

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Partnership

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTEGRATION
WITHIN THE OBJECTIVE ONE
PROGRAMME**

Final Report
February 2005

This document is formatted for double-sided printing.

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	INTEGRATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTO THE OBJECTIVE ONE PROGRAMME	7
3	INTEGRATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY - THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE	15
4	SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	25

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW AND POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX TWO: INTERVIEWS AND POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRES ACHIEVED

1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- 1.1 Atlantic Consultants was commissioned by the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Partnership to undertake a review of the experience of delivering the equal opportunities cross cutting theme within the different Structural Funds making up the Objective One Programme. The purpose is to ascertain the success of the horizontal integrative approach in delivering equal opportunities and economic gain.
- 1.2 The brief for the study requires:
- A review of the strategic drivers for equal opportunities and how they have been transferred to Programme delivery and activity supported
 - Qualitative research with project applicants and managers to ascertain the experience of delivering integrated projects on the ground, including barriers to effective integration, additional support needed to deliver integrated projects and examples of delivery of equal opportunities
- 1.3 The work has been undertaken through a combination of desk research and consultations with:
- Officers within GOSW, Objective One Partnership Office and PESCA
 - Project applicants and managers
- 1.4 The report is set out in the following sections:
- The remainder of Section One discusses the Equal Opportunities cross cutting theme and its purpose within the Objective One Programme
 - Section Two sets out the development of the Equal Opportunities theme within the Objective One Programme documents in general and the four Structural Fund elements in particular, and identifies the resources available to deliver the equal opportunities theme in terms of support to project applicants/managers and Programme personnel
 - Section Three compares the experience of project applicants/managers across projects funded by all four Structural Funds in developing and delivering projects that integrate equal opportunities with economic activity
 - Section Four gives a summary and recommendations on the experiences, opportunities and challenges to be addressed for the remainder of the Programme period

The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Programme

- 1.5 The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Programme covers the whole of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The Programme has a total value of £780m and some 400 projects have been approved to date (October 2004). The Programme has five priorities, each of which is divided into a number of measures. Each measure is funded from one of the four Structural Funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF); European Social Fund (ESF); and Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG). A summary of priorities and measures is given in Table One at the end of this section. In overall terms the Structural Fund contribution to the Objective One Programme is split as follows:

- ERDF: 56.2%
- ESF: 20.3%
- EAGGF: 19.4%
- FIG: 4.1%

1.6 The division of approved projects by Fund is different in percentage terms to the allocation of Funds, reflecting the difference in types of projects coming forward. There have been a number of large infrastructure projects that have been submitted for ERDF funding and some significant business support projects. These projects are in addition to smaller scale projects and delegated fund projects (where an intermediary has a block of funding which it then distributes as grant assistance to a number of organisations, for example the Rural Key Fund). EAGGF has had some large scale projects and also a significant number of smaller projects submitted by individual farmers. It too has several delegated grant schemes. ESF includes both large and smaller scale projects. The recent approval of two co-financing projects (described in paragraph 2.24) has meant that significantly fewer projects are now coming forward directly to the Objective One Programme. FIG is characterised by a large number of small scale projects. The distribution of approved projects by Fund (October 2004) is set out in Table Two below.

Table 2: Approved Projects by Fund

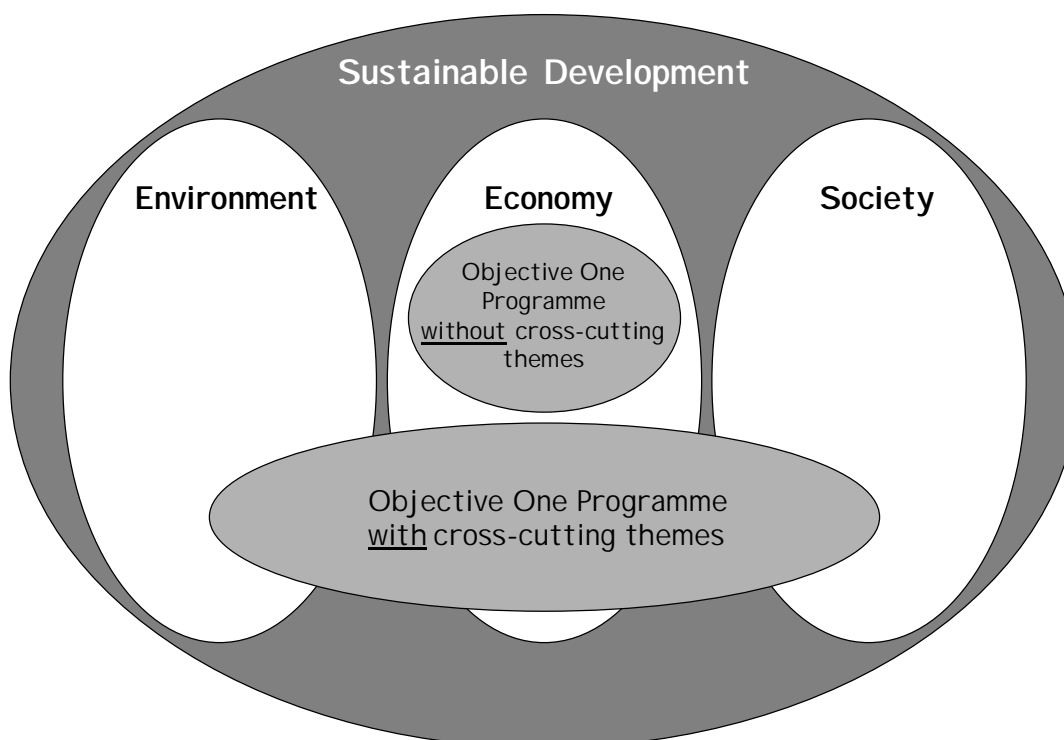
Fund	Number	%
ERDF	139	35.6
ESF	78	20
EAGGF	85	21.8
FIG	88	22.6
Total	390	100

1.7 The type and scale of project has implications for how equal opportunities has been integrated.

The Equal Opportunities Cross Cutting Theme

- 1.8 Equal Opportunities is one of three cross cutting themes in the Objective One Programme, the others being Environmental Sustainability and Information and Communications Technology.
- 1.9 Activities funded by the Structural Funds have to comply with European policy and legislation on equal opportunities as set out in the Amsterdam Treaty, which addresses the promotion of equality between men and women. This requirement is part of the Structural Fund regulations (and discussed further in Section Two).
- 1.10 The Objective One Programme has adopted the EU policy and legislative agenda for equal opportunities. However compliance with legislation is not the sole driving force behind the equal opportunities cross cutting theme. It is part of a wider agenda for sustainable development within Structural Fund programmes and a means of making an explicit link between economic improvement and society. In this regard, it sits alongside the environmental sustainability theme which provides the environmental component of sustainable development. This relationship is expressed in an Objective One Partnership document¹, as set out below.

¹ Environmental Sustainability in Practice - June 2002, Objective One Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly



- 1.11 As the diagram indicates, without the cross cutting themes the focus of Programme activity would be predominantly on economic development without any regard for its environmental and community impacts and opportunities. The cross cutting themes provide the means of ensuring that a wider view is considered by every project, regardless of which Priority, Measure or Structural Fund it seeks to access.
- 1.12 The link between economic activity and society is crucial for the Objective One Programme and the equal opportunities theme. The target is to ensure that there is equality of opportunity within all economic activities generated by the Programme (in terms of access to and therefore benefit from that activity). Within this, the equal opportunities theme seeks to meet the needs of groups disadvantaged in the labour market. All projects should consider which are the disadvantaged groups in relation to their project activity, what are their needs, and what the project can do to overcome these disadvantages. In this sense it is both an individual benefit, in that equality of opportunity means that all groups of people can develop their potential and talent, and a collective benefit, in that economic activity in Cornwall will benefit from the ability to make best use of the potential and talents of all people living and working there.
- 1.13 The key message on equal opportunities in the Objective One Partnership guidance note is equality of access. This may be in terms of physical accessibility or intellectual access such as access to information, training and development. Examples include:
- Improving access to premises to make them fully accessible to all groups of people including physical access improvements, ensuring the premises are in a well lit and secure location, improving accessibility by public transport and providing childcare support
 - Ensuring training courses are available to all e.g. held at family friendly times, in safe locations, provide basic skills support if needed, have equipment available for people with disabilities
 - Considering how business support is provided e.g. at times suitable to those with care responsibilities, in accessible locations and with threshold criteria that do not exclude groups of people.

