

Working Towards the Convergence Programmes

Newsletter 4: 27th October 2006

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 blue.](#)

Introduction

Dear Colleague

Government announcement

This week the Government confirmed the budget for the Convergence programme and announced, in broad terms, its management arrangements for Structural Fund programmes. More details are given below, but we now have a framework within which Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and regional partners can design the content and delivery of the Convergence programme.

Consultation

Over the next few months, the RDA will work with partners to work out the detail of programme priorities, and the likely amounts of money that we allocate to each priority. We are determined that this work, and the underlying consultation process, will take account of the views of all key stakeholders; a number of events will be arranged to ensure that this happens.

I know that there are still unanswered questions, and through his newsletter and the consultation events we will share what we know and what we don't know. The period between November and February will be a crucial period during which details will become clearer. Working from the Truro office of the RDA, I am committed to ensuring that we keep in constant touch and design a programme that invests in the right things for a competitive and knowledge based economy.

Draft programme

We expect to launch the draft Operational Programme early in November and I look forward to hearing your views on the document. The next newsletter on Friday 10 November will contain further information on consultation.

Yours sincerely

Phil McVey
Head of European Programmes
South West of England Regional Development Agency

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What we know about Convergence

- NSRF published* On 23rd October the Government published its response to the consultation on the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), outlining broad priorities, management arrangements and funding allocations for ERDF and ESF programmes 2007-2013.
- What is the budget for Convergence?* The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Convergence Programme will receive €79m (approx. £389m) and the Government proposes a 70:30 split between ERDF and ESF funding. However, the details of the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes will determine the final splits.
- Management arrangements for Convergence ERDF and ESF* The South West RDA will take the lead in the management of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's ERDF Convergence Programme and the Regional Skills Partnerships will play an important role in developing regional ESF strategies. However, the details of the management and delivery arrangements have yet to be clarified and further information will be contained within the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes.
- More information* More information about the NSRF and the Government's response to the consultation, can be found at:
<http://www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/page28796.html>
- Updated Convergence timetable* The Strategy & Action/Convergence timetable, circulated with this newsletter, has been updated to include more information about progression towards the Convergence Programmes.
- Consultation on Convergence* There will be thirteen-week consultations on both the national ESF Programme, expected to begin in late October, and the ERDF Convergence Programme, starting in November. They will include a number of consultation events – details are yet to be confirmed.
- The current Objective One Programme* The investment cycle of the Objective One Programme runs until 31 December 2006. This will be followed by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) Convergence programmes for the period 2007-2013. The purpose of the Convergence programmes will be to speed up the economic development of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
- The role of Strategy and Action* Strategy and Action – the overarching economic regeneration strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - will inform the ERDF and ESF Convergence programmes. The Convergence programmes will not be able to do everything that is included in Strategy and Action. They will be able to invest in some of it.
- There will be a number of differences between the Objective One Programme and the Convergence programmes.
- Convergence only ERDF and ESF*
- Convergence will consist only of ERDF and the ESF.
 - In the NSRF the Government proposes to allocate 70% of Convergence to ERDF and 30% to ESF. However, the details of the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes will determine the final splits. In Objective One 75% was allocated to ERDF and 25% to ESF.
- Rural and fish part of mainstream programmes*
- The rural and fisheries funds will become part of mainstream UK programmes.

More information about the fisheries and rural programmes

Further information about the fisheries programme can be found in the South West Regional Development Agency's Cohesion Newsletter at: <http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-funding-pos.shtm>

And more information about the rural programme, including the latest draft of the Regional Implementation Plan, is available at: www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/european-agricultura.shtm

The Objective One website www.objectiveone.com contains more information in the 'Towards Convergence' section.

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. It has been written by the EU and Member States in response to intensified competition from around the world.

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.

There will be a target of at least 60% of the Convergence programmes to meet the objectives of the Lisbon Agenda.

What we don't know about Convergence

Who will manage the Convergence Programmes?

Although we know that there will be ERDF and ESF Convergence programmes for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly – the decision was made when the European Union's Member States agreed the EU budget in December 2005 – we still do not know the exact details of the programmes.

The recently published NSRF indicates that the South West RDA will have an important role in managing the ERDF Programme; more details are expected to be included in the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes.

For Objective One, the role of Managing Authority for ERDF, ESF and EAGGF has been Government Office for the South West and the Marine Fisheries Agency for FIG.

What activities will be eligible for funding?

The NSRF outlines broad priorities for ERDF and ESF in the UK, but the detailed priorities for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's will be contained in the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes which are currently being developed and will be consulted on over the coming months.

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