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Staff Profile

This month we have another staff profile kindly given by Denise Marriott, North West Network's Communications Officer to start off the Newsletter.

Hello,

Let me introduce myself, my name is Denise and I have been with North West Network for over two years. I started out as a temporary Administrator and moved on to Finance & Administration Officer. I am now responsible for developing the range and quality of North West Network's information systems and internal and external communications. This means I manage the Website, E-mail Bulletin Service and co-ordinate the Newsletter.

I was born in Kent and have now been living in Manchester for four years. Before moving to Manchester I had been working in the music industry for over 14 years, responsible for managing a team of dedicated telesales staff, liaising and organising labels and label managers for weekly new releases. As the Press Release Officer for movie soundtracks and film scores I especially enjoyed reviewing and previewing films in London which ranged from the Matrix three months before its release and the premiere to Donny Darko.

After struggling to buy a suitable house in London during the property boom of the late 1990's, my partner and I decided to move to sunny Manchester after numerous visits to stay with close friends. We were lucky enough to find a wonderful house just before the property boom mirrored London spreading throughout Manchester.

Most of my spare time is spent listening to a vast array of music, cooking and caring for my two pet Belgian Hares who are quite a handful! I also love eating out, drinking and socialising with friends.

Looking to my future with North West Network I intend to get stuck in with creating an informative Annual Review a completely new and updated website and an all new glossy Newsletter, so look out for that in the next few months.

Regards

Denise Marriott
Communications Officer

Objective 2 Regional Round Up

Progress of the Objective 2 Programme in the North West

At the meeting of the Programme Monitoring / Regional Committee (PM/RC) on 10 July, members of the regional governance for the European programme received the following update regarding the Objective 2 (ERDF) programme.

- Spend has now reached £362m which is 63% of the programme allocation. It is likely that the N+2 target would be reached by the end of quarter 3 2006.
- To date £450m had been committed (rather than spent). This equates to 78% of the total allocation.

North West Network continues to provide a voice for the VCS on the O2 Advisory Group and the PM/RC. If you wish to know more about the O2 Advisory Group and what it does then please contact John Hacking, Senior European Officer at the North West Network office on 0161 236 6493 or e-mail him at john@nwnetwork.org.uk.

North West Objective 2 Programme – Annual Implementation Report 2005 and Annual Monitoring Report 2006.

Government Office for the North West (GONW) have recently published the above report. The main conclusions from the report are that the programme performed well during 2005. In particular the report points out the following areas of progress:

- N+2 (spending on the programme) was on target in 2005
- The Objective 2 programme has moved to almost full commitment on the ground
- Lessons from previous audits have been learnt and these lessons are helping to mitigate risk in the current programme
- The European Programme Executive at GONW has moved to area based teams which has improved the quality of relationships with sub-regional partners

If you would like a copy of the report contact Karina Ponsaing at North West Network on 0161 236 6493.

Email reception@nwnetwork.org.uk

Objective 3 Regional Roundup

LSC Greater Manchester

LSC Greater Manchester has just published the results from their fifth ESF Co-financing Prospectus. The total amount that was made available across all the available measures was £12m. Successful projects in this round will run between 1 October 2006 and 31 December 2007. The results of this Prospectus are available from the LSC Greater Manchester website

www.lsc.gov.uk/grmanchester/Corporate/default.htm and will be presented in detail in the next newsletter issue.

LSC Cumbria

LSC Cumbria are currently assessing and appraising the funding applications that they received under Round 8.

LSC Cheshire and Warrington

LSC Cheshire and Warrington recently published five invitations to tender (ITT) for projects to run between 1 September 2006 to 30 June 2008. The closing date for applications was 7 August 2006. LSC Cheshire and Warrington are in the process of assessing the applications and full results will shortly become available on their website www.lscdf.org.uk

LSC Lancashire

There are currently no open invitations to tender for LSC Lancashire.

LSC Greater Merseyside

There are currently no open invitations to tender for LSC Greater Merseyside.

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus are currently in the process of assessing those applications received under Round 3 of their Co-financing Prospectus. Full results will soon become available on their website www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Alternative Bidding Round 13

GONW recently issued a call for direct/alternative bids under Round 13. This round, which is the last to be made under the direct bidding process, was open under measures 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 5.1 and invited projects to run between 1 July 2006 and 31 December 2007.

Results from Round 13 have been published at www.eurofundingnw.org.uk and a full analysis of the results will be presented in detail in the next newsletter issue.

Please refer to the North West Network website to keep updated.
www.nwnetwork.org.uk.

ESF Private Match Funding Certificates

An audit by the European Commission auditors in 2005 indicated that the business process for the monitoring and control of private match funding was not as robust as that for public match funding in ESF projects.

The auditor's view was that there is a risk that project providers could claim private match funding, without providing any evidence that this exists, in order to draw down ESF. Subsequently, the Commission audit recommendation requested that the ESF Division introduce a business process that would monitor private match funding, including match funding in-kind – a process similar to that for public match funding.

As a result a private match funding certificate has been introduced that will help to minimise that risk.

With **immediate effect** Government Office will issue private match funding certificates and guidance, to be completed by any new Alternative Bid projects. The process will be the same as that for public match funding certificates and is explained in the guidance attached to the certificate. The certificate is not interactive. Government Office will issue either a hardcopy or a word document to newly approved project providers. The certificate will be checked in the same way as the public match funding certificate and should be retained with project records.

Research into VCS sustainability post-2006

The research which was commissioned by North West Network, together with Merseyside Network for Europe and Voluntary Sector North West looking to quantify the loss of funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) post 2006 and to assess the impact of this on the sector has now been completed.

You may recall from previous newsletter articles that the aims of the research were to:

- Identify in economic and social terms, the size and extent of the potential problem, through researching into the overall financial impact of the decline in funds
- Identify those services, organisations, thematic and geographical areas most at risk along with those which have successfully adapted to the changing funding climate
- Identify effective strategies for the sector to address the situation
- Analyse the implications of funding changes for the sector
- Suggest strategies for the sector and its funders to avoid a post-2006 crisis

The research recommendations for the sector have been highlighted in order to enable the VCS to plan for change and to engage with the public sector and other funding bodies in future funding delivery.

The research was carried out by URS Economics and Development and took over three months to complete and culminated in a detailed 63 page report. To further add to the research activities that took place, a consultation event was held at the JJB Stadium in Wigan. This event delivered the initial findings of the research to over 70 attendees including representatives from other key regional stakeholders and funders from across the region.

Here is just a brief overview of the findings of the research:

On the Changing Funding Climate

National, regional and sub-regional strategies illustrate the Government's aspirations for involving the VCS in public service delivery. Whilst the Government foresees an increased role for the VCS both in delivering services and informing decision-making processes, resources available to the VCS in the North West are in decline. These include the following:

- The Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) will be significantly lower post 2006 and will end completely in 2008. In March 2001, SRB was subsumed within the Regional Development Agencies (RDA) budget, the Single Pot. It is felt that the Single Pot will be less accessible to the VCS than SRB funding, as a result of the focus of Single Pot on achieving hard economic targets;
- European Union funding will significantly decline after 2006 as a result of EU enlargement and increased prosperity in the UK. The Draft National Strategic Reference Framework for EU Structural Funds 2007-2013 suggests further European funding will be focused on meeting harder economic objectives; and
- Lottery funding, in particular the Big Lottery Fund (BLF), is set to fall post 2006. Proposed changes to charity law will widen access to lottery funding meaning more organisations chasing fewer resources.