- 1.14 The study will test the extent to which integration of equal opportunities within economic activities is delivering benefits on both fronts.

TABLE 1 Programme Area	Vision and Strategic Objectives	Priorities	Measures/Fund
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One	<p>Vision: a prosperous Cornwall and Scilly where all people and communities share in an improving quality of life</p> <p>Mission: to achieve a step change in the prosperity of Cornwall and Scilly, making it a place where people and communities have equal access to opportunities and to a quality of life which arise from the sustainable development of its economy and its environment and the enhancement of its distinctiveness</p> <p>Strategic Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase absolute prosperity • To create sustainable communities • To protect and enhance the environmental and cultural and economic opportunities of distinctiveness in Cornwall and Scilly 	<p>Priority One: SME and Micro Business Support</p> <p>Priority Two: Strategic Investments</p> <p>Priority Three: Developing People</p> <p>Priority Four: Community Economic Development and Rural Structural Adjustment</p> <p>Priority Five: Regional Distinctiveness</p>	<p>Measure 1.1: Creating the economic conditions for competitive SMEs and businesses (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 1.2: Financial engineering for SMEs (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 1.3: Developing competitive SMEs (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 1.4: Processing and marketing of agricultural products (EAGGF)</p> <p>Measure 1.5: Supporting the entrepreneur (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 1.6: Developing sectors with growth potential (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 1.7: New employment opportunities (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 2.1: Strategic sites and premises (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 2.2: Employment growth centres (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 2.3: embedding the benefits of new investment (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 2.4: Strategic regional infrastructure (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 3.1: Active labour market policies (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 3.2: Learning for competitive business and for enterprise - adaptability and entrepreneurship (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 3.3: Lifelong learning (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 3.4: Promoting social inclusion (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 3.5: Increasing the participation of women (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 3.6: Infrastructure for Learning (ERDF)</p>

TABLE 1 Programme Area	Vision and Strategic Objectives	Priorities	Measures/Fund
			<p>Measure 4.1: Community Economic Development (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 4.2: Area based pathways to employment (ESF)</p> <p>Measure 4.3: Investment in Agricultural Holdings, Energy crops (EAGGF)</p> <p>Measure 4.4: Training (EAGGF)</p> <p>Measure 4.5: Forestry (EAGGF)</p> <p>Measure 4.6: Promoting the adaptation and development of rural areas (EAGGF)</p> <p>Measure 4.7: Structural adjustment in fisheries (FIFG)</p> <p>Measure 4.8: Community regeneration (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 5.1: Securing benefits from the arts, cultural and heritage industries (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 5.2: Enhancing and developing the public product (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 5.3: The knowledge driven region (ERDF)</p> <p>Measure 5.4: Research and knowledge (ESF)</p>

2 INTEGRATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTO THE OBJECTIVE ONE PROGRAMME

The Objective One Single Programming Document

- 2.1 The Objective One Single Programming Document (SPD) approved in 1999 provides the starting point for considering equal opportunities within the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Programme, as one of the three cross cutting themes. It takes as its policy context the EU policy of promotion of equality between men and women i.e. equal opportunities as an issue of gender equality². It also notes that the UK perspective is one of a broader definition of equal opportunities which includes the integration of a range of disadvantaged groups in the labour market such as black and ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities, lone parents and older workers.
- 2.2 The SPD scoped the extent of equality issues (in Chapter 3) identifying key points at the time when the SPD was prepared (1999) as including:
- Men dominate full time employment
 - Men still dominate in traditional sectors of employment
 - Increasing male economic inactivity rates and increasing female economic activity rates
 - Men continue to outnumber women in professional and higher order occupations
 - Female earnings are lower than male earnings
 - A small minority of employers provide childcare assistance
 - Economic activity and employment rates for people with disabilities lower than those for able bodied people
 - Economic activity and employment rates for ethnic minority groups below the average for the population as a whole
- 2.3 Key issues identified for the Objective One strategy are to develop the potential of all of the community and improve access to opportunities for disadvantaged people (by addressing barriers and constraints) with the emphasis on the economic benefits that can accrue e.g. as part of a strategy to increase incomes. The Objective One strategy identifies its approach to equal opportunities as one of examining, on a priority by priority basis, where there are problems, what groups are affected and what actions and policies should be developed.
- 2.4 Although information set out in the SPD scopes a wider definition of equal opportunities than that of gender equality, the priority objective³ and operational strategy for the equal opportunities cross cutting theme were initially very focused on gender equality and the need to increase the take up of opportunities for women. This priority is consistent with EU policy. At national level the relevant policy is the National Action Plan for Employment and National Childcare Strategy and at regional level the Regional Economic Strategy.
- 2.5 The outputs and results which the theme is expected to achieve flow from this strategic approach and concern the number of women into training and business opportunities, development of flexible working practices, childcare support and development of equal opportunities action plans within companies. It is this strategic background that guided

² European Employment Guidelines 1999 identifies strengthening equal opportunities between men and women as one of four pillars governing employment policy.

³ The Priority Objective is 'to increase the take up of opportunities by women through the promotion and provision of support and prioritisation of activities that explicitly address barriers to participation in opportunities provided by Structural Fund support'

the first rounds of projects in the Objective One Programme (2000, 2001 and into 2002).

- 2.6 The equal opportunities theme was elaborated in the Programme Complement (October 2000). This identified activities to be prioritised in the scoring system, together with indicative output targets at measure level for each operational objective of the theme.

Developing the Equal Opportunities Cross Cutting Theme

- 2.7 An Equal Opportunities Officer was appointed in December 2001 to develop the equal opportunity cross cutting theme, with the responsibility of increasing understanding and awareness of equal opportunities and monitoring and dissemination of equal opportunities related activities within the Objective One Programme.
- 2.8 A first task of the Equal Opportunities Officer was the preparation of an equal opportunities business plan (for 2002 - 2006), identifying the importance of addressing equal opportunities and setting out a work programme for developing the theme. Important additions at this point were two further operational objectives (approved by the Programme Monitoring Committee in October 2001) which sought to broaden the definition of equal opportunities beyond that of gender, bringing it more in line with UK equal opportunities policy (as well as those of the EU). These were:
- To increase access to, and the securing of, training and employment opportunities by people with disabilities
 - To increase access to, and the securing of, training and employment opportunities by people from economically and socially excluded groups by virtue of age, ethnicity, rural isolation etc.
- 2.9 Since the appointment of the Equal Opportunities Officer there has been someone available to provide advice and guidance to people developing project applications; appraising project applications; and undertaking the strategic management and delivery of the Programme.
- 2.10 The Equal Opportunities Officer has developed awareness of the equal opportunities theme in a variety of ways, including:
- Development of the equal opportunities toolkit note (see paragraph 2.11)
 - Written advice and guidance to project applicants and appraisers on integration of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme. In total 175 projects have been the subject of written advice (Jan 2002 - September 2004) of which the majority have been ERDF projects. No FIFG projects have received any written advice
 - One to one meetings with project applicants to discuss developing specific projects and more generally with representatives of a number of different organisations to raise awareness of the equal opportunities theme. In total, 76 such meetings have been held (Jan 2002 - September 2004).
 - Advice to staff appraising project applications on the effective integration of the equal opportunities theme
 - Training workshops and presentations at meetings for people involved in the preparation of project applications or the management of the Objective One Programme. Examples include training activity with project appraisers in Government Office for the South West, with organisations preparing bids for ESF projects and presentations on equal opportunities to organisations such as Taste of the West and to the Chairs of Integrated Area Partnerships
 - Work with the EAGGF technical support team based in Cornwall Enterprise, to develop the equal opportunities theme within EAGGF funded projects

