

OBJECTIVE 1 IN CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY

MEASURE 3.6 - INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LEARNING – EARLY STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

This paper is intended to guide project proposers, to ensure the coherent development of infrastructure for learning within the Objective 1 programme. It is integral with the Learning and Skills Task Force's position paper for revenue funding.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper provides early strategy and actions in respect of capital investment in learning infrastructure.

The vision of the Learning and Skills Task Force is:

“providing all individuals in Cornwall and Scilly with an opportunity for quality personal development and skills acquisition that enables them to participate fully within the social and economic activities of the County”.

The paper has been prepared in the context of the Task Force paper covering revenue activities dated December 2000. The capital investment implications of that paper are highlighted in the next section.

2 NEEDS ANALYSIS

2.1 The needs analysis set out in the Objective 1 Single Programme Document (SPD) identifies the main targets for developing people as:

- raising prosperity through the creation of new higher earning jobs.
- creating a human knowledge resource that is responsive to the needs of business, gives a competitive edge and encourages growth in emerging high value sectors.
- creating opportunities and support structures that promote inclusiveness, in particular for groups identified as marginalised or at risk of exclusion.

2.2 The analysis of supply and demand issues in the Task Force’s revenue strategy highlight the following issues (only those relevant to capital projects are included):

Supply side

- programmes must have suitable geographical locations with linkages to major centres of learning
- delivery mechanisms must be flexible and adaptable to suit the needs of individuals
- slight over provision of identified training needs would appear prudent to allow for a net outward flow of trained and qualified workers.
- although not meeting every eventuality, the development of ICT based learning will be critical in overcoming the problems of geography.
- training strategy that attracts the economically inactive into the labour market will be a pre-requisite for success.
- suitable strategies will be needed to aid the up-skilling and retraining of the unemployed.
- More flexible methods will be needed to deliver training to balance domestic and employment needs

(L&S Task Force Position Paper 2.1 – 2.7)

Demand side (again the following have an impact on capital projects)

- the creation of **new** higher level occupations will be critical in the raising of Cornwall’s GDP and its average wage.
- funding should be used to support investment in key industrial clusters.

- funding should be prioritised to growing employment sectors including food\drink, print\design, education, health, IT related, leisure, marine, call centres, culture and arts\crafts.
- support needs to be developed for part-time workers.
- there is a need for an immediate programme to up-skill and re-train much of the existing work force.
- Development of both flexible training programmes and funding to meet the specific training needs of employers – especially SMEs
- Routes to fund non-NVQ training including employer-specified programmes
- All beneficiaries within the strategy need to be able to contribute to the restructuring of Cornwall’s socio-economic activity.
- The content of all projects funded by Objective One needs to incorporate contributions to achievement of the three Horizontal Themes.

(L&S Task Force Position Paper 2.8 – 2.16)

The Task Force’s revenue strategy sets out a number of actions to resolve these issues, these fall into four categories:

- community learning and widening participation to address exclusion.
- learning and businesses.
- university/ research provision.
- modernising the learning infrastructure.

Specific details relating to infrastructure for learning are:

- extend the learning network using local centres, community outreach, ITC; all feeding into major learning nodes, mainly FE college centres containing comprehensive facilities. *(L&S Task Force Position Paper 4.1)*
- prioritise the needs of businesses operating in key industrial clusters as identified in the SPD. *(L&S Task Force Position Paper 4.2)*
- prioritise skills training in skills shortage areas which exist now and are expected, these include marketing and sales, new business development/ entrepreneurial skills, project management, digital techniques, computer networking, food technology, environmental science, building and construction, e-commerce skills and the management of early years provision.*(L&S Task Force Position Paper 4.2)*

The Task Force’s vision for the creation of a learning county is encapsulated in the concept of the Cornwall Learning Network. The main infrastructure requirements of the network relate to ICT and the acquisition/ development of support and learner management systems together with virtual resources/ assets.

2.3 **Existing Infrastructure for Learning**

The county has a wide range of learning facilities ranging from modern to 1950’s/60’s build. Geographic dispersion is also wide but there are specific pockets of under-provision.

