

European Programmes Update

MEETING:	Gwynedd Economic Partnership Steering Group
DATE:	25 January 2008
PURPOSE:	To update Partnership Members on the operation of 2000 – 2006 European Programmes and the Development of 2007 – 2013 European Programmes
RECOMMENDATION:	Note the contents of the report
AUTHOR:	Sioned E. Williams Head of Economy and Regeneration Service

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Partnership's members on the implementation of 2000 – 2006 European Programmes and the development of 2007 – 2013 European Programmes, specifically:

- West Wales and the Valleys Objective One Programme 2000 - 2006
- Wales - Ireland Territorial Co-Operation Programme 2007 - 2013
- West Wales and the Valleys Convergence Programme 2007 - 2013
- Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007 - 2013

2. Objective 1 ProgrammeBJECTIVE ONE PROGRAMME

2.1 *Aftercare:*

The role and responsibility of the Partnership's Secretariat in providing advice and assistance to Objective One project managers in Gwynedd continues. The Secretariat provides support to project managers to prepare for and host Article 4 visits by the Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) and continues to support applicants - 55 Article 4 visits on local projects in Gwynedd have been undertaken to date.

2.2 As a part of the continuing after-care service, the Secretariat has recently contacted 47 project managers offering advice and support within the issues that may be of concern. 16 meetings have been organised in the next few weeks.

2.3 Publicity:

The Partnership continues to work to ensure positive publicity locally for the programme. The Partnership had a stand in the official launch of the Ireland Wales 2007-2013 Programme in Llandudno on 7 December 2007.

3. Ireland / Wales Territorial Co-Operation Programme

3.1 The Ireland / Wales Territorial Co-Operation Programme was officially launched on the 7th December 2007. Speeches were received by Ieuan Wyn Jones AM, Deputy Welsh First Minister, Colm McGrady, Consul General For Ireland in Wales, and Ann-Kerstin Myleus, Deputy Head of the Territorial Co-Operation Unit in the European Commission.

3.2 The first call for application closed on the 18th of January. It is envisaged that there will be two calls per year, with the next programmed for May. It is understood that up to 30 applications were submitted in the first call.

3.3 Members' attention is drawn to the fact that the North West Wales Development Officer is yet to be appointed. It is foreseen that the Officer will be in place by March. In the meantime, support is available for applicants through the Territorial Co-Operation Unit in Merthyr Tydfil. The Secretariat has provided initial support for applicants, but the lack of a Development Officer has hindered the process of developing applications here in Gwynedd.

3.4 Further information on the programme is available through the website www.irelandwales.ie which provides contact information for applicants who are in the process of developing ideas, as well as all relevant documents. The Members are reminded that the WIN 2 (Wales Ireland Network) is now available to aid the formation of Partnerships that may lead to the submission of project applications. The scheme provides financial assistance to eligible organisations to cover travel and subsistence costs. Application form and guidance are available on the website.

4. Convergence Programme

4.1 Spatial European Teams (SET's):

Discussions are continuing to secure Technical Assistance funding from the Programme to support the work of the SET's, which will provide information, advice and support to project applicants during the lifetime of the Programme. Officers from throughout the North West who are likely to be involved in the SET's will meet on the 22nd January.

4.2 Strategic Frameworks:

All ERDF Strategic Frameworks, excluding Priority 5 Theme 1 (see 4.7), have now got an 'agreed' status on the WEFO website. All ESF Strategic Frameworks continue with the 'under review' status. It is understood through the Strategic Frameworks Co-Ordinators that WEFO will continue

to make minor changes before receiving the agreed status. There is no definite timescale for this work.

4.3 Project Information Forms:

There are 576 Project Information Forms by various agencies and bodies noted on the WEFO website so far. The discussion as regards to the next step in the process continues, it is likely that WEFO officers will discuss the way forward with the SET's.

4.4 The Partnership has expressed concern in the past regarding the lack of information from the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) on projects being developed. Although the situation is improving with a few WAG project information forms appearing on the website and information being shared through other sources (see below), the main situation still persists.

4.5 National Projects:

Workshops were held at the beginning of January by WAG (Visit Wales), Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency and CADW on the national projects which are being submitted through Priority 4 Theme 3 (Environment for Growth). The five proposed projects are as follows.

- Heritage Tourism (CADW)
- Wildlife Tourism / Communities and Nature (CCW)
- Coastal Access (CCW and WAG)
- Coastal Tourism (Visit Wales)
- Sustainable Tourism (Visit Wales)

4.6 See attachment * for a report on the contents of the workshop as well as details on the proposed projects.

4.7 The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), has arranged an ESF implementation workshop on the 29th and 30th of January at the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod. The purpose of the event is to provide up-to-date information on the implementation of the 2007-2013 ESF Programme within DCELLS, including an update on the frameworks, match-funding and project development. A representative of the Secretariat will attend as well as a member of the Skills Sub-Group.

4.8 Targeting Priority 5: Building Sustainable Communities (ERDF)

In a meeting of the Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) on the 6th of December 2007, a paper was submitted by WEFO on the method of targeting resources within the priority which would supplant the opinion of the Spatial Planning Group.

4.8 Members attention are brought to attachment * which outlines the decision as well as outlining obligations to Gwynedd.

4.9 Project Monitoring, Management and Control Systems Guidance
Member attention is drawn to the fact that the guidance is available on the WEFO website. The main aim of the guidance is to ensure that projects are structured and run in compliance with European Commission Regulations, this reduces the risk of grants clawback. Further information is available through;
www.wefo.wales.gov.uk/default.asp?action=page&ID=2175

6. Wales Rural Development Programme

6.1 Following Members support for the business plan and proposed project for Gwynedd through the Rural Development Programme, they were submitted to WAG on the 30th November 2007. At the moment, WAG Officers are assessing eligibility of the individual projects before considering the business plan. No feedback has been received up to now.

6.2 It is understood that discussions between WAG and the European Comission on the contents of the Rural Development Plan continues, they continue to wait for approval in March.

7. Recommendation

7.1 Partnership Members to support the contents of the report