- Review of the gender balance within groups involved in the management and implementation of the Objective One Programme, which led to development of the gender balance on the Objective One Programme Monitoring Committee
 - Attendance at conferences and networking meetings to exchange experience and develop information
 - Development of baseline information against which to measure progress in equal opportunities and (within the past 6 months) development of good practice examples of equal opportunities in Objective One funded projects
- 2.11 The Equal Opportunities Officer has prepared a toolkit (a written guidance note) to assist people in considering the equal opportunities theme. This identifies groups of people who might be socially or economically excluded and gives ideas of how different types of projects could incorporate equal opportunities issues. The toolkit sets out the economic case for equality of opportunity, although this is not developed further in terms of examples of economic benefits achieved. Other documentation has also been produced including a note on equal opportunities outputs by operational objective, removing the requirement for output targets for equal opportunities to be linked to any specific Programme measure.
- 2.12 GOSW has a nominated Equal Opportunities Officer within its Objective One team, in addition to the Equal Opportunities Officer within the Objective One Partnership. The role of this person is not one of practitioner but is responsible for internal processes, for example arranging equal opportunities training events for GOSW staff that may then involve the Objective One Partnership Equal Opportunities Officer in its delivery. The GOSW role is closely linked to the ESF process, including work that is developing within the South West Objective Three ESF Programme on mainstreaming of equal opportunities.
- 2.13 The Mid Term Evaluation of the Objective One Programme recognises the limited focus of the equal opportunities theme as initially set out in the SPD. It notes that mechanisms need to be established to assess the full impact of this cross cutting theme. It notes the value of the Equal Opportunities Officer in developing an understanding of the theme but notes the need for ongoing capacity building and awareness raising on this subject. The evaluation recommends that:
- A decision should be made on how far the equal opportunities theme should be widened (beyond gender issues) and reflected in scoring systems and programme monitoring
 - Monitoring of the equal opportunities theme needs to be improved
 - Support to active projects needs to facilitate, not police developing the theme
- 2.14 As a result of the Mid Term Evaluation, work has progressed in both the environmental sustainability and equal opportunities themes with the development of case studies to demonstrate the application of the themes in projects. Two case studies for the equal opportunities theme have been placed on the website and others are in development. These projects relate to physical infrastructure investment projects (Callington Workshops and Falmouth Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme).
- 2.15 Revisions to be made to the SPD and Programme Complement as a result of the Mid Term Evaluation formalise the additional operational objectives for the equal opportunities theme. The revisions also identify the output targets to be achieved by operational objectives.

Application of the Equal Opportunities Theme by Structural Fund

- 2.16 The application of the equal opportunities agenda varies between Structural Fund. The Structural Fund regulations set the context for equal opportunities within each fund and translates them into questions and guidance within the application process. This

subsection sets out how equal opportunities is considered within the four Structural Funds within the Objective One Programme.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

- 2.17 The 139 ERDF projects approved by October 2004 are quite evenly split between capital and revenue projects. There are some major capital investment projects such as building work associated with the Combined Universities in Cornwall or dualling of the mainline railway at Burngullow. There are also some significant revenue projects such as Finance Cornwall or Business Link business support services. The smaller scale projects are mainly associated with Measures 4.1 and 4.8, the community regeneration measures.
- 2.18 ERDF Regulation 1783/1999 states that, as part of its tasks, ERDF should support equality between men and women in the field of employment 'principally through establishment of firms and through infrastructure or services enabling the reconciliation of family and working life'. It also identifies the role of ERDF in promoting economic and social cohesion and social regeneration.
- 2.19 Equal opportunities is a specific question on the ERDF application form and described under the heading 'social exclusion - equality of opportunity for all'. It is not specifically limited to the issue of gender equality.
- 2.20 The equal opportunities theme is an integral part of the ERDF scoring process, accounting for a possible 10% of a project's score. The scoring structure has remained the same since 2000. However application of the scoring system has developed over time. Whereas initially a response indicating that a project would comply with the applicant organisation's equal opportunities policy was accepted, this is no longer the case and the application process looks more thoroughly at how equal opportunities will actually be delivered within the project (as well as acknowledging the applicant organisation's equal opportunities policy). Although it could be possible for a project to be approved without achieving any score on the equal opportunities theme, in practice this would be very unlikely to happen.

European Social Fund (ESF)

- 2.21 All ESF projects relate to revenue funding. The scale of projects varies significantly from major training projects led by colleges to small scale voluntary sector led initiatives.
- 2.22 ESF Regulation 1784/1999 states that projects should 'contribute to the promotion of equality of opportunity between men and women and the promotion of the integration and retention of disadvantaged groups and individuals in the labour market'. The scope of ESF therefore includes:
- Promoting equal opportunities for all in accessing the labour market, with particular emphasis on those exposed to social exclusion
 - Specific measures to improve the access of women to, and participation in, the labour market
- 2.23 The ESF application process has developed over the past three years from a single application, structured similarly to the ESF Objective Three process, to a two option route either through co-financing or as a direct application. Equal opportunities has always been a specific heading within the application process and the application form asks specific questions about numbers of beneficiaries in target groups e.g. male/female; ethnic origin; people with disabilities.
- 2.24 The two routes for ESF are currently:
- Through Co-Financing Organisations: funding delegated to the Learning and Skills Council and to Job Centre Plus, who each invite training providers to tender for

work on the basis of specifications issued. Each organisation has its own application process. An equal opportunities question is included in both application processes.

- Through direct applications to the Objective One Programme. As from May 2004, the direct application process has introduced an equal opportunities gateway criteria. This requires applicants to demonstrate how the project has been designed and developed to meet the needs of its beneficiary groups, how an equal opportunities policy applies to the project and how this is marketed and publicised.

2.25 Co financing organisations have their own systems for appraising projects and awarding contracts. For direct applications, the equal opportunities gateway is part of the eligibility criteria and applicants either score 6 or 0. Applications scoring 0 and failing to meet the criteria will not progress to full scoring. It is therefore not possible for a project through this route to be approved if equal opportunities has not been considered.

European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)

2.26 The 85 projects funded through EAGGF are quite evenly split between revenue and capital funded projects. A number of the revenue funded projects relate to studies and research. Two significant capital investment delegated grant schemes are included, the Rural Diversification Capital Grant Initiative and the Rural Tourism Improvement Fund. Applications come from both public and private sector applicants and can vary significantly in scale, some private applications being quite small.

2.27 EAGGF Regulation 1257/1999 states that EAGGF should support the 'removal of inequalities and the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in particular by supporting projects initiated and implemented by women'

2.28 Equal opportunity is not a specific question on the EAGGF application form. However it is identified as a topic to be addressed within the Business Plan that must accompany an application form and is expressed in terms of equal opportunities and social exclusion - making a positive contribution to ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all in rural areas and to combating social exclusion.

2.29 The current EAGGF scoring criteria operate as for ERDF, with equal opportunities having a potential score of 10%. The scoring system has developed during the lifetime of the Programme from a system initially set out by DEFRA to one specifically designed for the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Programme, to be compatible with the ERDF system. As with ERDF, although it could be possible for a project to be approved without achieving any score on the equal opportunities theme, in practice this would be very unlikely.

Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)

2.30 The projects funded by FIFG are characterised by their small scale. Only nine of the total of 88 projects exceed £100,000 total cost, although these nine projects together account for 75% of FIFG approved. Taking out these nine projects, the remainder have received an average figure of £11,536 in FIFG support. The type of projects supported include modernisation of vessels, improvements to fish storage and handling facilities and upgrading of harbour facilities such as slipways, lighting and electricity. Most applicants are private sector or Harbour Commissioners (or other organisation responsible for harbour facilities).

