

Newsletter 34: 1st February 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.**

Dear Colleague

UPDATE FROM THE MANAGING AGENT

- New era** The first Joint Programme Monitoring Committee for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence Programmes for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly on Wednesday 30 January 2008 marked the beginning of a new era of structural investment.
- Protocols approved** At their meeting the Joint PMC approved a number of documents and protocols vital for the proper implementation of the Programmes, including the ERDF selection criteria that will be used to appraise proposed investments.
- Cornwall University for the Arts** The PMC also considered an important and early project. In considering the proposed Cornwall University for the Arts (led by University College Falmouth and Dartington College of Arts) the Joint PMC gave their in principle support for the project to receive investment.
- In principle support given** In giving their in principle support to the proposed investment the Joint PMC was impressed by the proposed Cornwall University of the Arts and its potential to contribute to an economically successful future for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
- Opportunity** The Cornwall University of the Arts proposal offers Cornwall the opportunity of building the critical mass for a University that will cater for an enviable spectrum of specialist arts disciplines that will give Cornwall a new and sustainable Higher Education institution of regional standing.

Phil McVey
Director of European Programmes
South West Regional Development Agency

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CONVERGENCE

ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes begin	The first formal meeting of the ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes Joint Monitoring Committee on 30 January 2008 marked the beginning of the Convergence Programmes.
Why did Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly qualify for Convergence?	Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were awarded Convergence status in 2005, 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. Economic growth since then means it is unlikely that Cornwall will qualify for this level of funding again, so it is essential to maximise the impact of Convergence investments.
Management arrangements for Convergence ERDF	<p>The managing agent, with overall responsibility for delivering the ERDF Convergence Programme will be the South West Regional Development Agency.</p> <p>The Joint Programme Monitoring Committee will oversee strategy and delivery for both the ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes, ensuring they work together effectively and delivering the ERDF Convergence Programme will be the responsibility of the Partnership Delivery Board (PDB) which will continue to develop the commissioning process.</p>
Commissioning	Commissioning teams have begun to identify and develop investments which partners believe have the potential to transform the economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Once proposals have been tested and agreed the Programme will commission activity to implement them.
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: www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/recentnews.htm .
How can I apply for funding?	As the ERDF Convergence Programme will commission the majority of its activity 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'.
Match Funding	The ERDF Convergence Programme will be funded from European and national sources. Public sector match funding is expected to come from a combination of local, regional and national sources.
ERDF Operational Programme	The approved ERDF Convergence Operational Programme is available at www.objectiveone.com/O1htm/01-convergence/recentnews.htm under '14 December 2007'.
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 .
Management and delivery arrangements for ESF Convergence	The Managing Authority will be the European Social Fund Division (ESFD) of the Department for Work and Pensions, supported by Government Office for the South West. The Joint Programme Monitoring Committee will oversee strategy and delivery, with local delivery guided by the ESF Framework and Co-Financing Plans, overseen by the Regional Skills Partnership.

What activities will be eligible for ESF investment?	ESF investment will focus on tackling barriers to work, improving the workforce's skills and research and graduate activity. Further details can be found in the national ESF Operational Programme and the ESF Convergence Framework which are available from www.esf.gov.uk and www.swrsp.org.uk respectively.												
ESF Co-Financing, tendering and procurement	<p>ESF Co-Financing Organisations - the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (Jobcentre Plus) – are undertaking a tendering process to identify organisations to deliver elements of the ESF Convergence Programme.</p> <p>Responses to the LSC's first round of Invitations to Tender are being processed and contracts may begin as early as summer 2008. The second round will focus on activities such as higher level skills, support for the Third Sector and provision to complement the Rural Development Programme for England.</p> <p>Details of the LSC and Jobcentre Plus tendering processes can be found at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/esf-procurement/ and www.dwp.gov.uk/supplyingdwp/what_we_buy/european_social_fund.asp.</p>												
ESF newsletter	More information about the ESF Programme for England can also be found in the e-zine, 'ESF at Work', which can be found at www.esf.gov.uk/news/e-zine/ .												
European investment in the Convergence Programmes	<p>The table below summarises European investment in the Convergence Programmes. There is a 70:30 split between ERDF and ESF funding.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="435 1041 1289 1189"> <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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Key facts about Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convergence consists only of ERDF and the ESF investment. • The rural and fisheries funds will be managed separately as part of national programmes with allocations for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. • Investments will be commissioned by the ERDF Convergence Programme rather than projects bidding into it. 												
National Strategic Reference Framework	The ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes are underpinned by the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) which outlines broad priorities, management arrangements and funding allocations. It can be found at www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page28796.html .												
The role of Strategy and Action	Strategy and Action – the overarching economic regeneration strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - informs the ERDF and ESF Convergence Programmes. They will not be able to do everything in Strategy and Action, but will be able to invest in some of it.												
The Lisbon Agenda	European and UK economic regeneration policy is increasingly being driven by the Lisbon Agenda where the EU set itself the goal of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world, in response to intensified competition. For more information, see http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/key/index_en.htm .												

Lisbon targets	The Convergence Programmes will need to clearly show how they are contributing to the Lisbon Agenda – this will mean a significant increase in emphasis on business competitiveness and productivity, innovation and a more knowledge based economy. The ERDF Convergence Operational Programme submitted to the European Commission suggests a target of c. 80% of the Programme to meet the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.
Launch of the Rural Programme in the South West	<p>The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) will be launched in the South West.</p> <p>Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has an allocation of c. £55m (EU investment plus UK match-funding) for the socio-economic parts of the Rural Programme, which will be delivered by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). SWRDA will work closely with Natural England and the Forestry Commission who will be delivering the environmental and land management elements of the Programme.</p>
Rural investment themes	In the South West the Rural Programme will invest in skills development, social enterprise, business support, supply chain and adding value, resource management, sustainable tourism, biodiversity and landscape and community-led development. Further details can be found in the Regional Implementation Plan at www.southwestrda.org.uk .
Access to funding in the Rural Programme	Funding is being made available in two ways: groups, organisation and businesses will be able to ask for help through a Rural Development Gateway, and the South West RDA will commission larger projects and services.
Further information	The approved RDPE Programme Document can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/rdp07_13/progdoc.htm . Additional information can be found at www.objectiveone.com under ‘Convergence’, www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafnd/introduction.shtm and www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/rdp07_13/index.htm .
European Fisheries Fund Programme	The UK is required to submit its National Strategic Plan (NSP) and its European Fisheries Fund Operational Programme to the European Commission before the Programme can begin. The NSP is under development and a public consultation on the EFF Operational Programme is expected start in March 2008.
Budget for Fisheries Programme agreed	The budget for the European Fisheries Fund Programme 2007-2013 has been agreed: England has been allocated £26.42 million and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has an allocation of £7.3 million. A press release about the budget can be found at www.defra.gov.uk/news/2007/071127a.htm .

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

The detail of the Fisheries Programme	Work is underway in the Marine and Fisheries Agency (MFA) to develop a European Fisheries Fund (EFF) Operational Programme which will aim to improve sustainability and competitiveness in the fisheries industry. For further information please see www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-prog/european-programmes.shtm and www.mfa.gov.uk/ .
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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.