

Working Towards the Convergence Programmes

Newsletter 11: 2nd February 2007

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.](#)

Dear Colleague

Welfare to Work Supporting the Lisbon Agenda

Lisbon challenge Reducing worklessness has an important role to play in helping Cornwall to deliver its Convergence objectives. Lisbon challenges us to create more and better paid jobs by attracting more people into employment or entrepreneurial activity and to raise skills levels in the workforce.

Inspiration to re-enter the labour market The welfare to work agenda challenges us to inspire more of the 37,000 people of working age in Cornwall who are receiving benefits to re-enter the labour market or start work for the first time. If Cornwall fails to rise to these challenges, or tries to achieve one without the other we will not achieve the sustainable prosperity and community cohesion that we seek.

Through Convergence we can deliver the appropriate interventions to ensure that everyone who aspires to work can work and in doing so that we meet the employment and skills needs of businesses both today and into the future.

We can do this by making better connections between work and training,

Quality

- Not just by providing opportunities for workless people to overcome barriers to employment, develop employability skills and vocational skills but by providing the highest quality experiences and opportunities we can.

Pathway

- Not just by supporting community development activities but by supporting activities that clearly link into a structured pathway to employment.

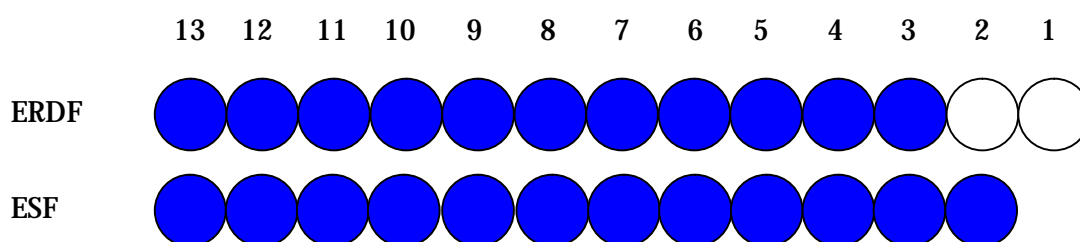
Sustainable work

- Not just by preparing and supporting people into work but into sustainable work with training.

Prosperity Only then can we start to break the cycle of low skills, low aspirations and low pay and really start to deliver on Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's goal of greater economic prosperity for all.

Carolyn Webster
European Funding and Programmes Manager
Jobcentre Plus

Consultation Countdown: weeks remaining



ERDF consultation ends 16 February 2007

ESF consultation ends 22 January 2007 – **CONSULTATION CLOSED**

Update from the Managing Authority

Further work

In the last edition we reported that a number of Task and Finish Groups would be meeting to work out more of the detail of the Convergence ERDF operational programme. Since then each of the groups has met and agreed the key activities within the proposed priority axes of the programme. A separate group has also met to look at the Convergence element of the national ESF programme, facilitated by the Regional Skills Partnership. Issues discussed have included defining what we mean by a focus on environmental technologies and renewable energies, scoping the sorts of business support activities required and exploring the investments required to regenerate lagging areas in Cornwall.

Integration of ERDF and ESF

An important issue raised at all groups has been the need to use ESF and ERDF so that they are complementary, and we know that our European Commission colleagues in Brussels are keen on the integrated approach we are taking. The output from these meetings will be shared with stakeholders at a workshop on 14 February. This will be followed by second meetings of the groups and feed into the final version of the Operational Programme.

Driving a lower carbon economy

Alongside this, a number of partners have been contributing to the debate on carbon emissions and how the programme should respond to the ambitions we set out in the draft Operational Programme. We know from consultation meetings that those ambitions have generated huge interest. Much attention has focused on definitions such as 'carbon neutral' or 'low carbon', but in a future edition of the newsletter we shall set out how partners hope to respond to the challenges of climate change in a practical way that brings economic benefits – and the latter is of course the primary aim of Convergence.

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

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 November 2006. Responses to the consultation should be made to the South West Regional Development Agency by 16 February 2007 using the feedback form. Further information can be found at www.southwestrda.org.uk .
<i>ESF consultation</i>	On 30 October 2006 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) launched the consultation for the England ESF Programme 2007-13. The consultation has now closed as the deadline for responses was 22 January 2007. Information about the next steps following the ESF consultation can be found at www.esf.gov.uk.
<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 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>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>What is the budget for Convergence?</i>	The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Convergence Programme will receive €579m (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 Operational Programme, which was out for consultation from 30 October 2006 to 22 January 2007, 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>The current Objective One Programme</i>	The investment cycle of the Objective One Programme ran 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 Action</i>	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 'European Cohesion Policy Update' at:

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/european-funding-pos.shtm>

And more information about the rural programme, including a link to the latest draft of the Regional Implementation Plan, is available at:

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/what-we-do/regeneration/eafrd/introduction.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

What will commissioning look like in the Convergence Programme?

The Convergence Programme aims to make a smaller number of more strategic investments than the Objective One Programme. To achieve this some investments will be commissioned. What these investments will be, how much they will cost and the details of the commissioning process are currently under discussion.

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 National Strategic Reference Framework (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 FIFG.

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 will be contained in the ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes, which are being developed and consulted upon at the moment.

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