2.31 The FIFG Regulation 1263/1999 makes no references to equal opportunities. A question on equal opportunities is included on the FIFG application form, which is specifically focused on EU gender issues (with reference to providing opportunities for women in sectors/occupations in which they are under represented and/or helping people to return to the labour market after a period of absence due to domestic or

family responsibilities). No information on equal opportunities is given in the guidance notes accompanying the application form

- 2.32 The scoring system has been revised, modeled on the ERDF system, and equal opportunities is now scored.
- 2.33 It is possible for a project not to score on equal opportunities and be approved. It is more likely that this could occur with FIG than with the other two Structural Funds (ERDF and EAGGF) due to the nature of projects. Provision of ice making facilities on board a vessel or at the fish market are examples of projects in FIG where developing the equal opportunities dimension are thought to be difficult.

Other Influences on Equal Opportunities Issues

- 2.34 There are other factors that have, and are, influencing the application of equal opportunities as a principle, and the specific aspiration of the Objective One Programme to integrate equal opportunities with economic benefit. Three factors are identified, as ones which will continue to influence for the remainder of the Objective One Programme period and beyond. These are:
- Future Structural Fund Regulations
 - The UK National Employment Action Plan
 - Legislation for Equal Opportunities

Future Structural Fund Regulations

- 2.35 The European Commission's stance on equal opportunities is set out in the current Structural Fund Regulations. The documentation for the next Structural Fund period indicates that the emphasis remains on gender related equality issues. The general provisions (2004/492), in Article 14, states 'the Member States and the Commission shall ensure that equality between men and women and the integration of a gender perspective is promoted during the various stages of implementing the Funds'.
- 2.36 This emphasis is carried through into the detail of proposed regulations for all the Structural Funds, for example:
- ESF regulation (2004/493) states that the Fund should give greater emphasis to elimination of inequalities between women and men; specific actions addressed to women and gender mainstreaming to increase participation and progress of women in employment. It also identifies a need for social integration and employment of migrants and minorities
 - The European Fisheries Fund regulation (2004/497) introduces a gender dimension (the current regulations do not include this), with an objective to promote equality between men and women in the development of the fisheries sector and a specific Article (Article 11) to seek integration of a gender perspective in implementation of the Fund
- 2.37 The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Objective One Programme takes a much broader approach to equal opportunities. Gender remains an EU priority.

The UK National Employment Action Plan (NEAP)

- 2.38 The annual NEAP implements the European Employment Strategy at the national level, including the commitment to promote gender equality in the labour market. The national strategy is built on three policy areas, one of which is policies to reduce barriers to work. The guidelines in the NEAP set out a range of actions which illustrate the breadth of activity related to reducing barriers to work. Although gender equality is a guideline in its own right (and particularly refers to gender pay gaps, measures to encourage female labour market participation and support for early years provision),

other guidelines are also relevant to issues of equal opportunity. Examples include Guideline Seven which combats discrimination against people at a disadvantage in the labour market and Guideline Three which promotes adaptability and mobility in the labour market including promotion of diversity of working arrangements.

- 2.39 The NEAP illustrates the broader economic agenda at national level, for integration of equal opportunities into economic activities that is being sought through the Objective One Programme and which is now reflected in the operational objectives of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme.

Equal Opportunities Legislation

- 2.40 There is an increasing range of advisory information on equal opportunities and a developing legislative agenda, the most recent being the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) which came into force in October 2004. Guidance available from the Objective One Partnership on equal opportunities lists a number of sources of advice. There is an increasing need for organisations to meet legislative requirements. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act has had a direct effect on Programme activity in that physical infrastructure improvements to provide disability access, which are now a requirement of the DDA, can no longer be funded through Structural Funds. Funding can only be available for infrastructure works that are over and above legislative requirements.
- 2.41 The equal opportunities theme, together with legislation, has raised the profile of equal opportunities with project applicants in the Objective One Programme (see Section Three). However, from the Programme perspective, the key emphasis is the link between equal opportunities and economic benefit (and not equal opportunities as an end in its own right).

Summary

- 2.42 The equal opportunities cross cutting theme has developed over the course of the first four years of the Objective One Programme, from a theme focused on gender equality to one which is more broadly based on social inclusion. The wider interpretation of equal opportunities is documented in the operational objectives for the cross cutting theme to be included in the revisions to the SPD and in the guidance notes for equal opportunities produced by the Objective One Partnership Office.
- 2.43 The equal opportunities cross cutting theme reflects the European Commission's focus on gender equality, and other issues expressed at national level, for example through the NEAP, which has a wider social inclusion focus.
- 2.44 Application of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme has also developed within each of the four Structural Funds within the Objective One Programme, for example with the development of scoring criteria to incorporate appraisal and scoring of the equal opportunities; with the use of seminars for organisations preparing project applications for ESF. This development has been at varying rates and has been assisted by the Equal Opportunities Officer based in the Objective One Partnership. The Equal Opportunities Officer has been active in project work involving ERDF, ESF and EAGGF but has had very little involvement with FIFG (reflecting the nature of the current FIFG regulations).
- 2.45 Legislation for equal opportunities is developing and there is a growing level of information and advice available about legislative requirements. This gives equal opportunities a higher and growing profile. It is important to ensure that the Objective One Programme equal opportunities cross cutting theme focuses on the integration of equal opportunities and economic activity, rather than equal opportunities as an end in itself.

3 INTEGRATION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES INTO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY - THE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Introduction

- 3.1 This section reviews the experience of project applicants/managers in integrating equal opportunities into the development and delivery of projects part funded through the Objective One Programme.
- 3.2 A list of all approved Objective One projects (2000 to 2004) was used to identify a total of 79 projects to be contacted to review how project managers have integrated equal opportunities into project development and delivery. Of these 79 projects, 22 were selected for face-to-face interviews and the remaining 57 received a postal questionnaire. Copies of the proforma used for the interviews and the postal questionnaire can be found in Appendix One.
- 3.3 These projects were specifically chosen to give representation across all four funds (based on the percentage of finance allocated to each fund), large and small projects, co-finance and direct bid grants.

Case Study Interviews

Structural Fund	Number of Interviews requested	Number of Interviews completed
ESF	5	5*
ERDF	10	11
EAGGF	5	3
FIFG	2	1
Total	22	20

*One completed via email

Postal Questionnaires

Structural Fund	Number of postal questionnaires sent	Number of postal questionnaires received
ESF	14	6
ERDF	24	10
EAGGF	13	3
FIFG	6	1
Total	57	20

- 3.4 The experience of projects is summarised under eight main headings and illustrated with examples drawn from individual projects. The headings are:
 - Understanding of the equal opportunities concept
 - Integration of equal opportunities at the project development stage
 - Advice and Information
 - Project approval
 - Practical experience of delivery
 - Tracking equal opportunities in project activity
 - Delivering equal opportunities and economic gain
 - Application of equal opportunities within the different Structural Funds

- 3.5 Key issues arising from the analysis of experience of projects are then identified and conclusions made.

Understanding the Equal Opportunities Concept

- 3.6 Applicants' understanding of the concept of equal opportunities has changed over the course of the Objective One Programme. These changes relate to both the concept and its application within the Objective One process.
- 3.7 Projects applying in the first two years of Objective One (and hence approved early in the Programme) focused their response to the equal opportunities theme on the existence of equal opportunities policy statements. Application forms addressed issues of gender and non-discrimination in relation to employment and recruitment. This focus on the written policy documentation was influenced by the information contained within the Single Programming Document, the guidance accompanying application forms and the wider legislative framework.
- 3.8 One project manager indicated that the early Objective One process merely paid lip service to equal opportunities and there was little support in terms of project development; a tick box system and a hurdle to get over. This view point was supported by four other project managers.
- 3.9 In general, projects approved at a later stage in the Objective One Programme (2002 onwards) gave broader consideration to equal opportunities issues: services to be available to all, inclusion of excluded groups, breaking down barriers to involvement, access to information, removal of discrimination, physical access to buildings. Along with these broader, more far reaching equal opportunity considerations came a development in ideas of how to address implementation rather than merely developing policy statements. For example, a number of training providers highlighted a change in practice to accommodate the needs of specific client groups; the location, start / end time and length of course, consideration of transport and child care arrangements were all modified / introduced to ensure that the target group were able to participate.
- 3.10 Project managers note that this has been influenced partly by a change in the Objective One Programme literature, following appointment of the Equal Opportunities Officer, and is linked to a natural shift and development in understanding of the equal opportunities framework at a national level. The Objective One Programme is now seen to be taking a more serious approach to equal opportunities with the employment of a dedicated adviser and the recent introduction of the gateway process for ESF funding projects. Organisations going on to develop further projects (in particular ESF projects) particularly note the change in content and quantity of guidance and advice available.

