

Newsletter 39: 11th April 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, Sarah Trethowan of TRAC Services Ltd discusses her experiences of the positive value of business support in helping her business grow and prosper.

BUSINESS SUPPORT, WHAT WORKS FOR ME? – Sarah Trethowan, TRAC Services Ltd

- TRAC Services Ltd** “My husband and I run a pharmaceutical consultancy company based at the Tolvaddon Energy Park. We started the business from a home office in Camborne on returning to Cornwall in 2001. We now employ 8 people.
- Workspace** “One of the most important factors for us in growing our business is the availability of quality office space that is the right size and location. After a number of unsuccessful months trying to identify a suitable office, Cornwall Pure Business helped us secure a unit on the Tolvaddon Energy Park.
- Knowledge** “Another key element in our rapid growth has been our involvement with the Unlocking Cornish Potential (UCP) programme. TRAC has employed six graduates through UCP who are all still with us and delivering real value for the business. The quality of the mentor support provided for graduates through UCP is exceptional. This aspect of the programme is maximising the benefits to the company.
- Business support agencies** “We have benefited from working with support agencies including actnow, Cornwall Enterprise and Business Link. However, at times the application process to gain support can be very time consuming and therefore disproportionate to the value obtained. We are fortunate to have been appointed a direct contact within these agencies who is able to inform us of available support and help us access this. This greatly increases the benefit.

Future	<p>“For businesses like ours to continue to grow, there is a need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create new office spaces of the right size in the right locations • continue the UCP programme and build on its strengths • provide businesses with one adviser who can develop an understanding of the company and then identify and access via other agencies the most appropriate advice and support available
Value added	<p>“Business support does work and can add real value but it has to be easy to access and people providing it need to ensure they understand the businesses they support.”</p> <p>Sarah Trethowan BSc MTOPRA Company Director TRAC Services Ltd</p>

UPDATE FROM THE MANAGING AGENT

Convergence and business	<p>A very live question in the past few months has been: What does the Convergence ERDF Programme mean for business sectors? Perhaps we should say, is that the right question? The real question is: What does the Convergence ERDF Programme mean for business?</p>
Approach	<p>The overall mission of the ERDF Convergence Programme is to grow, create and sustain high value added businesses, that will themselves create and sustain more and better jobs for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The approach to this in the ERDF Programme is firmly rooted in the Lisbon Agenda. That is that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we produce new ideas and technologies in Cornwall and Scilly, or that we import the best from elsewhere. • we put in place the right people and premises so that business can take advantage of those new ideas and technologies. • we underpin that with a package of business support measures that is non sector specific – in other words it focuses on the potential of any business to create the new and better jobs we need and increase the value of our economy.
Focus on businesses	<p>Sector groupings may therefore act as an important bridge to these high value added businesses, but it is the businesses that are the focus of the ERDF Programme wherever they are.</p> <p>Phil McVey Director of European Programmes South West Regional Development Agency</p>

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CONVERGENCE

Rural Development Gateway	Support from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) can be accessed through the Rural Development Gateway which offers advice and information about all elements of the Programme (environmental and socio-economic) and provides a route to help from the South West Rural Enterprise Gateway (SWREG) which deals with business and community aspects.
Support available	Support from SWREG is available now and can help with setting up collaborative groups, accessing investment for advice and training, and linking to a university based knowledge network.
Next Steps	Full access to investment from the Rural Programme will be available in autumn 2008 when the regional Grant Administration Body will be in place. Businesses that wish to access investment can contact the Rural Development Gateway to register their interest and begin developing their business plans.
Contact details	The Rural Development Gateway can be contacted on telephone number 0845 600 9966 or at www.sw-ruralgateway.info .
Why did Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly qualify for Convergence?	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were awarded Convergence status when the European Union's budget for 2007-2013 was decided. At that time the most up to date figures 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.
Focus of ERDF Convergence Programme	The ERDF Convergence Programme, which began in January 2008, will focus on business support, modern economic infrastructure and increasing innovation and research and development.
What activities will be eligible for ERDF investment?	Details of activities which will be supported can be found in Section 6 of the ERDF Convergence Operational Programme under '14 December 2007' at www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/recentnews.htm
How can I apply for ERDF Convergence investment?	The majority of activity in this Programme will be commissioned, so there will be very limited opportunities for people to bid into the Programme. If opportunities arise they will be publicised through www.objectiveone.com under 'Convergence'.
Commissioning	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.
ESF Programme for England	The national ESF (European Social Fund) Operational Programme, which will invest in skills and employment, includes a ring-fenced allocation of c. £133m of European investment and specific priorities for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. It can be found at www.esf.gov.uk .
What activities will be eligible for ESF investment?	ESF investment will focus on tackling barriers to work, improving workforce skills, and research and graduate activity. Further details can be found at www.esf.gov.uk and www.swrsp.org.uk .

ESF Co-Financing, tendering and procurement ESF investments will be guided by the Learning and Skills Council and the Department for Work and Pensions (Jobcentre Plus). Organisations have been invited to tender to deliver ESF investments. The Department of Work and Pensions' successful bidders are expected to be announced on 9 May 2008, with results from the Learning and Skills Council in summer 2008. Further information about tendering 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.

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. Further details can be found at www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafrd/introduction.shtm.

Access to funding from the Rural Programme Groups, organisations and businesses will be able to ask for help through the Rural Development Gateway, and the South West RDA will commission larger projects and services.

Call for Grant Administration Services The South West RDA is seeking an organisation to provide Grant Administration Services for the region's Rural Programme - please see the Official Journal of the European Union and www.southwestrda.org.uk for further details. The closing date for expressions of interest is April 23 2008.

Further information The approved RDPE Programme Document can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/rural/rdpe/progdoc.htm. Additional information can be found at 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 Programme has allocated £26.42 million to England and £7.3 million to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The UK's National Strategic Plan (NSP), has been submitted to the European Commission and can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/marine/fisheries/grants.htm.

First phase of consultation begins The first phase of the consultation on the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Operational Programme runs until 4 April 2008 - all documents can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/eufishfund/index.htm. The second phase will be followed by submission to the European Commission.

Further information For further information about the Fisheries Programme please see www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/european-programmes.shtm 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.