As grant based funding declines, there is an increased pressure on VCS organisations to shift to alternative funding models, including for example, social enterprise and tendering for public service contracts with mainstream agencies. Recent and some new government programmes such as Futurebuilders and Change Up will support organisations through this transition. The changing funding context raises implications for the VCS:

- An overall decline in grant based funding and a shift towards enterprise and self-sustaining will require a cultural shift and capacity building within the VCS to make best use of these opportunities
- The operating environment for the VCS is becoming more competitive; both in terms of competing for grant based funding and competing for public service contracts. The competition is getting tougher too, since the VCS will compete against public and private sector organisations, which often have more developed systems and processes for competing in this

environment. Again this will require capacity building within the VCS

- Funding priorities of the RDA and EU have shifted towards harder economic objectives related to skills, employment, enterprise and competitiveness. There are opportunities for the VCS to access these funds, although limited to those operating within these theme areas
- Emerging opportunities for the VCS to engage in decision making at local and sub-regional levels mean that the VCS needs to be more proactive at a strategic level to ensure representation

The research funding analysis suggests the overall decline in grant based funding from the base year of 2005/06 to the year 2007/2008 will equate to around £10million per annum and beyond 2008, there will be a further decline in grant-based funding, as a result of the following:

- SRB will be finalised in 2008, and will result in a further decline in Government programmes
- The North West (excluding Greater Merseyside) is expected to secure around £33million per annum of EU funding 2006-09, compared with an average of £133million per annum between 2000-2006
- Greater Merseyside is expected to receive around £50million per annum of EU funding between 2007-2013, compared with £131million per annum between 2000-2006
- The North West is estimated to receive £55.6million per annum of BLF post 2006 (based on North West share of national allocations of new BLF programmes), compared with an annual average of £118million per annum between 2000-2006

Impacts identified through the research

The funding analysis reveals an overall decline in funding for the VCS. If the VCS is not able to adapt fully to the changing funding climate, this could have serious impacts on the sector. Assuming existing grant funding largely covers staff salaries, a fall in funding of £10million between 2005/06 and 2007/08 could equate to a reduction of 500 VCS jobs, and further jobs in the region as a result of indirect and induced multiplier effects.

Based on the results of the research survey conducted by URS, VCS organisations themselves overall remain optimistic about their future prospects, despite a decline in grant-based funding:

- The survey suggests that the ability of the VCS to deliver services has not declined, despite a decline in funding in the region as a whole in the previous year. However, this should be treated with caution, given that a decline in funding may not have had enough time to impact on organisations. However, approximately less than a quarter of those sampled expected to be affected negatively by the changing funding climate. Future strategies must therefore target those most at risk;
- The survey suggests volunteering will increase alongside paid employment, rather than replace it. An increase in volunteering would result in additional positive impacts, taking into account the economic benefits of volunteering; and
- There was a general concern among stakeholders that the changing funding climate will decrease an organisation's ability to deliver services, with the results of increasing the burden on mainstream services. However, from the survey, VCS organisations expected the number of beneficiaries to grow as well as their capacity to tender for public service contracts.

The changing funding climate has resulted in the following 'organisational' impacts on the VCS:

- The new funding climate may result in 'Mission Drift'. As organisations establish more diverse funding models, new partnership structures and tender for service contracts with mainstream agencies, their original values and mission may begin to change
- The increased pressure to find alternative funding models has meant staff are spending more time chasing funding. This takes resources away from delivering and improving services, and may impact on staff morale
- The changing funding climate appears to be impacting on organisational culture. Organisations feel that they are becoming more business like and entrepreneurial. 43% of organisations stated that they have become more entrepreneurial in the last 12 months.

Areas Most at Risk

Taking into account the analysis of the overall changing funding context the research has identified some key areas, which will be most at risk as a result of the changing funding climate. These are:

- The decline in funding will be more severe in the Greater Merseyside sub-region given the volume of European Objective 1 funding
- Impacts may be more severe in rural areas, given a higher dependency on grant funding and the urban focus of the emerging policy framework
- Organisations dependent on a single source of funding
- Some VCS organisations are at greater risk due to the increased focus of funders priorities on hard economic measures. This may include projects focused around prevention, which may not demonstrate an impact on economic targets, but can prevent further economic costs for society. For example, VCS organisations dealing with vulnerable groups including homeless or mentally ill may not create economic benefits in the short term such as entry to employment

Conclusions from the research

- The researchers policy review reveals Government aspirations for an increased role for the VCS in public service delivery
- The sector traditionally relies on grant-based funding, which will decline post 2006. The funding analysis suggests that grant-based funding will decline by £10million between 2006-08 and further declines are expected beyond 2008
- As well as overall declines in grant based funding, the operating context for the sector is becoming more competitive and key funding programmes have demonstrated a shift to harder economic targets, which are not always directly relevant to the VCS
- Beyond grant-based funding, the VCS is expected to self-sustain through contracting for services with mainstream agencies and developing social enterprise approaches. Although these approaches are not always appropriate to all Voluntary and

Community Organisations (VCOs), and raise serious challenges for the sector

- Whilst the survey shows positive signs that organisations have demonstrated progress towards becoming self-sustaining and securing income through procurement, there is still a strong dependence on grant based funding, and there will continue to be into the next three years. As grant based programmes wind down the VCS will need to increase its ability to self-sustain at a similar rate to avoid a post 2006 crisis. The VCS will definitely need further support to enable it to fully adapt to a new funding climate. Feedback from the VCS at the consultation event held in June 2006 suggested existing support was not enough

If you would like to download a copy of the report then please visit the North West Network website www.nwnetwork.org.uk under the section: Home / European Funding / Post 2006 / News

Structural Funds 2007-13

Background

The EU Structural and Cohesion Funds are the second largest item of EU expenditure. They are used to promote regional development and employment across all the EU Member States. As you are aware the current cycle of Structural Funds programmes will shortly draw to a close at the end of this year.

Agreement has now been reached on the new 2007-2013 programme budget, with the UK receiving approximately €9.4bn under the new programme. Consultations are now underway at European (Community Strategic Guidelines), national (National Strategic Reference Framework) and regional (Operational Programme) levels.

Whilst agreement has yet to be made on the Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG's) at the EU level, believed now to be in October, further consultation is currently being undertaken at a national level. This will inform the priorities for the new structural funds programme together with arrangements for delivering these funds. Once the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) has been agreed, there will be further consultation at the regional level.

The UK's National Strategic Reference Framework

The broad objectives for EU Structural Funds are governed by CSGs, which have identified three main priorities for funding. These are:

- Increasing accessibility, quality and level of services and environmental potential of member states, regions and cities
- Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship and investment in research and innovation, including information and communication technology
- Creating more and better jobs, improving adaptability of workers and increasing investment in human capital

The UK's NSRF will assess the country's economic strengths and weaknesses, and will ensure that our national strategies contribute to the priorities of the CSGs. The NSRF consultation document will outline the strengths and weaknesses of the UK economy, identifying support for small and medium-sized enterprises, translation of science research into practice, with economically inactive groups and

environmental technologies as particular areas needing greater support.