Integration of Equal Opportunities at the Project Development Stage

- 3.11 The majority of projects were aware of the need to address equal opportunities as a cross cutting theme within the Objective One Programme, being public sector organisations more attuned to the wider legislative agenda for equal opportunities. Those that were unaware of this requirement were generally from the private and voluntary sectors.
- 3.12 The majority of projects had a central economic driver for bringing the project forward for EU funding. Two thirds of the economically motivated projects had additional social or environmental benefits (e.g. targeting disadvantaged groups, introducing good design, an opportunity to try a new initiative to support a specific client group). Those projects not identifying economic reasons for project development stated either social or environmental drivers as the key motivation. However all of these projects could still identify economic benefits resulting from the implementation of their projects.

- 3.13 There are a range of reasons why equal opportunities considerations have been integrated into projects, the main ones being (of the projects interviewed):
- Integral to the management framework of the organisation (32%)
 - Integral to the nature of the project and a natural consideration (26%)
 - A requirement of the Objective One Programme (37%)
- 3.14 Five percent of project managers did not give any reason.
- 3.15 All projects interviewed indicated that they would consider equal opportunities within other projects being developed. A small number of project managers contributed the opinion that it is an essential component to project development and not an 'additional' consideration; it is not separate from project development and implementation.
- 3.16 The understanding of equal opportunities changed over time, from project inception to implementation stage. In general (with a few exceptions) there was a movement from addressing solely legislative requirements to a broader consideration of practical implementation issues and making a direct impact upon project delivery. A number of projects recognised that there is a need not only to meet, but to exceed, regulations / legislation. Projects therefore focused on how to implement equal opportunities considerations: what will work, what will enhance the project. A small number of ongoing projects are making serious efforts to address the fundamental issue of breaking the barriers of disadvantage.
- 3.17 As an example, one ERDF project manager in the voluntary sector identified that, during the project development phase, the organisation became aware of the wider needs of the local community and started to combine this knowledge with its ideas for a new building. The result was a building for general community use, providing activities and training for disadvantaged groups in the community and an opportunity for self help and guided support (thus incorporating social and economic benefits within the project). The organisation considered how to overcome the barriers to involvement for the disadvantaged groups identified and is working to develop appropriate and accessible activities and training options.
- 3.18 A small number of ESF and ERDF projects indicated that the Objective One application process helped the organisation to rethink and repackage their projects by requiring consideration of equal opportunities issues. It helped to focus the project on the issues and how they could be implemented within the project.
- "The whole process of Objective One was mind opening and provided a clear framework for the project. People who have problems with the process will have problems with their project. Operational processes must be in place: it is about discipline. The consideration of equal opportunities got the group off the 'band wagon' of doing good and made them think of giving people an opportunity to help themselves. It made them focus on all aspects of the project, especially empowerment and inclusion." Project Manager (ERDF project).
- 3.19 Only one project manager interviewed had difficulties in relating equal opportunities to the project (a FIG project). Although carefully considered, the project manager could not relate any relevant considerations to the capital purchase of an item of equipment. A further six questionnaire responses (2 ERDF, 2 ESF, 1 EAGGF and 1 FIG) indicated that project managers had found it difficult to incorporate equal opportunities objectives into the project (five of these responses did not include any specific details of the nature of the difficulty). The one reason that was provided related to the wider industry characteristics - "the industry is predominantly male and physically able, and has limited scope for the obvious targets in terms of gender and disability." However a project within a similar industry had also highlighted the male dominance and physical nature of the work involved and had consequently focused on the development and support of a social enterprise (employing a specific socially excluded client group) to redress the balance.

Advice and Information on Equal Opportunities for Project Development

- 3.20 Advice and information about equal opportunities was obtained from a range of sources (including websites, written material and verbal advice) and a range of organisations, not solely the Objective One / GOSW team. Those that sought external support contacted a variety of organisations: Cornwall Enterprise, Objective One Team, Government Office South West, Business Link, Equal Opportunities Officer (Objective One Team), Penwith Community Development Trust, Tourist Board, Access Cornwall and the Disability Council
- 3.21 One EAGGF and one FIGF project consulted an independent consultant and PESCA (respectively) on the overall application process. The project managers indicated that they were unaware of any specific requirement to address the equal opportunities cross cutting theme even though one of the projects incorporated a significant equal opportunities element through provision of disability access in tourism accommodation.
- 3.22 A number of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector used their own knowledge and/or advice available from within their organisation to address the equal opportunities cross cutting theme. Discussions indicate that more recently approved projects (and developing projects) under ESF and ERDF are consulting with the Objective One team on a more regular basis.
- 3.23 Those projects that have had contact with the Equal Opportunities Officer reported a positive experience and informed discussions which supported the organisation in addressing equal opportunities issues.
- 3.24 Project Managers with projects approved in the first few years of Objective One highlighted the limited nature of equal opportunities guidance available during the early years of Objective One (as detailed in the Single Programming Document and the application form). This guidance and, subsequently, those projects approved early on in the Programme, focused specifically upon ensuring the applicant organisation had an equal opportunities policy statement in place and that gender issues had been addressed.
- 3.25 The majority of project managers did not see a need for further help or information - one off projects are already completed and where the same organisations are developing other projects they consider they are aware of the change in focus of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme and the necessity and benefit of considering the broader issues.

Project Approval

- 3.26 Only one project stated that further queries or comments about the equal opportunities content of their application were raised at the project approval stage. Three project managers indicated that they considered the lack of questions to be because they had sought advice from the Equal Opportunities Officer prior to submission hence no clarification was required⁴.
- 3.27 Three project managers received requests for further information in relation to economic/financial aspects of the project and the environmental cross cutting theme, but not on equal opportunities.
- 3.28 Both the interviews and the returned questionnaires indicated that, generally, no specific conditions were placed upon projects in relation to equal opportunities at the

⁴ A further three project managers indicated that recently developed projects (not those discussed as case studies) have involved discussions with the Equal Opportunities Officer prior to submission under the Objective One Programme.

approval stage. Only three projects identified specific conditions related to monitoring requirements, these being:

- Number of business start-ups assisted (women)
- Target of achieving M3 (disabled access in tourism businesses) scheme by a given date
- Repeat of visitor survey to gather opinions on new facilities (which included facilities for disabled people)

Practical Experience of Delivery

- 3.29 Most projects have not identified any major problems with the practical experience of delivering equal opportunities within their project. Some minor issues were identified:
- Incorporating disabled access using sustainable materials on a tight budget
 - Attitudes and guidelines of the planning system is constantly changing for physical and visual aids. Information about the changes and what current good practice is available, but there is a need to keep up to date
 - Where projects have third party beneficiaries (not a delegated grant scheme) information is passed on, but it is not possible to make them implement changes
 - Capturing diversity information within the constraints of the Data Protection Act
- 3.30 One project identified a potentially problematic issue in relation to ESF criteria on the age of intended beneficiaries. The project operates an open access employment and training policy and considered age issues in relation to ESF beneficiaries as potentially conflicting with the Equal Opportunities policy of the organisation.
- 3.31 Surveys have identified a number of examples of different ways in which project managers have incorporated delivery of equal opportunities within their projects and it is clear from discussions that project managers have sought to be flexible and respond to situations as they develop or take a proactive approach to addressing needs. For example an agricultural training provider noted the lack of women attending training courses and started targeting vocational training mailshots, to 'Mr and Mrs' rather than solely 'Mr'. As a result their female trainee numbers increased. Similarly the same provider initiated part funding for relief agricultural workers which acted as an incentive to enable farmers to attend training courses in the daytime.
- 3.32 One project did identify a particular problem in trying to recruit women onto a training course in a skill area that is traditionally male dominated and had not been able to resolve this problem. Equally another project identified that one day weekend courses had worked well in encouraging women to participate in a non traditional skill area. Interestingly one project noted a real issue with trying to attract young men into training activity, suggesting that the gender issue is not always solely related to problems of achieving female participation.
- 3.33 The research has shown that there is a range of positive experience that is developing and, within this, there may well be experience from one project that could provide valuable advice to another. Project managers were divided on the need for further information. Those expressing an interest in further information and/or advice suggested the following areas could be covered:
- How to monitor equal opportunities with real examples
 - Sharing information between projects with similar issues, to help resolve challenges
 - Examples of proactive promotion (moving away from the tick box culture of equal opportunities)

