

Working Towards the Convergence Programmes

Newsletter 6: 20th November 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 Partner

Consultation launched On behalf of the South West RDA, Government Office for the South West and Cornwall County Council the Draft Convergence Operational Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly has been launched for consultation.

Convergence Programme to follow successful Objective One Programme The Convergence Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will succeed the current Objective One Programme, which has been delivered with great effect by all of the stakeholders. A total of £380m of ERDF and ESF funding has been allocated for the new Convergence Programme, and this will be complemented by EAFRD and EFF funding targeted at rural and fishing communities. ESF support, some 30% of the total EU support, is included in the England ESF Operational Programme. This is the subject of a separate consultation (see www.esf.gov.uk) and you may wish to contribute to this exercise as well.

Operational Programme provides framework to guide investment The role of the Operational Programme is to provide the high level strategic framework that will guide the investment of the fund. The Draft ERDF Operational Programme has been produced under the guidance provided by the core stakeholders and has been supported by a number of workshops. It builds upon the extensive work carried out to develop Strategy and Action.

Will be working with partners to develop the Operational Programme further The analysis is supported by a wealth of background information. Taken together, the material should convey a clear picture of what we are trying to achieve. We are now entering a formal thirteen week consultation process. We will be constantly working with partners during the consultation period to further develop the Draft Operational Programme.

Management and delivery arrangements being developed New management and delivery arrangements will need to be put in place for the ERDF Structural Funds Programme. Discussions with key partners on the shape of these arrangements are at an early stage and will continue during the consultation period.

Stakeholders' views on match-funding sought The provisional financial table has a ratio of 75/25 EU to UK public sector support. This is the maximum level of EU intervention allowed. This is a provisional figure on which we seek stakeholders' views. More generally, we are seeking to identify with partners the range and sources of match funding which might allow a higher level of match funding to be included in the final financial tables.

Submission to European Commission March 2007 Following the formal thirteen week consultation process, and following feedback and revisions (as set out under Feedback, below) the Operational Programme will be finalised and formally submitted to the European Commission by the beginning of March 2007.

A New Ambitious Agenda

Four broad areas for intervention give a balanced set of priorities

The Draft Operational Programme sets out four broad areas for intervention – Innovation and Research and Development; Enterprise and Investment; Learning and Skills; and Economic Infrastructure and Place Based Regeneration. This is a balanced set of Priorities which takes account of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. The focus is on improving competitiveness of the regions of European, while taking account of the need to develop an inclusive society and protect and enhance our environment.

It is proposed that the Convergence Programme should be 'carbon neutral'

I would like to draw your attention to our proposals with regard to carbon neutrality. Given the increasing importance of the climate change agenda, we all need to mitigate our impacts, adapt to inevitable changes and look for economic opportunities. Consequently, we are proposing that the Convergence Programme will be 'carbon neutral' across the Programme as a whole. This would be a bold and timely step - and we seek your views on this.

The Draft Operational Programme also addresses the challenge of establishing a knowledge-based economy

In addition to carbon neutrality, there are a number of distinguishing features of this Draft Convergence Operational Programme. These are:

- This Draft Operational Programme addresses the challenge of establishing a knowledge based, high value added economy in a peripheral and rural economy – if successful, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be an exemplar for communities from all parts of Europe.
- The Programme puts knowledge, innovation and creativity at the heart of a responsible economy which values its environment as much as economic growth; it is a forward thinking Programme, rooted in the talent and enterprise of its communities.
- The Programme sets out the most ambitious plans to develop environmental technologies and renewable energy sectors as a new wealth creating sector.

Keen to develop environmental technologies and renewable energy sector

We are keen to develop an environmental technologies and renewable energy sector which is amongst the best in Europe. This is both an economic opportunity and part of our broader commitment to addressing environmental concerns. This theme is one of the key distinguishing features of our proposals and is also a feature of the South West Competitiveness Programme.

Clear intention to develop a forward and outward facing Programme building on strengths and opportunities

The Draft Operational Programme is work in progress, and the Priority Axes and Cross Cutting Themes of the Environment and Equal Opportunity and Diversity will be further developed. The clear intention is, however, to develop a forward and outward facing Programme, building on the strength of the environment, a heritage of trade and enterprise, new opportunities around environmental businesses and the knowledge and talent of the business community and workforce.

Feedback

Feedback welcomed. Deadline for written responses, 16th February 2007.

I hope that you will take the opportunity to let us have your views on the draft consultation document. It would be helpful if you could submit written comments on the formal feedback document which accompanies this letter. We are also interested in your views on how the Programme should be delivered and the feedback document includes a few questions on specific aspects of the new arrangements. More generally, we would welcome any views with regard to how we can deliver the new Programme more efficiently and effectively. I encourage

you to circulate the consultation document within your own organisation or existing partnership group.

We are keen to involve partners throughout the consultation period, and will also be holding stakeholder workshops in January (details to be confirmed).

You may find it helpful to look at the frequently asked questions on the Objective One Partnership Office website: www.objectiveone.com or phone the Objective One Partnership Office helpline on 0800 028 0120.

The final deadline for written responses to the Draft is Friday 16th February 2007. Our intention is to formally submit the Draft Operational Programme to the European Commission by the beginning of March 2007. Thereafter, we have a negotiating period of a few months, and we expect the programme to be formally agreed during the summer months. We will of course be progressing our delivery arrangements during this period.

Can I take this opportunity of thanking you for your continued engagement and support in this process.

Jane Henderson
Chief Executive
South West Regional Development Agency

On behalf of
Cornwall County Council
Government Office for the South West

20th November 2006

What we know about Convergence

<i>ERDF Convergence consultation</i>	The consultation on the draft European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Convergence Operational Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly was launched on 20 th November 2006. Responses to the consultation should be made to the South West Regional Development Agency by 16 th February 2007.
<i>ESF consultation</i>	On 30 th October 2006 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched the consultation for the England ESF Programme 2007-13. The deadline for responses is 22 nd January 2007. Further information about the ESF consultation can be found at www.esf.gov.uk under the heading 'Future'.
<i>Convergence timetable</i>	A timetable for the Convergence Programmes and Strategy and Action can be viewed in the Towards Convergence section of the Objective One website, www.objectiveone.com .
<i>NSRF published</i>	On 23 rd 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.
<i>What is the budget for Convergence?</i>	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.
<i>Management arrangements for Convergence ERDF</i>	The South West RDA will take the lead in the management of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's ERDF Convergence Programme. However, the details of the management and delivery arrangements have yet to be clarified and further information will be contained within the ERDF Operational Programme.
<i>Management arrangements for Convergence ESF</i>	The draft ESF Operating Programme, which is currently out for consultation, proposes that the Managing Authority for the ESF Programme in England 2007-13 will be the European Social Fund Division (ESFD) of the Department for Work and Pensions, overseen at a national level by a Programme Monitoring Committee. Most of the delivery of the programme will take place at regional level. The Regional Skills Partnerships will have a leading role in the development of regional ESF strategies and may be assisted by regional ESF committees. The Convergence area of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will have its own strategy and committee.
<i>More information</i>	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
<i>The current Objective One Programme</i>	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.
<i>The role of Strategy and</i>	Strategy and Action – the overarching economic regeneration strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly - will inform the ERDF and ESF Convergence

Action 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

Details of 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 FIGG.

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