

Working Towards the Convergence Programmes

Newsletter 12: 16th 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

Convergence: Progress to Date and Emerging Messages

Workshops and consultation

On 14 February in Newquay a series of workshops was held giving 120 representatives of the public and private sectors the opportunity to share their views on the key themes and actions for the new Convergence Programme, as part of the consultation on the draft ERDF Operational Programme. The workshops were based on themes such as innovation, enterprise, infrastructure and skills.

Ambition

The new Programme aims to make the economy stronger and more sustainable by making it more knowledge-based, higher value added with higher paid jobs. Increasing business competitiveness and raising innovation levels will be important in making this happen and a high proportion of the Programme (likely to be about 75%) will be allocated to activities which support the Lisbon Agenda, the EU's strategy for narrowing the productivity gap with the USA and Japan.

A major difference between the Objective One Programme and the Convergence Programme will be fewer, bigger, more targeted investments designed to transform the economy.

Informal dialogue with the European Commission to date reveals some positive emerging messages.

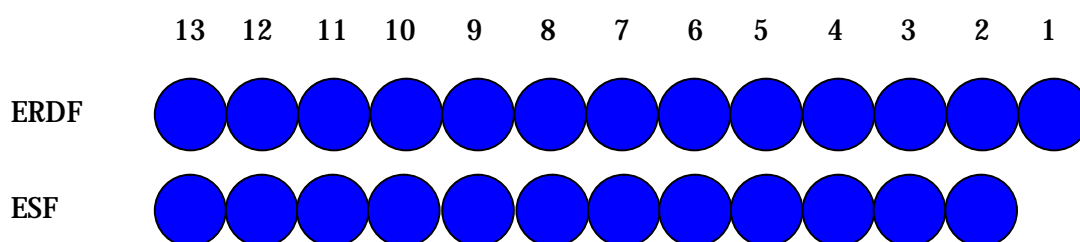
Feedback

- The Commission sees Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's Convergence Programme as a real opportunity to make a difference to the area's economy.
- Their expectations are high due to the success of the Objective One partnership which is recognised as an example of good practice within Europe.
- The Commission is supportive of the Convergence Programme's ambition to create a high value added economy in a peripheral area, but believes this sets a major challenge.

Feedback from the consultation will inform the Final Operational Programme which is expected to be submitted to the European Commission in March/April 2007.

John McCreadie
Chairman
EKOS Consulting

Consultation Countdown: weeks remaining



ERDF consultation ends **16 February 2007 - LAST DAY OF CONSULTATION**
ESF consultation ends **22 January 2007 – CONSULTATION CLOSED**

Update from the Managing Authority

Consultation responses Today, 16 February 2007, is the last day of the Consultation on the draft ERDF Convergence Operational Programme. Responses to the consultation will be collated and analysed by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and a summary will be made available on both www.southwestrda.org.uk and www.objectiveone.com.

www.objectiveone.com As we move towards implementation of the Convergence Programme the Convergence Newsletter and Objective One website (www.objectiveone.com) will continue to provide updates on progress made. The next steps in the process are expected to be as outlined below.

Submission to the European Commission

- The revised Operational Programme will be submitted to UK Government ministers in March, and to the European Commission in April.

Programme goes live in autumn

- Negotiations to finalise the Operational Programme will take place with the Commission during the summer and the Programme is expected to go live in the autumn.

As with the draft Operational Programme, the final document will be made available on the Objective One and SWRDA websites once it has been agreed.

Phil McVey
Head of European Programmes
South West 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/european-programmes .
<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 financial tables for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Convergence Programme have been updated. The Programme will receive a total investment of c. £453 million (c. €648m), the majority of which will come from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), with approximately £133m (c. €190m) being made available through the European Social Fund (ESF). 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>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<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</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

<i>Programme</i>	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>	<p>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.</p> <p>There will be a number of differences between the Objective One Programme and the Convergence programmes.</p>
<i>Convergence only ERDF and ESF</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
<i>Rural and fish part of mainstream programmes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rural and fisheries funds will become part of mainstream UK programmes.
<i>More information about the fisheries and rural programmes</i>	<p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>The Objective One website www.objectiveone.com contains more information in the 'Towards Convergence' section.</p>
<i>The Lisbon Agenda</i>	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.
<i>Lisbon targets</i>	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

<i>What will commissioning look like in the Convergence Programme?</i>	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.
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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.

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