

# Newsletter 41: 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008

This is part of a fortnightly series of newsletters that will help explain the process and progression towards 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.

## PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE

*Continuing our series in which partners reflect on key topics for Convergence, Mark Williams of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) discusses the role of business in the LSC's workforce development strategy.*

### BUSINESS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – Mark Williams, Learning and Skills Council

#### ESF Convergence Framework

“In contributing to the implementation of the ESF Convergence Framework the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has defined a series of specifications which ensure LSC investments add value to the ERDF Convergence Programme as well as mainstream LSC and Department for Work and Pensions programmes.

#### Workforce development programme

“The focus of the Convergence ERDF Programme is clearly about increasing business competitiveness and productivity, and sector groupings may be an important route to businesses that provide well paid jobs through growth and innovation. This focus has been applied to the LSC's ESF workforce development programme and developed to build on the successful business led programmes delivered with Objective One. Sector groupings have provided an effective bridge between learning/skills providers and businesses, with tangible improvement in business involvement in planning and delivering learning.

#### Strands of activity

“The LSC will invest in three broad strands of workforce development activity: employer/sector-led workforce interventions, area-focussed investments to complement ERDF investments in place, and workforce-led provisions.

#### Programmes of activity

“Programmes of activity which will contribute to the effectiveness of the ESF workforce development strategy have been developed, based on these strands. They include equality and diversity, higher level skills, Voluntary and Community Sector support, support for the rural land-based sectors and for family learning.

**Key considerations** To deliver this strategic investment successfully the Learning and Skills Council's investments through the ESF Convergence Programme will take into account key considerations including:

- The need to further develop sector and local workforce skills programmes
- The importance of overcoming barriers to training, especially those faced by smaller businesses
- The importance of supporting and using employer and employee organisations - such as sector networks and the TUC - to demonstrate the mutual benefits of learning
- Developing vocational training centres in partnership
- Cross-sector working on learning opportunities for adults
- Improving opportunities for transferring skills between jobs and sectors
- Focusing on investing in activities rather than organisations to achieve these goals."

Mark Williams  
Skills Development Director – ESF  
Learning and Skills Council

#### UPDATE FROM THE MANAGING AGENT

**Business support requirements** As many of you will know Nick Turner, on secondment to the South West RDA from Serco, has been helping define the business support requirements across the South West including the role that ERDF Convergence can play in delivering them.

**Informed the Convergence Programme** I would like to thank Nick and all those who have contributed to his review – Nick has brought a valuable external view, in the light of the national business support simplification agenda, to business support provision. This work has informed Programme partners on what businesses in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly need going forward and will inform the ERDF Convergence commissioning process.

**Key issues** Nick's work has highlighted a number of issues, including the following

- Businesses taking control / giving businesses choice in accessing business support
- The need to invest in activities and not organisations
- The need for a more robust approach to measuring the impact of business support on the economy
- Achieving sustainability in business support post 2013

**Next steps** Over the next couple of months the Programme Monitoring Committee will receive a framework for business support investment for Priority 2 of the ERDF Convergence Programme and Convergence investments will be commissioned to implement this. This framework will be made available under 'Convergence' at [www.objectiveone.com](http://www.objectiveone.com) following its presentation to the PMC. In the meantime the key contact in the South West RDA is Josie Linton – 01872 243 750 / [josie.linton@southwestrda.org.uk](mailto:josie.linton@southwestrda.org.uk).

Phil McVey  
Director of European Programmes  
South West Regional Development Agency