Reform of Structural Funds for 2007-2013

There are to be three new objectives in the new programme. These are:

Convergence Objective

For regions with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) below 75% of the EU average. This will replace the current Objective 1. Under the Convergence objective, the UK will receive approximately £1.9billion. Convergence funds will go to West Wales and Cornwall with a 'phasing out' element also going to the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

Competitiveness Objective

For competitiveness and employment in more prosperous regions. This will replace the current Objectives 2 and 3. All regions in England will be eligible for this funding with South Yorkshire and Merseyside being eligible for 'phasing-in' funding as they would no longer qualify for Objective 1 funding even if EU enlargement had not taken place. Under the Competitiveness objective approximately £4.4billion will be allocated to the UK of which approximately £1.26billion will go to South Yorkshire and Merseyside.

Territorial Co-operation Objective

To support cross-border and trans-national projects. This will replace the current Interreg Community Initiative. The Government will shortly be agreeing the list of regions eligible for funding under this objective with the European Commission. The Territorial Co-operation budget for the UK will amount to approximately £0.43billion.

Here in the North West, we will primarily be in receipt of funds from the Competitiveness Objective.

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The Government is proposing ERDF for each region under the Competitiveness Programmes. ERDF spending will have four main priorities:

- **Promoting innovation and knowledge transfer**, including research and development and building links between higher education institutions and businesses

- **Stimulating enterprise and supporting successful business**, including support for small and medium-sized enterprises and social enterprises
- **Ensuring sustainable development, production and consumption**, including encouraging take up of renewable energy and building a better environment
- **Building sustainable communities**, including support for social enterprise, increase the attractiveness of deprived areas and improving access to employment and public services

The North West Competitiveness Operational Programme – ERDF

At a regional level the first consultation draft of the North West Operational Programme (NWOP) was prepared for discussion by the Operational Programme Steering Committee on 31st July 2006. The Operational Programme Steering Group (of which North West Network is a member) is responsible for developing the ERDF Operational Programme, its delivery mechanisms, its governance arrangements and the European Social Fund (ESF) regional strategy.

At the Operational Programme Steering Committee's inaugural meeting it was agreed that the initial draft of the Operational Programme should be subject to a limited consultation with the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) Advisory Group, Sub-Regional Partnerships and the existing Programmes Governance Structures to kick start the process. The draft first went out to public consultation on Thursday 4 August and was deliberately positioned to inform and stimulate debate, leading to a second draft where more formal sub-regional consultations will take place.

Whilst there is still no confirmed date for the response to the NSRF consultation, and in the absence of this, work on the development of the Operational Programme has proceeded on the assumption that there will be no significant changes in terms of eligible activity. It is proposed that even if there is slippage with the response, the dates for the face-to-face consultation events (see end of article) will be retained, as the formal consultation period can still be concluded via written comments. Proceeding as proposed would ensure that all stakeholders are effectively engaged during the developmental period, and that the timetable for production of the Operational Programme is not significantly compromised.

Possible Level of NWOP Resources

Currently the annual total of all North West ERDF is of the order of £150million to £160million a year (this is based on the total programme value divided by 7 years and is roughly 50:50 between Objective 1 and Objective 2).

The Department for Trade and Industry is still working on the allocations methodology for the Competitiveness Programme, from which the North West region will benefit. The exception to this is Greater Merseyside whose phasing in status means that the funding levels available are predetermined. Based on what is known about the Greater Merseyside allocation (around £320million at current exchange rates) and assuming that the allocation for the rest of the North West is 50% of current levels, then the estimated potential future value of the new programme will be approximately £70million per annum or around £500million over 7 years. This total will be split between Greater Merseyside at around £30million per annum (assuming that 60% of the new Operational Programme ring-fenced allocation for Greater Merseyside is allocated to ERDF) and the rest of the North West at around £40million per annum.

Current broad thinking on the North West Operational Programme

The three Regional Economic Strategy (RES) drivers will be driving the new Operational Programme's regional priorities. These are:

OP1 Improving productivity and growing the market

OP2 Creating the conditions for sustainable growth

OP3 Growing and accessing employment

with the following suggested "action areas" being developed for each priority and drawing on the RES.

OP1 Improving productivity and growing the market

- 1 Support new enterprise
- 2 Support regional target sectors
- 3 Encourage innovation in SME's
- 4 Exploit science Research/Development
- 5 Encouraging use of ICT in SME's
- 6 Helping SME's access international markets
- 7 Encourage sustainable production
- 8 Management and leadership

OP2 Creating the conditions for sustainable growth

- 1 Developing regional gateways (air, sea and potentially rail)
- 2 Develop high quality sites and premises
- 3 Supporting environmental activities (with economic impact)

OP3 Growing and accessing employment

- 1 Stimulate enterprise in deprived areas and groups
- 2 Support linkages to employment opportunities
- 3 Employment in areas of regeneration need
- 4 Employment in areas of opportunity

Implementing Arrangements

The Government has still to take a decision on whether or not the Regional Development Agencies will have lead responsibility for the implementation of the ERDF Programme, and which body will be responsible for the implementation of the ESF Programme. Informal discussions are taking place based upon planning assumptions, but serious work on transitional management cannot proceed until future roles and responsibilities are formally articulated by Government. In the absence of this decision it is slightly premature to move to the design of governance and delivery arrangements and these key workstreams will need to be addressed immediately a decision is reached.

Consultation

As you can see, preparing for a new European structural fund programme is a complicated business with consultations galore and allocation methodologies still to be worked out. We hope that the information provided has helped you to get a feel for what the new programme will look like. However if you feel you would like to input into the consultation process and have your say on the future programme and how you would like it to look then please contact a member of the European team at North West Network. Alternatively you could attend one of the following consultations across the region. Dates and venues that have already been arranged to date include:

Cheshire	6 October 2006	10.00 am	Crowne Plaza, Chester
Lancashire	2 October 2006	10.00 am	Tickled Trout, Preston
Greater Merseyside	3 October 2006	14.00 pm	Cunard Building, Liverpool
Cumbria	11 October 2006	14.00 pm	Castle Green, Kendal
Manchester	2 October 2006	14.00 pm	Wigan Investment Centre

Moreover a regional event is to be held in Manchester on November 6 2006. The venue is yet to be confirmed. Please contact North West Network for more details on any of these events.

European Social Fund (ESF)

In the new programme there will be a single Competitiveness and Convergence ESF for the whole of England. This will support national employment and skills strategies and will be focused on two priorities:

1. Extending employment opportunities, including developing the skills of unemployed people and mobilising excluded and disadvantaged people; and
2. Developing a skilled and adaptive workforce, including increasing participation among young people, training for low skilled workers and improving basic literacy and numeracy skills.

ESF Programme

The Department for Work and Pensions has recently commissioned Government Offices across the country to take the lead responsibility for the development of the Regional Plan for the National European Social Fund Programme. In the North West discussions have already started with the Regional Skills Partnership, Learning and Skills Council and North West Universities Association as to how the plan could be developed. The Regional Skills Partnership will be invited to agree that an updated Statement of Skills Priorities is prepared, which will then provide a strategic framework for the development of the Regional ESF plan, similar to that provided by the RES for the ERDF Programme.

