



Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Convergence Operational Programme - Consultation Draft

Dear Partner,

On behalf of the South West RDA, Government Office for the South West and Cornwall County Council I have pleasure in enclosing a Draft Convergence Operational Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, for your comment and input. Also enclosed is the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The Convergence Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will succeed the current Objective One Programme, which has been delivered with great effect by all of the stakeholders. A total of £380m of ERDF and ESF funding has been allocated for the new Convergence Programme, and this will be complemented by EAFRD and EFF funding targeted at rural and fishing communities. ESF support, some 30% of the total EU support, is included in the England ESF Operational Programme. This is the subject of a separate consultation (see www.esf.gov.uk) and you may wish to contribute to this exercise as well.

The role of the Operational Programme is to provide the high level strategic framework that will guide the investment of the fund. The Draft ERDF Operational Programme has been produced under the guidance provided by the core stakeholders and has been supported by a number of workshops. It builds upon the extensive work carried out to develop Strategy and Action.

The analysis is supported by a wealth of background information. Taken together, the material should convey a clear picture of what we are trying to achieve. We are now entering a formal thirteen week consultation process. We will be constantly working with partners during the consultation period to further develop the Draft Operational Programme.

New management and delivery arrangements will need to be put in place for the ERDF Structural Funds Programme. Discussions with key partners on the shape of these arrangements are at an early stage and will continue during the consultation period.

The provisional financial table has a ratio of 75/25 EU to UK public sector support. This is the maximum level of EU intervention allowed. This is a provisional figure on which we seek stakeholders' views. More generally, we are seeking to identify with partners the range and sources of match funding which might allow a higher level of match funding to be included in the final financial tables.

Following the formal thirteen week consultation process, and following feedback and revisions (as set out under Feedback, below) the Operational Programme will be finalised and formally submitted to the European Commission by the beginning of March 2007.

A New Ambitious Agenda

The Draft Operational Programme sets out four broad areas for intervention – Innovation and Research and Development; Enterprise and Investment; Learning and Skills; and Economic Infrastructure and Place Based Regeneration. This is a balanced set of Priorities which takes account of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas. The focus is on improving competitiveness of the regions of Europe, while taking account of the need to develop an inclusive society and protect and enhance our environment.

I would like to draw your attention to our proposals with regard to carbon neutrality. Given the increasing importance of the climate change agenda, we all need to mitigate our impacts, adapt to inevitable changes and look for economic opportunities. Consequently, we are proposing that the Convergence Programme will be 'carbon neutral' across the Programme as a whole. This would be a bold and timely step - and we seek your views on this.

In addition to carbon neutrality, there are a number of distinguishing features of this Draft Convergence Operational Programme. These are:

- This Draft Operational Programme addresses the challenge of establishing a knowledge based, high value added economy in a peripheral and rural economy – if successful, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be an exemplar for communities from all parts of Europe.
- The Programme puts knowledge, innovation and creativity at the heart of a responsible economy which values its environment as much as economic growth; it is a forward thinking Programme, rooted in the talent and enterprise of its communities.
- The Programme sets out the most ambitious plans to develop environmental technologies and renewable energy sectors as a new wealth creating sector.

We are keen to develop an environmental technologies and renewable energy sector which is amongst the best in Europe. This is both an economic opportunity and part of our broader commitment to addressing environmental concerns. This theme is one of the key distinguishing features of our proposals and is also a feature of the South West Competitiveness Programme.

The Draft Operational Programme is work in progress, and the Priority Axes and Cross Cutting Themes of the Environment and Equal Opportunity and Diversity will be further developed. The clear intention is, however, to develop a forward and outward facing Programme, building on the strength of the environment, a heritage of trade and enterprise, new opportunities around environmental businesses and the knowledge and talent of the business community and workforce.

Feedback

I hope that you will take the opportunity to let us have your views on the draft consultation document. It would be helpful if you could submit written comments on the formal feedback document which accompanies this letter. We are also interested in your views on how the Programme should be delivered and the feedback document includes a few questions on specific aspects of the new arrangements. More generally, we would welcome any views with regard to how we can deliver the new Programme more efficiently and effectively. I encourage you to circulate the consultation document within your own organisation or existing partnership group.

We are keen to involve partners throughout the consultation period, and will also be holding stakeholder workshops in January (details to be confirmed).

You may find it helpful to look at the frequently asked questions on the Objective One Partnership Office website: www.objectiveone.com or phone the Objective One Partnership Office helpline on 0800 028 0120.

The final deadline for written responses to the Draft is Friday 16th February 2007. Our intention is to formally submit the Draft Operational Programme to the European Commission by the beginning of March 2007. Thereafter, we have a negotiating period of a few months, and we expect the programme to be formally agreed during the summer months. We will of course be progressing our delivery arrangements during this period.

Can I take this opportunity of thanking you for your continued engagement and support in this process.



Jane Henderson
Chief Executive
South West Regional Development Agency

On behalf of:
- South West Regional Development Agency
- Cornwall County Council
- Government Office for the South West