- Examples of best practice; promoting the ways to achieve success and not solely the problems
 - Implementation of equal opportunities, not just compliance
 - Information on how to promote facilities to disabled people
- 3.34 A flexible approach to the provision of this information was requested by a small number of organisations. The information should be succinct and easily accessible when required.
- 3.35 Those project managers that did not want any further information or advice indicated that their project had finished (and it was unlikely another application would be made) or that they already had access to a sufficient amount of information.
- 3.36 Project managers were also divided in their response to the possibility of accessing opportunities to network with other organisations. Of those project managers supporting the development of networking opportunities, one suggested an annual best practice workshop and another a best practice seminars and project dissemination events that could include an element of equal opportunities but where this should not be the sole focus.
- 3.37 The majority of project managers were positive about incorporating equal opportunities into future projects - not only because it is a legislative requirement but because it made good business sense and was considered good practice.
- 3.38 Of the delegated grant schemes and co-financing projects contacted, the equal opportunities cross cutting theme is an aspect of project development that third party applicants are required to address. Additional equal opportunities guidelines have been developed by the principal organisation and specific questions included within the application form.

Tracking Equal Opportunities in Project Activity

- 3.39 The majority of issues raised about project delivery by project managers related to aspects of tracking project progress. As one project manager noted, there is a system of checks in place to ensure equal opportunities is considered at the application stage, but there is no comparable system to measure their outputs. Few of the projects contacted seemed to be specifically reporting any quantified outputs in relation to equal opportunities as this may not be a requirement. For example a holiday cottage business incorporating one unit specifically fitted out for disabled guests does not specifically report on the number of disabled guests booking the unit. This it does mean there is a gap in information about the actual performance of equal opportunities within project activity
- 3.40 The main exceptions are ESF projects which are required to undertake diversity monitoring of beneficiaries of training and some job creation projects which are required to monitor the specific take up of training and employment opportunities by women.
- 3.41 Several project managers can identify the range of equal opportunities that their project has been able to address. Project managers are tracking information sometimes for other funders rather than for reporting to Objective One. For example one college which received capital funding for new buildings reported back on jobs directly created in the building through additional teaching staff, but not on the users of the building. However all sorts of training and education are being delivered which have equal opportunities impacts e.g. a recent course on food hygiene, delivered in Bengali.
- 3.42 Project managers are aware that information may be lost (and may not be collected) in relation to equal opportunities achievements but are concerned that increasing formal monitoring requirements might become overly onerous.

Delivering Equal Opportunities and Economic Gain

- 3.43 A small majority of project managers reported that incorporating equal opportunities considerations has provided economic benefits such as widening the 'business' market, (bigger markets, larger audiences) which provides an opportunity for market development. The benefits were detailed as:
- Physical modifications improve the built environment for all (not just disabled people) e.g. one project has incorporated elements of disabled access within the townscape heritage improvements being undertaken. This improves access for all (e.g. older and other people with limited mobility and parents with prams / buggies) and has provided greater access to some shops and businesses.
 - Socially excluded individuals and groups have greater access and opportunity to become involved and contribute to the community. For example a Community Resource project has identified excluded groups within the community and is providing activities and training opportunities to support them in overcoming the barriers to their involvement, increasing individual confidence and enabling them to make a contribution
 - Supporting people in making an active contribution to the community and hence the economy e.g. a number of ESF projects have actively changed the way in which training is delivered to enable socially excluded groups to enter or progress along the path to employment. One project has exceeded DDA building requirements to enable access for all within its building and has incorporated a range of initiatives to address individuals' support needs e.g. sheltered workshops or placements and information in different formats.
 - Increasing confidence of economically inactive people producing long term economic and social gain e.g. one project is working directly with young parents to address and overcome barriers to involvement in all aspects of life
 - Positive end use of buildings through producing a wider range of people who can access and use the buildings. For example one project has incorporated facilities accessible for all into the development of four workspace units which are for hire to businesses. This is believed to increase the potential rental market for the units
 - One ESF project manager was of the opinion that equal opportunities considerations have resulted in economic benefit through developing a larger audience for information and advice on employment and training. These people who have greater access to this information can benefit from the project and become contributors to the economy.
 - An EAGGF project manager thought that the consideration of equal opportunities had enabled her to increase access to services for disabled people and thus generated a niche market within the tourist accommodation sector.
- 3.44 Four project managers raised the difficulty of measuring the economic impact of equal opportunities impacts. It was possible to give a qualitative description of the economic impacts, but quantitative measurement had not been undertaken or it was difficult to measure.
- 3.45 Of the 19 case study interviews, four projects (two ERDF, one EAGGF and one FIGG) could not identify any economic gain from the inclusion of equal opportunities in their projects.

Application of Equal Opportunities within the Four Structural Funds

- 3.46 The interviews highlighted a difference in:
- i) The guidance available to applicants

- ii) The requirement for consideration of equal opportunities within the application process between the four different Structural Funds (guidance and requirements to be being more comprehensive under ESF funds followed by ERDF, EAGGF and finally FIG)
- 3.47 The majority of projects did not identify any particular problems with integrating equal opportunities. The main issues lay with FIG:
- ESF: project managers address equal opportunities as an integral part of their projects, referring in the main to established equal opportunities frameworks and systems.
 - ERDF: the majority of project managers indicate that they had no specific problems with integrating equal opportunities into their projects. This was found to be the case specifically for physical build projects as the issue of physical access is seen as part of the planning system.
 - EAGGF: no specific problems were reported, two of the three projects indicating that it was complementary to their project
 - FIG: interviews and questionnaire response rates indicate that equal opportunities are thought to be less relevant and it is harder to make the connections between the project and consideration of equal opportunities
- 3.48 ESF has requirements for formal monitoring in place through the need to monitor diversity of beneficiaries, although this focuses on numbers rather than impacts. None of the other three Funds have any consistent approach to tracking of equal opportunity targets and discussion with project managers has generally identified that this is not always formally reported. However project managers can identify information that could be reported. Examples include:
- ERDF capital build projects; monitoring of the beneficiaries of services being delivered from new buildings
 - EAGGF; a land based industry project indicated that beneficiaries of the delegated grant scheme do undertake diversity monitoring of employees as a duty for National Government. The project has not considered using this information but is aware that it does exist
 - ESF; two projects expressed an interest in reporting on qualitative / soft targets relating to Equal Opportunities. An example is that of a project working with the often excluded group of lone parents. The project manager suggested that the impact of working with socially excluded individuals would be of relevance; a scenario being if a lone parent is supported through the project, there is often increased confidence for this individual, the client stops (for example) taking drugs, is supported in undertaking some volunteer work and consequently the child is taken off the 'at risk register'

Key Issues Arising

Capturing Information on the Impact of the Equal Opportunities Theme

- 3.49 It is evident from the interviews and questionnaires, that there has been a significant development in understanding and integration of the Equal Opportunities theme since the start of the Programme period, supported by the Equal Opportunities Officer. Information and guidance is available to applicants and equal opportunities is scored in the application appraisal processes for all four Funds.
- 3.50 However this effort at application stage is not mirrored by an equal effort on gathering information on the impact of integrating the equal opportunities theme. ESF has a formal system in place for gathering monitoring information, through diversity monitoring of beneficiaries. Other projects should report on any equal opportunities

outputs as part of a general requirement to carry out their project in accordance with their applications (and any specific conditions if applicable). More qualitative information may not be given. Valuable information about successes (and challenges) is not being reported to the Objective One Programme, although it is clear that there are a range of experiences and impacts that could be reported. It also means that there is no easy way to measure achievement against output targets for the equal opportunities theme operational objectives, which have just been restated in the draft revised Programme Complement document. There is also a danger that, if applicants can see there is no follow up, there will be less incentive to put in place any positive equal opportunities measures.