Consultations for the ESF regional development programme will take place from October to December.

Acceding Countries – Bulgaria and Romania

Bulgaria and Romania are the two countries who are currently candidates to accede the European Union in the near future.

The European Commission is scheduled to review Bulgaria's and Romania's accession status on 26 September 2006, while full EU membership for both countries is scheduled for 1 January 2007.

Here we take a closer look at the potential newcomers to the European Union.

Bulgaria

Bulgaria with a population of 7.97 million borders the Black Sea to the east, Greece and Turkey to the south, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia to the west, and Romania to the north. Bulgaria's capital is Sofia.

History

Bulgaria is one of the oldest countries in the European continent being founded in 681. It was part of the Ottoman Empire for around 500 years and after the Second World War Bulgaria became the Soviet Union's satellite country for almost half a century. The transition to democracy and a market economy after the collapse of communism in Bulgaria has not been easy.

In a speech to the parliament, Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn announced that Bulgaria and Romania should be able to join the EU on 1 January 2007 if they took action to address a number of outstanding problems including the need for judicial reforms and the fight against corruption and organised crime.

Structural Funds in Bulgaria

The EU has raised the amount of financial assistance given to Bulgaria by an average of 30% in the period 2004-2006. Bulgaria receives an amount of around €500million per year in financial assistance from the EU, reaching 2% of its GDP.

The European Union's pre-accession aid to Bulgaria is mainly provided by three instruments: the PHARE programme, ISPA and SAPARD. Under its mid-2004 agreement with the EU, Bulgaria will receive €240million on top of the previously announced funding of €4.4billion from the EU's 2007-2009 budget.

Voluntary Sector in Bulgaria

Most Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's) in Bulgaria was established between 1989 and 1990.

The most common activities NGO's undertake in Bulgaria are the dissemination of environmental information, environmental field work, and education and training. The most frequently mentioned problem among Bulgarian NGO's is insufficient funding, with almost half of the groups claiming it as their primary concern. About one-fifth of the NGO's cite it as their second most important problem. General legal problems, related to imperfections in Bulgarian legislation, are also at the top of the list of problems for NGO's. The third-largest problem is limited access to modern communication equipment, which is another major problem for many of Bulgaria's NGO's.

The most important types of support requested by Bulgarian NGO's are assistance with the institutional development of the organisation and support for the implementation of a particular local, regional or national environmental project. Assistance in creating, maintaining or developing environmental information networks; collecting and disseminating information; and supporting the implementation of environmental projects tackling trans-boundary problems are some of the other issues Bulgarian NGO's have raised.

For further information on Bulgaria please visit:

ec.europa.eu/enlargement/bulgaria/index_en.htm

www.rec.org/REC/Publications/NGODirIntros/Bulgaria.html

Romania

Background

Romania lies in South-eastern Europe bordering Hungary and Serbia to the west, Ukraine and Moldova to the northeast, and Bulgaria to the south. Bucharest is the capital of Romania and it's population is currently 22million.

History

Romanians trace their history back to 300 B.C. but Romania did not become an independent, unified country until 1861. During most of the time in-between, various foreign peoples ruled all or part of Romania. The unification movement grew rapidly during the mid-1800's and in 1861, the principalities united to form a nation called Romania.

More recently, Romanian Communists took control of the government after the Second World War and declared Romania an "independent people's democracy." However, Romania was in fact a Soviet satellite (country controlled by the Soviet Union) with Romania's government, educational system, and other institutions being modelled on those of the Soviet Union.

In the 1980's, new jobs were created, but Romania's living standard remained low and consumer goods were scarce. Reasons for the struggling economy included corruption in the Communist Party and an over reliance on central government's economic planning. In mid-December 1989 anti government protests spread across Romania. In Bucharest, tens of thousands gathered in the streets and called for increased freedoms and the resignation of Ceausescu.

On December 22 1989 Ceausescu and his wife, Elena, fled Bucharest during a massive anti-government demonstration. However, they were soon captured by the army and a secret trial took place where Ceausescu and his wife were charged with murder and embezzlement of government funds. They were found guilty and were executed on December 25th 1989. The National Salvation Front, a group made up chiefly of former Communists, took control of the government with free multiparty elections taking place in May 1990.

In 1996, Emil Constantinescu, who supported more rapid reform for the country, was elected president. His party, the Democratic Convention of Romania, also won the most seats in the legislature. Much discussion is currently focused on the decision by Romania's government to join the European Union (EU).

Economy

After Romania's Communist regime was overthrown in late 1989, the country experienced a decade of economic instability and decline, led in part by an obsolete industrial base as well as a lack of structural reform. Starting from 2000, however, the economy was transformed into one of relative macroeconomic stability, high growth, low unemployment and increasing foreign investment. Romania's economy is currently among the most developed in Southeastern Europe.

Economic growth since 2000 has averaged 4-5%, rising to 8.3% in 2004. This has characterised Romania as a boom economy and one of the fastest growing in Europe. Romania is expected to join the EU in January 2007.

One of the strong aspects of Romania is the technologically advanced market economy which is supported by substantial government participation. Having its own natural resources, Romania has intensively developed its agricultural and industrial sectors over the past 20 years and it is largely self-sufficient in food production.

Unemployment in Romania is at 6.2% (May 2006), which is very low compared to other large European countries such as Poland, France, or Germany. Since the late 1990s, there have been several economic reforms, spurred on by the country's bid to join the EU. As of 2005, a significant amount of Romania's major companies have been privatised, including the majority of banks, the largest oil companies Petrom and Rompetrol, energy distributors and telecommunications companies. The country continues to privatise remaining state enterprises, including Romanian Post and the Romanian Commercial Bank. In comparison to its neighbours, Romania has a high number of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Romania's economy is characterised by a huge potential of tourism. Tourism of Romania has attracted €880 million in investments in 2005 which has doubled the amount of money invested in Romanian resorts. Despite Romania's rapid economic development, poverty is still a pervasive problem, and modernisation's effects are only slowly being felt in the country's rural areas. Entrance to the European Union, however, should further speed up the country's development.

Voluntary Sector in Romania

Although the oldest Romanian NGO was founded in 1886, most environmental NGO's obtained legal status in the 1990's - part of the movement to develop a civil society in the transition from totalitarianism to democracy. NGO's are registered as non-profit organisations according to the old law of associations and foundations and new groups have been registering continuously over the last few years.

A key organisation in the voluntary sector in Romania is the Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF). CSDF is a non-governmental organisation based in Bucharest, Romania. It is a legally established non-profit organisation founded in 1994, and whose mission is to support the development of the organisations in civil society.

CSDF promotes the active involvement of individuals in their communities and encourages the efforts of non-profit organisations to improve the quality of life and to strengthen democracy in Romania.

Links:

Official site of the Romanian government - www.gov.ro/engleza/
Portal for Romania NGO's - www.ro-gateway.ro/node/185929/
CSDF - www.fdsc.ro/index.html

Framework 7

The structural funds are not the only source of European money available to the voluntary and community sector. Whilst not directly supporting areas where the sector is traditionally strong the Framework Programme (FP) is the European Union's offer of some possibilities. FP is the main instrument for funding research and technological development (RTD). In line with the structural funds, the latest FP (FP7) will take over from the current programme (FP6) on 1 January 2007 and will run for seven years running from 2007 to 2013.

