

Newsletter 44: 20th June 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.**

UPDATE FROM JOBCENTRE PLUS

Jobcentre Plus programme begins

The Jobcentre Plus (Department for Work and Pensions) Co-financing Programme commences on 23 June and will support 8,400 people over the next three years to overcome barriers to employment and move into and towards work, with 2,100 moving into work with ongoing training and development.

Who it will help

The programme, which is available for all workless people in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, is prioritised towards people who are most disadvantaged in the labour market. Support will also be available for people who are at risk of becoming unemployed through large-scale redundancy.

Scope of delivery

The programme will deliver across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, with additional resources in areas where there are high concentrations of worklessness, with the aim to inspire more people to take up activity in those areas.

Strands of activity

There are three strands to the overall programme:

- Cornwall Works Plus will provide high quality, individually tailored pathways to employment and engage more people in areas where the benefit claim rate is high through the development of multi-agency Neighbourhood Action Teams. This will be delivered through Working Links in partnership with a range of local sub-contractors.
- Cornwall Works for Social Enterprise will engage, inspire and upskill participants through activities delivered by range of social enterprise partners under the leadership of Cornwall County Council.
- Cornwall Works for Learning Disabilities provides ring-fenced investment and support to help people with learning disabilities secure employment. This activity will be led by Cornwall County Council and delivered through the Learning Disabilities Partnership.

Further information

More information on Department for Work and Pensions programmes is available from Jobcentre Plus. Please contact: carolyn.webster@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk.

Carolyn Webster
European Funding and Programmes Manager
Jobcentre Plus

UPDATE FROM THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

ESF Convergence investments

The Learning and Skills Council has developed European Social Fund Convergence Programme investments which address regional and local employment and skills priorities and will add value to mainstream skills and employment services by providing enhanced packages of support and extending eligibility. The Learning and Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus have worked closely together to develop complementary European Social Fund investment packages.

Workforce development

One of the initial contracts to be agreed is a partnership project involving thirteen sector organisations, the Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service and learning providers to engage businesses in workforce development. This £8m project aims to deliver over 2000 qualifications, will invest in developing eleven new qualifications and will promote career options to school students. It will complement European Regional Development Fund Convergence investments in business growth by supporting networking skills amongst small and medium sized enterprises.

Third Sector and Social Partners

A further £2.2m investment focuses on Third Sector and Social Partner organisations, developing their capacity to contribute to the Convergence Programme by carrying out organisational health checks, increasing the number of employees with Skills for Life qualifications and promoting volunteering.

Isles of Scilly

The £570k Progressive Isles project seeks to deliver a learning and skills programme that enables individuals, organisations and businesses to fulfil their ambitions and potential on the Isles of Scilly, by offering a range of qualifications to residents.

Skills for Life

Another £4m programme will provide Continuing Professional Development to those delivering Skills for Life courses. It aims to increase participation in Skills for Life courses and will help businesses and social partners improve take up and achievement of Skills for Life qualifications in the workforce.

Further information

Further information about these investments will be made available as projects go live.

Mark Williams
Skills Development Director - ESF
Learning and Skills Council

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 in this Programme will be commissioned, so there will be very limited opportunities for bidding into the Programme. Commissioning teams have begun to identify and develop investments and once they have been tested and agreed the activity will be commissioned.

ESF Convergence Programme The European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence Programme will focus on tackling barriers to work, improving workforce skills, and research and graduate activity. It allocates c. £133m to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/Jobcentre Plus will deliver investments via competitive tendering. Further information can be found at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/ and www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp.

Department for Work and Pensions investments announced The Department for Work and Pensions has announced its first three European Social Fund Convergence Programme investments which will encourage people into work. Working Links (Employment) Ltd and Cornwall County Council will manage the investments which will be delivered through Jobcentre Plus. Further information can be found above and at www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp.

Learning and Skills Council investments **The Learning and Skills Council has agreed a number of investments which will focus on raising skill levels in the workforce in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Further information can be found in the 'Update from the Learning and Skills Council' above.**

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

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. Investment will be channelled into demand-led bids into the Programme (e.g. for farm diversification or adding value to produce); commissioned projects (strategic investments to deliver key support); and support for community-led development.**

Commissioned investments

More information about commissioned investments being developed by the Rural Programme will be made available at www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/post2006_faq.htm.

Contacting the Rural Programme

The main portal for contacting the Programme is the Rural Development Gateway at www.sw-ruralgateway.info. 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 has allocated £7.3 million to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. A consultation is being held until 27 June 2008 to help develop of the UK's EFF Operational Programme. Until the Operational Programme is complete, the Marine Fisheries Agency is 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, www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/naturaleenvironment.htm and www.mfa.gov.uk/.

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 Objective One website www.objectiveone.com.