- 3.51 The formal monitoring systems within the Objective One Programme are applied by GOSW and guided by national systems already in place. There is a need to consider whether there is a way this can be supplemented to ensure that other information relevant to this cross cutting theme can be gathered. It is also important that any reporting requirements for projects are not too onerous. In some projects, information being collected for other funding programmes could also be useful to report for Objective One purposes. For example ERDF capital projects related to training may not be monitoring the diversity of those beneficiaries who are the end users of their accessible buildings, although they will be doing this for other funders such as DfES.
- 3.52 A key need is to draw out the impact of integration of equal opportunities, focusing on the economic effects in particular. This is a particular gap in information. Whereas quantitative tracking can collect numbers of participants etc, the real need is to understand what impact this is having. For example, even though ESF has a system in place for gathering statistics on beneficiaries, this does not fully report on the benefits of participation for beneficiaries. It is this information which will be very valuable in case studies to put over the business case for equal opportunities, rather than the benefits of considering equal opportunities per se.
- 3.53 If information is to be gathered through data collection and evaluation processes, it is also important that the information is used to forward plan and assist others who may be planning and developing activities in similar areas of work. The interviews and questionnaires identified both good examples of steps taken to resolve equal opportunities issues within economic projects but also examples where help was needed to resolve issues. Drawing out this information and experience and using it constructively within Programme activity would be very valuable.
- 3.54 FIGF is a particular Fund where integrating equal opportunities is less easy and experience in projects within the other Funds may help to provide some ideas to use in relation to FIGF projects. This could be very helpful in assisting fisheries projects to consider equal opportunities in preparation for the next Structural Fund period, where equal opportunities will be built into the proposed European Fisheries Fund.

Good practice - Case Studies

- 3.55 During the course of this research a number of projects have been identified as potential case studies for good practice, both to develop information about economic benefits and also practical examples of actions that other projects could follow:
- Duchy College
 - Truro College
 - Chark Holiday Cottages
 - Penryn Townscape Heritage Initiative
 - Pentreath Industries
 - Cornish Horticultural Enterprises
 - Trevenon Community Hall

Conclusions

- 3.56 The interviews and questionnaires have identified a range of experiences, generally positive, on the integration of equal opportunities into project activity. The process of considering equal opportunities has developed and most projects have been able to find links. ESF projects have found this easiest and FIG projects have found it the most difficult, reflecting the different nature of projects under the different Structural Funds.
- 3.57 The key need now is to ensure that the experience of projects is drawn together, a number of which are now near the end of three year programmes, may already be complete and some of which are considering applying for further funding for the remainder of the Programme period. There is a lot of valuable experience and information available from the projects reviewed and it does not seem that current reporting systems fully capture this information. Other means of data collection and obtaining information on impacts needs to be found so that the full impact of activities in relation to operational objectives and output targets for the equal opportunities cross cutting theme can be measured.

4 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

- 4.1 This section draws together our conclusions from reviewing the development of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme within the Objective One Programme and the practical experience of organisations developing and delivering equal opportunities within projects financially supported by the Programme. Recommendations on actions that would assist in developing and delivering the equal opportunities cross cutting theme and in assessing the impact and benefits that it is having, are made.

Summary

Applying the Equal Opportunities Theme

- 4.2 Applying the equal opportunities theme has been a learning and development process since the start of the Programme. Initially, the Programme focus was on gender related issues as originally set out in the SPD. Interpretation in relation to projects focused on whether applicant organisations had an equal opportunities policy. No specific resources were available to promote and develop the equal opportunities themes until the Equal Opportunities Adviser came into post in December 2001. A number of projects were approved in 2002 and 2001 (several of which are projects continuing over up to three years) with no specific requirement to report on equal opportunities progress but which have valuable experience demonstrating the integration of equal opportunities and economic benefit.
- 4.3 The equal opportunities theme now has operational objectives which are much more broadly based than gender equality; project appraisal systems that have developed in their scoring of equal opportunities issues; and all supported by a range of advice and support through the Equal Opportunities Officer and other sources. However, even though the understanding and application of the equal opportunities theme has developed, there seems to be limited reporting on equal opportunities by projects, once approved.
- 4.4 This development can be seen within the projects reviewed. Initially equal opportunities only touched on equal opportunities policies being held by the applicant organisations. It has developed into a much more thorough focus on the project activity itself and what it will do to address equal opportunities within the context of its economic activities. This appears to have been assisted by a growing national awareness of equal opportunities issues and an increasing availability of information. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act is a particular example which will impact on project activity for capital build projects.
- 4.5 Whilst understanding and application of the equal opportunities theme has developed significantly over the Programme period, this has been at differential rates within the four Structural Funds. It appears to have been easiest for ESF projects and remains most problematic for FIFG projects, reflecting the nature of the projects coming forward.
- 4.6 However, even though there is now a much greater awareness and application of the equal opportunities theme, it is important to emphasise that the Objective One Programme's interest is in the link between equal opportunities and economic benefit and not purely on equal opportunities per se (although there is a clear benefit in the ability of the equal opportunities theme to raise the profile of equal opportunities in general). For example, even though the ESF has systems in place for scoring and monitoring equal opportunities, this is quite process driven and a numerical assessment of diversity of project beneficiaries may not truly reflect the economic

impact for the people concerned. Case studies have identified good examples of the equal opportunities/economic benefit achieved.

- 4.7 The process of assessing equal opportunities contributions of projects has developed in all four Funds. However, although the processes leading up to project approval are now much stronger, this is not reflected in an equal process post project approval, to draw out actual experience, successes, issues and impacts. Project managers who are now developing further projects have experience that they can apply and there are examples of good practice that could be valuable to other projects. However there appears to be no structure for bringing this information forward.

Practical Experience of Delivering and Tracking the Equal Opportunities Theme

- 4.8 No project managers identified major problems with integrating equal opportunities theme within their projects, with the exception of FIG. However projects note challenges that have arisen during project delivery, for example in terms of trying to integrate different groups of people into project activity. In some cases project managers have successfully introduced elements into their project activity to overcome such problems. Equally some acknowledge that they have not found an effective way to do this. There are examples where project managers may not have fully thought through the practical implications of making information or venues fully accessible. Drawing out the experience of projects in order to support effective implementation and help others who are planning projects would be extremely valuable.
- 4.9 There is a particular need to link across the four Structural Funds in developing experience and supporting effective project delivery, using the experience of projects to date. For example capital funding support is available through ERDF, EAGGF and FIG and experiences in developing fully accessible buildings could be shared. This will be particularly important with the application of the DDA and therefore a requirement on projects that they have to deliver more than Part M of the Building Regulations. Equally training is supported by both ESF and EAGGF, whilst there are links that could also be made between ESF/EAGGF training activity and ERDF/EAGGF capital activity on fully accessible buildings.
- 4.10 The report has indicated that there is now a considerable amount of information within projects on successes and challenges associated with integrating equal opportunities into projects and that the economic benefits of this are being felt. However this information is not always reported as a result of Objective One approvals. It may be exchanged informally through networking between individual projects and it is beginning to be gathered through the work of the Equal Opportunities Officer who has visited specific projects with a view to developing case study information to place on the Objective One Partnership website. However, the lack of a structure through which to gather this information appears to be a major gap in information needed, to be able to effectively and consistently report on the success of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme.