Briefly, FP7 will be based around the following four main programmes:

Co-operation

Collaborative trans-national research activities

The objective of the specific programme on Co-operation is to support the whole range of research activities carried out in trans-national co-operation, from collaborative projects and networks to the co-ordination of research programmes. International co-operation between the EU and third countries is also included. It is designed for Europe to gain leadership in key scientific and technological areas. To this end, it will support co-operation between universities, industry, research centres and public authorities throughout the EU and beyond.

With a budget of over €44billion, the co-operation programme will support research cooperation in nine research themes, (see later) each of which will be operationally autonomous. However, the coherence and consistence of all measures across the thematic areas will be maintained. Joint approaches to research areas of common interest, with participation from two or more of the thematic areas, will also be possible.

Ideas

Basic research implemented through the European Research Council

The objective of the 'Ideas' programme proposed for FP7 is to enhance the dynamism, creativity and excellence of European research at the frontier of knowledge. This is to be done by supporting "investigator-driven" research projects carried out across all fields or research by individual teams in competition at the European level. Projects will be funded on the basis of proposals presented by researchers on subjects of their choice and evaluated on the sole criterion of scientific excellence as judged by peer review. The Ideas programme will thus become a trans-European mechanism to support creative scientific

research designed to generate completely new knowledge opening up new venues for technological progress and new solutions for social and environmental problems.

People

Human potential and science careers

Highly trained, qualified researchers are needed to advance science and underpin innovation, and to attract and sustain public and private investment in research. With growing global competition, the development of an open European labour market for researchers and the diversification of skills and career paths of researchers are crucial, and mobility, both trans-national and inter-sectoral, is a key component of the European research area.

Europe already has a very high level of human resources in R&D, but continued supportive action is necessary in order to maintain this competitive advantage. FP7's specific programme on "People" aims to improve the quality of the human potential in the European R&D and technology sector while at the same time increasing the number of researchers and other people working in the RTD sector.

Capacities

Development of research infrastructures and support to regional clusters, SMEs and international cooperation

The Capacities programme proposed for FP7 aims to enhance research and innovation capacities throughout Europe and to ensure their optimal use. Within the strategic approach of the Capacities programme, support will be available for new research infrastructures as well as for measures intended to ensure the optimal use of existing research infrastructures. The Capacities programme will operate in six broad areas:

- Research infrastructures
- Research for the benefit of SMEs
- Regions of knowledge and support for regional research-driven clusters
- Research potential of Convergence Regions
- Science in society
- International co-operation

This specific programme also aims to support the coherent development of policies, complementing the Co-operation programme, and contributing to community policies and initiatives to improve the coherence and impact of member states policies. Synergies with

regional and cohesion policies, the Structural Funds, education and training programmes and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme will also be sought. Activities carried out in this context include:

- Monitoring and analysis of research related public policies and industrial strategies
- Coordination of research policies, including trans-national cooperation initiatives

FP7 Thematic Areas

The FP7 programme includes the following thematic areas of interest to the sector:

Health

Health covers the following areas:

- Biotechnology, generic tools and technologies for human health
- Translating research for human health
- Optimising the delivery of healthcare to European citizens

Information and Communication Technologies

The ICT thematic area will seek to improve the competitiveness of European industry and enable Europe to master and shape the future developments of ICTs so that the demands of its society and economy are met. This thematic area is likely to be structured around:

- ICT Technology Pillars
- Integration of Technologies
- Applications Research
- Future and Emerging Technologies

Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities

Socio-Economic Sciences and the Humanities covers the following areas:

- Growth, employment and competitiveness in a knowledge society
- Combining economic, social and environmental objectives in a European perspective
- Major trends in society and their implications
- Europe in the world
- The citizen in the European Union
- Socio-economic and scientific indicators
- Foresight activities

Financial Contributions

The European Community financial contribution could be a maximum of 50% of eligible costs minus receipts for both research and demonstration activities (the current rate for FP6 is 35%). For SME's, public bodies, secondary and higher education institutions and non-profit research organisations there would be a top up of a maximum of 25% for research activities.

Frontier research actions funded through the European Research Council would be reimbursed at 100% for all bodies. All other activities, including those relating to co-ordination and support actions, and actions for the training and career development of researchers, can be reimbursed at up to 100%.

For more information please go to: fp6uk.ost.gov.uk/fp7/Default.aspx

Big Coaching Project

North West Network (NWN) has recruited volunteer managers and volunteer infrastructure organisations from the Greater



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through the Big Lottery Fund



Manchester area for the first round of its Big Coaching Project. The project has generated lots of interest around all three main activities of the project:

- Coaching for Volunteer Managers
- Cascade training to Volunteering Infrastructure Organisations
- Training in outcomes focussed organisational planning for Volunteer Involving Organisations

So far demand has outstretched supply and NWN have had to develop a waiting list for volunteer managers wanting to receive coaching. NWN are also holding an extra Self Assessment Manual Volunteer Management cascade training event to accommodate the response from volunteering infrastructure organisations.

The Greater Manchester round will run until the end of the 2006 after which NWN will focus on another sub region within the North West. Levels of interest from organisations will be a factor in deciding which sub region of the North West NWN will focus on next.

If you would like more information on this project please visit the Volunteer Development section of the North West Network website: www.nwnetwork.org.uk or contact Carol or Dan. Tel: 0161 236 6493, E-Mail: carol@nwnetwork.org.uk, dan@nwnetwork.org.uk.

Tameside Coaching Project Final Update

North West Network (NWN) has completed the Tameside Coaching Project and has finished evaluating its impact of the project. Both the coaching and Self Assessment Manual (SAM) Volunteer Management training elements of the project were a success.

Coaching

The Tameside Coaching Project supported the learning of volunteer managers, through coaching, in order to develop their skills and knowledge in managing volunteers.

The volunteer managers who completed the coaching have made positive and sustainable changes to the way they feel, think and act about their volunteer manager roles. Examples of outcomes achieved by volunteer managers through the coaching include:

- Managing their time and planning more effectively
- An improvement in how they communicate with their line manager
- Increased problem solving skills and coping strategies for difficult situations
- Becoming better at delivering presentations
- Increased confidence and more positive attitudes
- Enhanced communication skills

The volunteer managers identified that the changes occurring on an individual level have had a positive effect on the volunteering experience within their organisation, particularly in how volunteers are supported and how difficult situations are dealt with.

We asked the volunteer managers taking part in the project to describe Coaching, here is what they said:

“Coaching is a fun empowering and enlightening process that has enabled me to be more confident, more flexible, have more self belief and to reach my own potential in my role.”

“Coaching helps to develop a pro-active coping strategy with tools to clarify, question, challenge to get what you want out of a situation.”

“Coaching is an enabling tool which allows you to develop and enhance what existing skills you already have.”

“Coaching is not like anything that I have encountered before. I feel everybody should have access to coaching, especially managers or individuals who have leadership roles.”

SAM Volunteer Management Training

The project aimed to introduce new skills and knowledge to Volunteer Centre Tameside (VCT), by training in SAM Volunteer Management (a self assessment tool developed by NWN), so that they can offer different but effective learning opportunities to support local volunteer involving organisations in the future.

