocational workshops | | 2024 RAAC steel supports; 2025 roof & insulation replacement |
| Social Sciences & Healthcare | | Specialist teaching centre |
| Classrooms, offices, gym, refectory, training kitchens, automotive & engineering workshops | | Riverside regeneration site |

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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