Recommendations

- 4.11 Our main recommendations relate to addressing the information gap identified in paragraph 4.10 above:
- There is a need to make sure that where projects coming forward for approval identify quantifiable output targets for equal opportunities, information on progress is gathered during implementation. This will require some discussion with GOSW, who carry out the formal monitoring functions to develop a practical solution which is not too onerous on project managers. However it is important in order to measure progress against output targets set for the operational objectives of the

equal opportunities cross cutting theme and any other equal opportunities outputs that had not been expected

- There is a need to develop a data bank of good practice examples of practical ways in which equal opportunities issues have been addressed. The steps already taken towards developing case studies by the Equal Opportunities Officer have begun this process and need to relate to all four Funds. Projects could be asked to complete a short proforma as part of their reporting processes, which asks project managers to identify what they consider are good practice examples and issues, which can then be developed as case studies where appropriate and also provide a mechanism for alerting the Equal Opportunities Officer to projects where assistance to resolve issues would be of benefit.
- There is a need to identify where problems have been experienced by project managers in seeking to deliver equal opportunities e.g. problems recruiting a particular target group onto a training scheme and work with projects to address these during implementation and/or draw out the lessons for future projects
- Most importantly there is a need to develop information on the economic benefits of equal opportunities integration into projects. As well as drawing out any quantitative data, this work needs to focus on qualitative information in relation to benefits and impacts. A number of projects can identify economic benefits but the information is not being reported. In our view it would be unfair to introduce new reporting requirements for existing approved projects. A solution would be to explore whether a few projects, representing different Funds and types of projects, could be specifically researched in cooperation with project managers, to draw out information on economic benefit. This is likely to require some specific funding for evaluation work.
- It is important that information about projects identified for case studies also incorporates economic benefits as far as this is possible and available and do not only focus only on practical actions taken to increase accessibility. This will help to emphasis the links
- Once more information is available, it would be helpful to review the guidance notes on equal opportunities, to increase the ideas given about ways in which this can be taken on board and its economic benefits
- There is a need to develop ideas on ways in which equal opportunities and economic benefit can be tracked and the impact assessed within projects. Some project managers have identified the need for help, particularly in relation to monitoring/evaluation on a limited budget. The experience of existing projects should help in developing potential methods
- It is important that, where information is collected from projects, this is positively used to develop the operation of the equal opportunities theme. As well as case studies, there could be benefit in developing a list of simple, practical steps on developing accessibility taken by projects which can be shared e.g. through the website.

APPENDIX ONE

CASE STUDY AND POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRES

Areas for discussion with Case Study Managers

The case studies focus on exploring how projects have integrated the equal opportunities cross cutting theme into their projects. The areas for discussion fall under four broad headings:

- Project Development - looking at how the project developed, whether equal opportunities considerations were initially considered and how information about equal opportunities has influenced the form of the project
- Information and advice - specifically looking at use of equal opportunities information and advice, the usefulness of this together with any gaps/problems
- Project application - any equal opportunities issues arising at the formal application stage and how these were addressed.
- Post application - how project managers are now experiencing project implementation and whether there is a need for any ongoing support to take forward the equal opportunities theme within the project

Project Development

What prompted you to bring forward the project for EU funding? (was it solely on economic grounds? Or for a mix of reasons?)

Were you aware, when you first decided to seek EU funding, that the Programme has an equal opportunities cross cutting theme that you would need to think about?

What did you understand the equal opportunities theme to mean? What did you think its implications would be for your project?

Has your understanding of the equal opportunities cross cutting theme changed/developed since then? In what way? How has it actually been taken on board in your project?

Have you changed/modified your project in any way, from the time you first thought about it to the point when you made your application, to take on board the equal opportunities theme? In what way has it changed?

Do you feel that at equal opportunities perspective to your project has benefited it? If so in what ways? In particular, what sort of an economic benefit has it had? Has it caused you any problems? If so, what are these?

Would your experience of incorporating equal opportunities in your project now make you think about its integration into other projects that you do? Or do you see it as a requirement particular to the Objective 1 Programme only?

Equal Opportunities Sustainability Advice/information

Did you seek any equal opportunities advice/information during project development? If so, at what point in the project development stage did this happen?

What information/advice did you obtain? Where did you obtain this from (e.g. internet, written material, meeting, telecom) and what people did you contact to obtain this?

Was the information/advice you received sufficient to help you integrate equal opportunities into your project? Or did you feel you needed any further help? If so, in what way?

If you did not seek any equal opportunities information/advice, do you feel you were able to adequately address this cross cutting theme? Or in hindsight would some advice/information have helped you?

Project Approval

Once you had formally submitted your application, did you receive any further queries/comments about its equal opportunities content? If so, what were these and how did you respond to them?

Could any issues raised at this point have been avoided or dealt with at any earlier stage before making the application? If so, why weren't they?

Did your project approval letter have any specific conditions regarding its equal opportunities content? How have you addressed these conditions?

Project Implementation

What has been your experience delivering the equal opportunities dimension of your project? Has it integrated well into overall project activity in practice? Are there specific elements in the project that deliver equal opportunities? Have you experienced problems? If so, what problems have you experienced and what has been the cause of these?

If you experienced problems, could these have been avoided with any external help (at the project planning or implementation stage)?

How are you monitoring your equal opportunities outputs/results?

Are equal opportunities outputs/results you are required to meet are relevant to your project or are there better targets that could be measured?

Do you feel any need for access to ongoing information/advice to help you implement your equal opportunities targets (e.g. help in setting up monitoring systems for equal opportunities targets?) If so, what sort of information/advice would you find helpful? What form would you like this support to take? (e.g. written documents, a person, workshops/seminars).

Would you find it useful to network with other projects about equal opportunities issues/opportunities and how these are integrated into projects?

Summary

What is your overall assessment of addressing the equal opportunities cross cutting theme and integrating it into your project? What aspects have been positive about this? What aspects have been negative and why? Are there any barriers that need to be overcome to make this integration more effective?

Postal Questionnaire

Objective One and Equal Opportunities

Contact Name (name of person completing questionnaire)

Organisation.....

Position within Organisation

Contact Telephone Number.....

1. Did you know about the equal opportunities cross cutting theme Yes No
when you first developed your project?

If no, at what point in developing your project did you find out about the equal opportunities cross cutting theme?

2. Do you consider that you have a good understanding of the equal opportunities theme and what it is seeking to achieve? (1 = good, 4 = poor)
1 2 3 4

3. How have you taken the equal opportunities cross cutting theme on board in your project?

4. Please describe what progress you have made towards achieving your equal opportunities aims and objectives.

5. Do you measure progress with achieving your equal opportunities aims and objectives? If so, how do you do this?

6. Have you found it easy to incorporate equal opportunities objectives into your project (1 = easy, 4 = hard)

1 2 3 4

What is the reason for any difficulties you have experienced?

7. Has the incorporation of the equal opportunity theme had benefits for your project? Yes No

If yes, please describe what these benefits are?

8. Has your understanding of the equal opportunities theme Yes No
 changed as you have developed an implemented your project?

If yes, in what way has it changed? Has this affected your project's activity?

9. Did you seek any advice about the equal opportunities theme Yes No
at any point in developing and implementing your project?

If yes, what advice did you seek? Did this change what you planned to do or have done in your project?

10. Is there a need for any further information or assistance, to help Yes No

develop the equal opportunities within Objective One projects?

If yes what type of help do you consider is needed?

11. Is there useful experience about equal opportunities from this project that you will develop in other projects that your organisation undertakes? Yes No

If yes, please give examples.

12. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the equal opportunities cross cutting theme within the Objective One Programme and how this has been developed in your project? If you have any experience that you consider would be a good case study for other organisations to consider, we would be pleased to receive any further information or contact details.



Thank you very much for your help.

If you wish to receive this questionnaire in any other format, please contact us and we will seek to arrange this for you:

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