

Newsletter 47: 1st August 2008

This is part of a fortnightly series of newsletters that will help explain the process and progression of the Convergence Programmes for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The newsletters will contain the most up to date information about Convergence as it evolves over the coming months. **Updated information will appear in bold blue type. The next issue will be circulated on 5 September 2008.**

PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

Continuing our series in which partners reflect on key topics for Convergence, Dr Richard Cresswell, South West Regional Director at the Environment Agency, reflects on the environment as a cross-cutting theme and as an economic driver.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMIC REGENERATION

Dr Richard Cresswell, Environment Agency

Environment and economy

“The environment is one of the South West’s greatest assets. It is an important driver of the economy, with key roles to play in business productivity and new business sectors, as well as attracting inward investment.

Sustainable development

“Sustainable development is among the principles enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union and the Lisbon Agenda and is a key aim of the Convergence Programme.

Regional strategy

“The Regional Economic Strategy for the South West aspires to the protection and enhancement of the region’s unique environmental and cultural assets to attract investment and develop economic advantage.

Is the ‘Greening’ of Projects Just a Matter of Policy?

Positive impact

“Environmental consideration not only benefits the project itself, but makes good use of and supports the developing goods and services sector.

Business benefits

“Environmentally economic programmes have proven to be more effective at delivering value. They encourage environmental innovation, for example, as well as showing greater efficiency through cost savings from minimising use of resources and energy across the business base.

Emerging sector

“These programmes also create economic opportunities for the emergent and dynamic environmental sector, by stimulating the creation of ‘green jobs’, fostering demand for environmental technologies and helping create a critical

mass of environmental skills.

Reduced risks

“Considering and managing environmental risks reduces the overall risk to both projects and programmes. Initiatives become more attractive to investors and resilient to future pressures from increasing environmental regulation, higher energy and resources costs, climate change and raised social expectations.

Lower carbon economy

“The impacts of global climate change, global commodity and resource price increases are at the forefront of everybody’s agenda. It is time for the Convergence Programmes to play, and be seen to play, a key role in helping stimulate a lower carbon economy. They can help increase environmental understanding in businesses, boosting resource efficiency and the sustainable management of waste. Investing in research and innovation will help trigger the new economy.

“Maximising the use of nature’s renewable resources, minimising waste, and working in an attractive environment cannot be left just to policy – it’s good business sense.”

Dr Richard Cresswell MBE
South West Regional Director
Environment Agency

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CONVERGENCE

Why did Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly qualify for Convergence?

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly gained Convergence status when the European Union’s budget for 2007-2013 was decided. At that time the most up to date figures (an average for 2000-2002) showed that Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP, a measure of wealth creation) was less than 75% of the European Union average, allowing this area to qualify for Convergence. If the measurement was done again today we would no longer qualify. The latest data shows that in 2005 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly’s GDP per head was 77% of the EU average.

Focus of ERDF Convergence Programme

The ERDF Convergence Programme will focus on business support, modern economic infrastructure and increasing innovation and research and development. The majority of activity will be commissioned, so there will be very limited opportunities for bidding into the Programme. Commissioning teams have begun to identify, develop and test potential investments.

First ERDF Convergence investment

The European Regional Development Fund Convergence Programme is to invest in improvements on the Truro-Falmouth branch line to double train services, www.objectiveone.com/client/media/media-1400.htm.

Peninsula Dental School investment

The Peninsula Dental School is to receive investment through the European Regional Development Fund Convergence Programme to help develop a state-of-the-art dental education and research facility in Truro. Details are available at www.objectiveone.com/client/media/media-1417.htm.

ESF Convergence Programme

The European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence Programme, which allocates c. £133m to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, will focus on tackling barriers to work, improving workforce skills, and research and graduate activity.

Department for Work and Pensions investments announced The Department for Work and Pensions has announced three ESF Convergence investments which will encourage people into work. Please see Newsletters 44 and 45 www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/newsletters.htm and www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp for more information.

Learning and Skills Council investments The Learning and Skills Council has agreed a number of investments to raise workforce skill levels. Further information can be found in Newsletter 44 at www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/newsletters.htm and at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/.

ESF newsletter An e-zine, 'ESF at Work', is available at www.esf.gov.uk/news/e-zine/.

European investment in the Convergence Programmes European investment in the ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes:

	£	€
ERDF	c. £311.4 m	c. €458 m
ESF	c. £133.3 m	c. €196 m
Total investment	c. £444.7 m	c. €654 m

Rural Programme in the South West The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) allocates Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly c. £55m (EU investment plus UK match-funding) for the socio-economic parts of the Programme. Further information is available at www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/post2006_faq.htm#Q4.

Local Action Groups selected **Local Action Groups for the Clay Country, East Cornwall, West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have been successful in bidding for investment from the Rural Development Programme. Detailed planning and implementation of projects to support sustainable farming, forestry and food sectors, whilst bringing benefits to the economy, environment and rural communities will begin in autumn 2008. Details can be found at www.southwestrda.org.uk/news/release.asp?releaseid=2648.**

Accessing the Rural Programme The Rural Programme can be accessed through the Rural Development Gateway at www.sw-ruralgateway.info and on telephone number 0845 600 9966. The Gateway can provide advice about developing project proposals. Further information is also available from www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/index.htm and www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafrd/introduction.shtm.

European Fisheries Fund Programme **The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Programme allocates £7.3 million to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. European Commission agreement to the UK Operational Programme is expected this month and the Marine and Fisheries Agency expects to be able to announce the launch of the scheme in the next few weeks. Details will be posted on the MFA website, www.mfa.gov.uk/, and an advertisement will appear in 'Fishing News'.**

Expressions of interest sought The Marine Fisheries Agency is currently seeking expressions of interest from those who would like to access the Programme. Further information can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/fisheries/grants.htm, and www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/naturalenvironment.htm.

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

The detail of the Fisheries Programme Work is underway in the Marine and Fisheries Agency (MFA) to develop the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Operational Programme.

More detailed information about Convergence, links to key organisations and websites can be found in the 'Convergence' section of the website www.objectiveone.com.

Information is also available from the Partnership Office's helpline on 0800 028 0120.