VCT already had the skills to use SAM Volunteer Management; the training gave Volunteer Centre staff the confidence, knowledge and experience to deliver it effectively. VCT is planning to implement SAM Volunteer Management to support volunteer managers in Tameside and have already made arrangements to use SAM Volunteer Management with 2 external organisations.

“I hope that VCT can offer the process to all co-ordinators in Tameside and perhaps to those we work with outside of the borough. This is another professional service available through the volunteer centre.”
Volunteer Centre Tameside

NWN would like to thank everyone who made the Tameside Coaching Project possible; including the volunteer managers who received coaching, project partners Volunteer Centre Tameside and the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund. NWN will continue to build on the experience gained on the Tameside Coaching Project during its Big Coaching Project.

A full evaluation report of the Tameside Coaching Project will be available to view on the Volunteer Development section of the North West Network website: www.nwnetwork.org.uk. If you would like a hard copy please contact Carol or Dan. Tel: 0161 236 6493, E-Mail: carol@nwnetwork.org.uk, dan@nwnetwork.org.uk



CabinetOffice

Treasury Review of the Voluntary Community Sector

The Government acknowledges that the third sector makes a vital contribution to society: building social capital; empowering individuals to make a difference; and helping to deliver public services - particularly for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. These topics and many others have been discussed at the regional consultation events of the 'Review of the future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration', following the Chancellor's 2006 Budget speech.

HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office have been undertaking the largest ever review of the third sector and have engaged with the sector in Guildford, Bristol, Cambridge, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham and recently in Manchester. The last regional event will be held in London on 18 September 2006. The review offers opportunity for local groups to influence local and national policy informing a ten-year strategy for the sector's vision. The review takes a broad approach allowing the sector to shape the discussion, rather than government.

The review is being led by Ed Miliband, Minister for the Third Sector and is overseen by a cross-departmental Whitehall Ministerial group. Ministers have attended every regional event and have engaged with a variety of organisations within the third sector. The Government is keen to hear from small community groups, to reach people at the grass roots. In addition to the regional events, HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office have been assisting community groups to host sub-regional events to reach people at the front line.

The Government wants to ensure that all groups that make up the third sector have the conditions and support to make a difference in the many diverse ways that they can.

One North West is working together with HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office to offer Black and Minority Ethnic groups an additional opportunity to contribute their views to the review.

To achieve this, a regional event is being organised for late September 2006. Further details will be sent out shortly, information will also be available through the website:

www.onenorthwest.org.uk

Organisations can also provide their views on the review through the following ways:

Websites: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/documents/public_spending_and_services/third_sector/pss_thirdsector_consultations.cfm

Email: CTSFU@hm-treasury.x.gsi.gov.uk or thirdsector@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

Postal address: Third Sector Review Team
Charity and Third Sector Finance Unit
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

Article written by Radiah Binns, HM Treasury, Review Team

Article further developed by Paul Harris, Project Director for One North West



North West Regeneration Sector Lacks Diversity



About RENEW Northwest:

RENEW Northwest is the North West's Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities. Launched at the Sustainable Communities Summit in February 2005, RENEW Northwest was commissioned by the Deputy Prime Minister and is funded by the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) to improve the skills and quality of North West regeneration professionals to deliver sustainable communities in the region.

Through learning opportunities such as mentoring, Masterclasses, and good practice sharing, RENEW Northwest assists regeneration professionals, from architects to planners, from property developers to community representatives, in the development of the leadership and regeneration skills necessary for the future renaissance of the region.

For further information visit www.RENEW.co.uk

One North West Interest:

Paul Harris, Project Director for One North West (1NW) has made contact with the RENEW Northwest lead on the 'Ladders to Regeneration' report, Tony Baldwinson. The report, detailed below, highlights a lack of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) diversity in regeneration in the North West particularly within senior positions and professions. Lack of diversity is further compounded by male dominance and gender stereotyping which inhibits the progression of women in the sector.

1NW is particularly interested in receiving any information about instances of good practice in the region or from outside the region that may be used to develop 'ladders to regeneration'. These case studies may cover a variety of perspectives including BME, gender and disability; topic areas include skills development, employment initiatives, governance initiatives, procurement initiatives and community engagement.

If you have evidence of good practice please contact Paul Harris by email at paul@nwnetwork.org.uk or by telephone on 0161 236 6493.

Renew Northwest: Ladders to Regeneration (May 2006)

The RENEW Northwest: Ladders to Regeneration report reveals that those from deprived areas; disabled people, women and BME groups are alienated from entering into regeneration employment in the North West.

Despite over £24 billion a year of public money alone being spent in the North West on regeneration and economic renewal and in a sector currently employing over 15,000 people, a report published on 14 July 2006 by RENEW Northwest, has found that there is a serious lack of diversity within the North West regeneration sector.

The report highlights that local people are generally excluded and are not being represented on Boards tasked with delivering regeneration.

The report was commissioned by RENEW Northwest to inform its Ladders to Regeneration: Diversity in Regeneration Employment Task Force. The Task Force has been set up to work with a number of partners in the North West to focus on current innovation and identify practical solutions to transform current inequalities within the regeneration workforce.

The report, carried out by EKOS Consulting, found that:

- Local residents are still under-represented on regeneration boards and are failing to access career opportunities, leaving them frequently excluded from becoming involved in regeneration
- Disabled people's exclusion from regeneration is profound and this group is noticeably absent from the government's regeneration agenda. Disabled people tend to be identified as consultees of regeneration schemes rather than decision makers in the policy process
- Despite having greater presence in deprived areas, BME individuals are poorly represented in the regeneration sector, notably within senior positions and professions and face a number of perception-based barriers to entering and progressing in the profession
- Male dominance and gender stereotyping is inhibiting the progression of women in the sector, which is illustrated by the low proportion of professional female planners

Kate Willard, Chair of the Diversity in Regeneration Task Force said, "Whilst the results are not surprising, we are disappointed at the current lack of diversity in one of the major employment markets in the North West. We will, as a Task Force, be addressing the issues highlighted in the report and are confident that with the right approach and working with other agencies and organisations, we will be able to widen the diversity of those employed in and responsible for regeneration delivery in the region."

Phil Barton, Director of RENEW Northwest said, "We know that this diversity issue is not isolated to the North West region. However, it is still very disappointing that despite the amount of investment going into regeneration, it is often those communities subject to regeneration that are finding it the hardest to enter into regeneration employment, despite genuine attempts to tackle the issue."

He continued, "The Task Force will be working with regeneration organisations across the region to better understand the barriers to achieving diversity and to come up with practical steps to turn this around. We are particularly keen to hear about examples of good practice in this area and of experience of what has worked – and what hasn't."

The Diversity in Regeneration Task Force will be publishing its results early next year following detailed work with local organisations around board representation, employment and procurement.

A copy of the full report can be obtained from (www.renew.co.uk).

Original press release may be downloaded from
www.renew.co.uk/article.asp?s=6&c=0&sc=0&id=1030

Article edited by Paul Harris, Project Director (1NW)



The Barriers to the Employment of BME Ex-offenders



This article presents a summary of a recent report by the Criminal Justice Research Unit (CJRU) at The University of Manchester and the IMPACT project on the barriers to the employment of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) ex-offenders. The article includes findings from a review of the literature and makes a number of recommendations.