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CONVERGENCE

<b>Second round of Learning and Skills Council tenders</b>	The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has released its second tranche of tender specifications for ESF Convergence investments. They include support for: area-focussed investments to complement ERDF Convergence place-based regeneration; the rural land based sector; and Higher Education. The LSC expects contracts to start in the autumn. For further details please see <a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/">www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/</a> .
<b>Rural Programme at Royal Cornwall Show</b>	The South West Regional Development Agency will be promoting the Rural Development Programme for England at the Royal Cornwall Show, 5 - 7 June 2008, including an event 'Supporting Rural Development - Life after Objective One'. For details see <a href="http://www.objectiveone.com">www.objectiveone.com</a> , 'Recent News'.
<b>Why did Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly qualify for Convergence?</b>	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.
<b>Focus of ERDF Convergence Programme</b>	The ERDF Convergence Programme, which began in January 2008, will focus on business support, modern economic infrastructure and increasing innovation and research and development.
<b>What activities will be eligible for ERDF investment?</b>	Details of activities which will be supported can be found in the ERDF Convergence Operational Programme at <a href="http://www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/recentnews.htm">www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/recentnews.htm</a> under '14 December 2007'.
<b>How can I apply for ERDF Convergence investment?</b>	The majority of activity in this Programme will be commissioned, so there will be very limited opportunities for bidding into the Programme. If opportunities arise they will be publicised at <a href="http://www.objectiveone.com">www.objectiveone.com</a> under 'Convergence'.
<b>Commissioning</b>	Commissioning teams have begun to identify and develop investments which partners believe have the potential to transform the economy. Once proposals have been tested and agreed the Programme will commission activity to implement them.
<b>ESF Programme for England</b>	The national European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme, which will invest in skills and employment, includes an allocation of c. £133m and specific priorities for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It can be found at <a href="http://www.esf.gov.uk">www.esf.gov.uk</a> .
<b>What activities will be eligible for ESF investment?</b>	ESF investment will focus on tackling barriers to work, improving workforce skills, and research and graduate activity. Further details can be found at <a href="http://www.esf.gov.uk">www.esf.gov.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.swrsp.org.uk">www.swrsp.org.uk</a> .
<b>ESF Co-Financing, tendering and procurement</b>	The Learning and Skills Council and the Department for Work and Pensions (Jobcentre Plus) have invited organisations to tender to deliver ESF investments. Successful bidders are expected to be announced during the summer. Further information can be found at <a href="http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/">www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/provider-procurement/esf-procurement/</a> and <a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp">www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp</a> .

ESF newsletter	An e-zine, 'ESF at Work', is available at <a href="http://www.esf.gov.uk/news/e-zine/">www.esf.gov.uk/news/e-zine/</a> .												
European investment in the Convergence Programmes	<p>European investment in the ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>£</th> <th>€</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ERDF</td> <td>c. £311.4 m</td> <td>c. €458 m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ESF</td> <td>c. £133.3 m</td> <td>c. €196 m</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total investment</td> <td>c. £444.7 m</td> <td>c. €654 m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		£	€	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
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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	The approved RDPE Programme Document can be found at <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/progdoc.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/progdoc.htm</a> and additional information is available from <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/index.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/index.htm</a> and <a href="http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafpd/introduction.shtm">www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafpd/introduction.shtm</a> .												
Accessing the Rural Programme	The main portal for the Rural Programme is the Rural Development Gateway which can be found at <a href="http://www.sw-ruralgateway.info">www.sw-ruralgateway.info</a> . Larger projects and services will be commissioned by the South West RDA. Full access to investment will be available in autumn 2008. Until then, the South West Regional Development Agency will process a small number of early investments where proposals are fully developed.												
European Fisheries Fund Programme	The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Programme has allocated £7.3 million to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Before the Programme begins the UK's National Strategic Plan (NSP) and Operational Programme must be approved by the European Commission. The NSP has been submitted to the Commission and can be found at <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/marine/fisheries/grants.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/marine/fisheries/grants.htm</a> .												
Responses to first phase of consultation	The first phase of the consultation on the EFF Operational Programme concluded on 4 April 2008. A summary of responses can be found at <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund/index.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund/index.htm</a> .												
Second phase of consultation	The second phase of the consultation - 2 May to 27 June 2008 - seeks further comments, particularly regional perspectives. For information, please see <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund%2Dphase2/">www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund%2Dphase2/</a> .												
Expressions of interest	While the EFF Operational Programme is developed, the Marine Fisheries Agency is seeking expressions of interest from those who would like to access the Programme. Details are available at <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund%2Dphase2/">www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund%2Dphase2/</a> .												
Further information	For further information about the Fisheries Programme please see <a href="http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/european-programmes.shtm">www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/european-programmes.shtm</a> and <a href="http://www.mfa.gov.uk/">www.mfa.gov.uk/</a> .												

## 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](http://www.objectiveone.com).