



Letter to National Strategy Forum Members from Kirstie Donnelly MBE and Alan Woods OBE

Dear NSF members,

As Board members we are all extremely grateful for the leadership of Paul Eeles and Terry Fennell in their role of Chair and Vice-Chair of the FAB Board, through what has been exceptionally turbulent times. Their advice, good humour and sheer professionalism has lent the FAB Board an exceptional “well” of knowledge and skill upon which to draw.

Building on the strong foundation created by Paul and Terry, as well as under Tom’s leadership, it’s heartening to see the latest Member Survey shows a 97% satisfaction rate with the performance of the organisation.

As we prepare to see Paul and Terry retire from their positions at the AGM on the 8th December, we wanted to introduce ourselves as the new Co-Chairs, who will formally take over these Board leadership positions once Paul and Terry have formally stepped down in December.

We appreciate the decision by the Board to appoint a Co-Chairs arrangement is both novel and innovative. However, both of us feel that the external environment, not least all of us operating in the midst of a pandemic, presents a very unique and challenging set of circumstances.

The challenge we face as a professional trade body is one of opportunity to shape the future, not only in relation to the Government changes in England to educational policy, i.e. the FE White Paper, L3 and below reviews, T Levels, Apprenticeship Reform, Higher Technical Qualification L4/5 expansion; but increasingly an agenda which has become highly complex in our relationships with significant stakeholders, such as Ofqual and other regulators in devolved governments.

We believe the breadth of engagement required as we face the future is probably beyond what is possible for one chair and a vice chair, operating as we do as executive leaders within our own organisations as well as the non-executive positions on the FAB Board. It is also a moment, we believe, in which we can build on the success of the last few years and strike out in a new direction.

Working with FAB’s hard working and dedicated staff team, we think we can use our joint experience and talents, not only to deliver on the transformational agenda necessary both within and outside of FAB, but also cover for each other as the need arises in chairing Board meetings, working groups or guiding and encouraging Tom Bewick, our chief executive.

Between us we have over 55 years’ experience in the skills and education field, working and leading in both the formal and informal educational sector through trading charities,



private companies, FE, HE and consultancy, with a strong emphasis on commercial success and putting the learner at the heart of what we do.

As we navigate the next 3+ years we believe 'two chairs' operating as co-chairs will be better than one, because it will provide more resource to support the FAB team and allow Tom and the Board to use more of the talents of the Board and members of the National Strategy Forum, depending on the circumstances required.

We are very excited about the opportunity this may present for FAB, both for the Board and its Membership; and we are very committed to making this work. We are determined to see and ensure that FAB makes significant headway in these challenging times, but equally determined that we can support Tom and the team to ensure we continue to represent, promote and embody the fantastic work of all our member organisations, partners and colleagues.

Finally, utilising the digital investments we have made recently in the organisation, the team will be writing out to you in due course with details about a series of member virtual 'Town Halls' we will be hosting in the New Year. This will be your opportunity to inform us directly what you want from your professional association and for us to share our longer-term plans with you.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirstie Donnelley'.

Kirstie Donnelley MBE

Chief Executive
City & Guilds Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Woods'.

Alan Woods OBE

Chief Executive
Vocational Training and Charitable Trust (VTCT)