An important finding to emerge from the available literature concerning the barriers to the employment of BME groups is that there is very little research on the barriers to employment in relation to BME ex-offenders; the majority of studies either concentrate on barriers to employment for BME groups or for ex-offenders. The barriers facing ex-offenders and BME groups can broadly be placed in two categories: those associated with employers' attitudes and their level of knowledge of relevant issues, and those associated with employees' personal skills and attributes.

Since very few studies have concentrated on the barriers facing BME ex-offenders as a group, it is unclear how the two sets of barriers, (those facing ex-offenders and those facing BME groups) interact with each other. However, it has been suggested that BME ex-offenders may have more barriers in common with the ex-offender population. Furthermore, as certain similarities exist between the barrier types in ex-offenders and in BME groups. However, additional barriers specific to BME ex-offenders may also be important, especially issues around racial discrimination.

A significant lack of data still exists about offenders and employment, despite research which suggests that employment does have a positive role in desistance from crime. However, there is a knowledge gap in relation to the effect of prison work on post-release employment prospects.

The literature stresses that employers attach a high level of importance to criminal records and this creates a set of difficulties for offenders, especially in relation to disclosing their records. Given the importance that many employers attach to criminal records it is not surprising that they are hesitant in recruiting ex-offenders. However, those employers who have had experience of employing someone with a criminal record express positive attitudes towards employing ex-offenders.

In terms of the barriers to the employment of BME groups, firstly it has to be acknowledged that people from a BME background cannot be seen or treated as one homogenous group. The literature indicates considerable disparities in the employment rate, the pay, the occupational attainment and the human capital of different ethnic groups: Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black-Caribbean people fare less well in these respects. There are also disparities between people by gender and geographical location. Second and subsequent generations of BME people may have different experiences and different issues than their first generation counterparts, whilst at the same time experiencing similar problems in relation to employment rates.

The main recommendations from the research are:

- Any strategies aimed at countering the barriers to employment for BME ex-offenders must include those that address employer attitudes and perceptions and those addressing BME groups and ex-offender's skills and attributes
- Useful work experience for BME ex-offenders should be arranged during their time in prison as a way to help them engage and find positive employment on release
- More information about risk management and information that counters stereotypes may help in overcoming employer reluctance to view ex-offenders as potential employees
- The differences of ethnic origin, geographical location, age and gender differences need to be taken into account when individual intervention plans for BME ex-offenders are being prepared

The full report contains a detailed review of the literature, a comprehensive list of recommendations and the relevant findings from a recent employer consultation carried out by the CJRU.

Article written by: Emily Smith, Researcher, University of Manchester

The full report can be obtained by contacting Shelley Lockett, Media Manager, IMPACT project: at shelley.lockett@hmps.gsi.gov.uk

Article sourced by Paul Harris, Project Director for One North West



North West of England Brussels Office

Emile Pinel of North West Network recently met with Suzy Sumner – Head of the North West of England Brussels Office to find why the North West needs a representation in Brussels...

Q. So can you tell me what the North West Brussels Office does exactly?

A. The North West of England Brussels Office (NWBO) is the representation office for both the North West Regional Assembly and North West Development Agency to the European Union. It is the eyes and ears of the region on what is happening in the European Union and represents the region at meetings with the European Commission, European Parliament and other institutions. We work to provide updated information back to the regional organisations to assist the North West in making the most of being part of the European Union. We also lobby the EU institutions on behalf of the North West organisations and promote the region in Europe. The office also has regular contact with the Members of the European Parliament for the North West and supports our three Committee of the Regions members in their work in Brussels.

Q. Do all EU regions have an office like this?

A. The office is one of over 250 regional offices based in Brussels – offices representing all regions of the European Union from northern Finland to southern Greece, western Portugal to eastern Poland. The offices vary in sizes and, to some extent, in their functions.

Q. So do you have a lot of contact with the other regions?

A. Yes. We work quite a lot with other English and UK regions and share information and intelligence. However we have also built up strong partnerships with other regions through European cooperation projects such as *Interreg*. For example we are working with the Dutch region of Flevoland and the Hungarian North Great Plains. The Committee of the Regions Open Days, the highlight of the regional calendar in Brussels provides another useful opportunity to work together with other regions and this year is the second year we will be working in a conglomerate with Mid-Sweden and Mid-Norway, as well as seven other regions, to share best practice and information on energy issues.

Q. There are so many issues of concern for the EU – how do you prioritise what is important for the region?

A. As a region we have a European Framework which highlights our priorities for the coming period. Since I start in the job in November 2004 until now one of the biggest priorities has been lobbying for the future of Structural Funds for the North West. From January 1st 2007 there is a new budget in place in the EU and a new set of programmes and priorities covering not only the Structural Funds but also Research and Development, Competitiveness and Innovation, Social Inclusion. For that reason we are currently in the process of reviewing our priorities to look at where the efforts of the region need to be placed over the next couple of years.

Q. Who decides on the priorities?

A. The final decision will rest with the newly established North West Regional European Partnership (NWREP). This is a regional committee bringing together representatives from the NWRA and NWDA with Government Office and the three Committee of the Regions representatives. They will consider a draft of the Framework in September and agree the final document towards the end of 2006. NWREP were in Brussels in June for a two-day induction to some of the new issues on the horizon from the European Union. Although we are still debating the future of Structural Funds in the region, the committee has begun to take a look elsewhere at the so-called 'smart money' for the region and at the other areas where EU legislation can have an effect on the region. This is vital for our future work.

Q. Thanks for this – how can people find out more?

A. Our office has two permanent staff, myself and Kathryn Griffiths, our Policy and Information Officer. You can find our contact details as well as much more information on what we do on our website www.nwbo.be

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NACVA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action)

According to the 2004 ChangeUp framework, voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure is “the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that exist to support and develop, co-ordinate, represent and promote front line organisations, thus enabling them to deliver their missions more effectively”. Most people involved with a local voluntary or community organisation (VCO) probably rarely stop to think about infrastructure in their area, although they may well rely on it to support their work, and would soon miss it if it wasn't there. But where do local infrastructure organisations come from, what do they actually do, and who supports them?

The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) is an England-wide network of local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) with 360 members; each of these is an autonomous body, firmly rooted in its local community. LIOs tend to come about because a group of people from local VCOs recognises the need for tailored support and representation. LIOs in the NAVCA network have grown in response to the needs of their community so they are all slightly different, but they share values of local ownership and accountability, and a common purpose of strengthening local voluntary and community action.

The activities carried out by LIOs reflect the ChangeUp definition, but in essence their role is to build capacity in the local VCS – whether that means capacity to deliver more services, or to influence the policies of the local authority. LIOs offer practical support such as training or advice on sources of funding, but they also enable local organisations to understand and influence local policies, often through forums and cross-sector partnerships.

LIOs come together through NAVCA so that they can share good practice and access support to develop their own skills and knowledge. They also use NAVCA as a route to learn about and influence national Government policy – for example, NAVCA has gathered information from LIOs about the effects of the ending of European funding, to lobby the Government to do more to minimise the negative impact on the local VCS.

Clearly, LIOs have a valuable role to play, but funding is a constant challenge. Many LIOs charge for some services, but few local VCOs

have the funds to meet the full cost or to pay for representation and influencing. NAVCA is lobbying to ensure that local statutory organisations recognise the value of LIOs, and are prepared to put their hands in their pockets to pay for them.