There is good coverage of outreach resulting from a strong Adult Education\Link into Learning presence, coupled with more recent investment through RATIO and FE sector outreach learning centres.

Specific demands have been identified as follows:

Under provision (skill/facility specific) Under provision of skills training is often difficult to evidence locally, and can be subject to rapid change as economic factors alter. There are also wide variations within the county, depending on where the resources are based. The following list, however, highlights the sectors/areas which have been identified as suffering from under provision

ICT, multi-media and design (including , digital techniques, computer networking and E-commerce)^{1, 2, 3}

Advanced Engineering²

Tourism²

Hospitality/food & drink/food technology^{1, 2}

Life sciences/biotechnology^{1, 2}

Marine engineering^{1, 2}

Environmental & earth technologies^{1, 2}

Marketing and sales³

New business development/ entrepreneurial skills³

Project management³

Building and construction³

Art & culture³

Management of early years provision³

Sources: 1 SPD 2 RDA 3 L&S Task Force position paper

Under provision (general)

Higher level skills^{1, 3}

In addition, investment is required in updating equipment and ICT infrastructure, in particular:

- to service outreach facilities.
- to enhance learning support for marginalised/excluded groups.
- to modernise key vocational training areas

2.4 Summary

The analysis above highlights the need for a broad range of investment that can be summarised as:

- investment in existing key learning centres to ensure they can service demand levels and provide high quality premises and equipment to ensure that learning is up to date.
- investment in new learning centres where a demonstrable deficit of provision is identified.
- investment in ICT and Learning Support Infrastructure to enable the creation of the Cornwall Learning Network.

Prioritisation of investment is discussed in section 4.

3 **FUNDING LEARNING INFRASTRUCTURE**

The SPD provides funding through five priorities:

- Priority 1 SME and Micro-business Support
- Priority 2 Strategic Investment
- Priority 3 Developing People
- Priority 4 Community Development and Rural Sector Adjustment
- Priority 5 Regional Distinctiveness

The only specific measures within these priorities aimed at Learning Infrastructure development are:

Measure 3.6 Infrastructure for Learning
Measure 5.3 The Knowledge Driven Region

Measure 5.3 is specifically focussed at higher level skills development, development of which is being managed under the Combined Universities for Cornwall Task Force. For this reason, this paper does not discuss in detail, strategies for higher level skills.

Measure 3.6 is targeted specifically at developing the learning infrastructure and the main objectives and targets have been formally agreed as:

Objective: “to provide appropriate facilities, infrastructure and support which complements the training and HRD activity in the remainder of Priority 3”.

Eligible activities:

- new and enhanced vocational training facilities.
- enhancement and development of ICT facilities.
- provision of a managed network and common learning platform.
- conversion and enhancement of existing buildings to enable community access.
- development of facilities and equipment.
- provision of facilities for childcare where this facilitates access to training.
- provision of infrastructure to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups.

Targets: New \ upgraded facilities provided: 10

Within the other priorities the only measures that clearly indicate the potential to fund infrastructure for learning are:

Measure 4.1 Community Economic Development
Measure 4.8 Community Regeneration

The ability to utilise funding in other measures appears unlikely. Further clarification needs to be sought from the Government Office South West, in particular in respect of priority 1.

The amount of funding available to fund infrastructure development is not determinable until the full extent of measures able to provide funds is clarified. However, measure 3.6 has available funds of £4.8 million and it is clear that this falls significantly short of the anticipated demand for funding support.

Appendix 2 provides a summary list of projects either developed or in development, obtained from members of the Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Learning Partnership. Whilst this list is indicative only, it suggests a demand for funding of approximately £16 million. The Learning and Skills Task Force members have made representations to GOSW to consider this position and look at solutions to enable as much of this activity to take place as possible. In the short term, section 4 below sets out the Task Force's recommendations in terms of priorities that will guide the priority management groups in project selection.

4 PRIORITIES FOR ACTION \ EARLY STRATEGY

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on the Task Force's view on priorities for action to project promoters and project appraisers.

4.1 The Use of Funds under Measure 3.6

Section 3 highlights the problem of excess demand for funds under measure 3.6. and also highlights possibilities for funding learning infrastructure through other measures in particular under priority 4. The Task Force believes that priority under measure 3.6 should be given to funding large scale infrastructure projects that meet the priorities set out in sections 4.2 to 4.4 below. Larger scale infrastructure projects are unlikely to be fundable under other priorities whereas clear opportunities exist for smaller scale local projects in particular community learning initiatives. **Projects must clearly show that there is a real unmet demand which can only be addressed through objective one funding.**

4.2 Priorities identified in the context of the Objective 1 SPD

The Task Force agrees with the priority for action in the SPD, i.e.:

1. Projects that can demonstrate that they will contribute to raising prosperity through the creation of **new** higher earning jobs in Cornwall.
2. Projects that demonstrate support of identified high growth and emerging sectors (links to measure 1.6).
3. Projects that address current barriers to skills acquisition and learning linked to improved employability, in particular for groups currently excluded or at risk of exclusion.

All project proposals should be required to meet one or more of these priorities. In addition the more specific priorities and issues set out in the sections below should be taken into account by project promoters and appraisers.

4.3 Links to the Task Force's revenue Strategy and Action Plan

Priority should be given to projects that link strongly with the revenue strategy set out in the Task Force's position paper. (*L&S Task Force Position Paper, Chapter 4*)

In particular priority should be given to projects that extend and develop the existing infrastructure by creating opportunities for new learners, especially those identified as priority groups by the FEFC (LSC) e.g. 16-18 year olds, widening participation and lifelong learning groups.

Priority should also be given to projects that can demonstrate an innovative approach to widening learning opportunities in particular through the use of ICT e.g. the Cornwall Learning Network proposal.

All project proposals should be required to meet as many of the above criteria as possible. Individual projects will not necessarily be able to address more than one criteria; in these circumstances they should not be significantly disadvantaged.

4.4 Strengthening Core Infrastructure and the Development of Outreach

The aspirations of learning providers include a wish for both the strengthening of core infrastructure (e.g. College campuses) and existing learning centres through the creation of new buildings together with the creation of new outreach facilities.

The balance between these is critical and the Task Force believes that the following points need to be taken into account when prioritising project activity:

- Projects should be able to demonstrate growth, or that declines in provision are a real possibility if resources are not improved. Projects which simply deflect provision from one area to another should have low priority.
- Projects should address the issues of underprovision indicated in section 2.3. However, it is recognised that there are local variations, and that circumstances can change rapidly. Where a project addresses sectors other than those listed in section 2.3, the bid must show clear evidence of the needs within that particular sector
- The existence of a high quality core campus infrastructure is crucial in sustaining quality learning and skills. The importance of ensuring flexible and local learning is a key strand throughout the Task Force's strategies, and core campuses are often needed to create the critical mass required to sustain the highest quality provision. This can be particularly true for higher skills levels in sectors where investment in fabric and equipment is the most expensive. However, projects which request enhanced core infrastructure must demonstrate that the result will be centres of excellence which can reach out to learners beyond the physical centre itself, particularly for lower level skills.
- Much outreach provision, especially for higher level skills, is high cost, low volume and difficult to sustain without being grown out of established core facilities. For skills which require a modest resource base (e.g. ICT, languages), lower level skills can be delivered using outreach facilities, and projects aimed at these skill levels should demonstrate how this is to be achieved. Sustainable outreach is likely to be based on a strong partnership with the community and /or business.
- Projects must be able to demonstrate both a build up of capacity within the county and long term sustainability. There is a strong risk that a proliferation of funds supporting the development of ICT (NOF, ICT, SDF etc) could lead to over-provision

and duplication of outreach centres. Projects must be able to demonstrate complementarity with the Cornwall Learning Network and with existing provision. In developing projects sustainability should be a core criteria. The best indicator of a promoter's confidence in sustainability is the commitment of an organisation's own funds as part of the funding package.