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Funding Opportunities

Waterways Trust Small Grants Scheme

Funding will be provided for waterway related projects that provide: lasting environmental enhancement; public enjoyment and awareness; educational opportunities; and benefits to young people.

Organisations, community groups or schools including private companies, charities and local authorities can apply for grants worth up to £1,000. Projects are normally being expected to attract further funding from other sources.

The deadline for this scheme is 30 November

For further information please go to:
www.thewaterwaystrust.org.uk/grants/index.shtml

Trusthouse Charitable Foundation

Charities and not for profit organisations active in the fields of Health Care and Disability, Community Support and the Arts and Education are able to apply for funding through the Trusthouse Charitable Foundation.

Funding is available for both revenue (up to £10,000) and capital (up to £50,000) expenditure. The Foundation also considers applications from charities based in the UK which undertake healthcare, health education and community projects in developing countries.

Applications are assessed when the trustees meet in February, May, September and November.

For further information please go to:
www.trusthousecharitablefoundation.org.uk/home.html

The Dulverton Trust

The Trust offers approximately 250 grants of between £1,000 and £50,000 per year for work that focuses on the following areas:

- Youth and education – excluding arts projects or bids submitted by schools and colleges which are not registered charities
- Conservation – excluding museums, churches, cathedrals and other historic buildings
- General welfare – excluding projects related to medicine and health, drug addiction and the mentally and physically handicapped

Further information can be accessed from www.dulverton.org/

Development Awareness Fund – Mini Grants Scheme

Organisations and networks with an interest in international development education are being invited to apply for funding through the Department for International Development's "Development Awareness Fund – Mini Grants Scheme".

Grants of between £1,000 and £10,000 are available for projects that raise awareness and understanding within the UK of international development issues. The funding is available for projects of between one and three years. The types of projects funded in the past include: working with refugees to raise development issues; incorporating development issues into the school curriculum; and using the arts to promote awareness and understanding global issues. The deadline for this fund is 31 October 2006.

Further details can be found at www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/daf.asp.

Big Lottery Fund – Community Buildings

The Big Lottery Community Buildings Programme has a budget of £50million to distribute over the next three years. Groups can apply for grants of between £50,000 and £500,000 for projects to improve existing community buildings or build new community halls. The buildings must be multi purpose and accessible to more than one organisation. Buildings should also be environmentally, economically

and socially sustainable. Community Buildings grants will be for capital projects and not for revenue costs although there will be small grants of up to £5000 available to groups for training on managing buildings.

Applications will be in two stages- the deadline for the first stage is 30 April 2007; successful groups will then be invited to make a stage two application and may be offered a development grant of up to £25,000 to develop their bid.

The Big Lottery hopes to make the first Community Building awards in July 2007.

More information is available on their website www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or by calling 08454 10 20 30.

Big Lottery Fund – Advice Plus

Advice Plus has a budget of £50million to distribute over the next three years. Grants will be given to improve existing advice services or to projects which raise awareness of or increase access to existing advice services. Grants may also be given to fund new advice services where such services do not presently exist. Organisations can apply for capital and revenue grants of up to £500,000 for up to five years.

There will be three annual deadlines for Advice Plus - 30 October 2006, then October 2007 and finally October 2008.

For more information or to download guidelines and application forms visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk or call 0845 4 10 20 30.

National Offender Management Service (NOMS) – Grant Programme

NOMS is offering grants to voluntary and community groups working with offenders and their families; especially women and offenders from BME communities. Grants are usually from between £15,000 and £60,000 per year over three years and groups are expected to find up to 50% matched funding.

The application process is in two stages and the deadline for the first stage is Friday 15 September 2006.

Application forms are available to download from the website: www.noms.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/briefings-newsletters/ or call 0207 035 0211

£100,000 windfall for Cumbria's young people

Cumbria Community Foundation has been given extra cash to help the county's young people. The government has allocated a £100,000 windfall to the Foundation to support projects that benefit people under 19 years old. Groups are being asked to step forward if they have projects that might be eligible for the money.

Usually the Foundation is asked to distribute £350,000 each year from the Local Network Fund. But other areas underspent their allocation, and the Foundation's impressive grant-making record made it first choice for the spare money.

If your group would like to discuss applying for a Local Network Fund grant, call grants officer David Andrews on 01900 825760

Microsoft Community Learning Awards

Microsoft and Citizens Online are offering grants of up to £2500 plus essential IT software to 30 organisations in the UK who are helping groups of disadvantaged adults or young people develop IT skills. The awards are available to all community groups and registered charities throughout the UK that are seeking funding for IT skills projects for disadvantaged young people and adults in their area.

The closing date for applications is 27 September 2006 and successful entrants will be notified in mid-November

Community groups or registered charities can download application forms from www.ukcommunityawards.com

BT Community Connections

A nationwide award scheme that connects local community and voluntary groups to the internet. Since 2000, the scheme has awarded more than 4,600 internet-ready PCs to community and voluntary organisations. In 2006/7 over 1300 awards will be made to groups who can demonstrate how a PC and internet connection will benefit their work and the local community. To apply simply log on to www.btcommunityconnections.com for an application form. There are two rounds of the award scheme and applications should be submitted prior to the closing dates: Thursday 26 October 2006 and Thursday 15 February 2007.

Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund.

The Community Development Foundation (CDF) has again been commissioned by the Race, Cohesion and Faiths Directorate, part of

the Department for Communities and Local Government, to run the second round of the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund. Organisations are invited to apply for small grants (up to £5,000) or large grants (between £5,000 and £30,000) which are available between April 2007 and March 2008.

The fund will support faith and inter faith organisations to strengthen their capacity (capacity building) in order to play a fuller part in civil society/community cohesion. It will also support inter faith activities which bring together people from different faith groups to talk, network and learn from one another.

Who can apply?

- Faith based organisations
- Inter faith organisations
- Voluntary and Community organisations carrying out inter faith activities or working with faith communities
- Partnerships between several faith or inter faith organisations in an area

The fund is available for organisations in England and Wales and the closing date for applications is 1 November 2006.

Further details and the paperwork can be downloaded at www.cdf.org.uk. Alternatively you can ring 01223 400341 or email them at fundingadmin@cdf.org.uk.

Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund

Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund was established by Manchester Airport to promote, enhance and improve the environment and social welfare of areas affected by Manchester Airport. The airport contributes between £100,000 and £150,000 each year to the Fund, and this sum is further increased by money generated through fines on noisy aircraft. The Fund awards grants to local groups to support community, social or environmental projects with a charitable focus. The Trust's area of benefit concentrates on those areas most affected by aircraft operations. Generally, awards are for up to £5,000 towards a project. Applications are considered for particular items or works that allow your project to increase community benefit.

For further information please go to:

www.manchesterairport.co.uk/web.nsf/Content/CommunityTrustFundLinksWithTheCommunity

Yapp Charitable Trust

Yapp Charitable Trust make grants to small charities to sustain their existing work with:

- elderly people; children and young people aged 5 – 25; people with disabilities or mental health problems; people trying to overcome life-limiting problems of a social, rather than medical, origin; and education and learning, (including lifelong learning)

Single year grants are usually for up to £3,000 with the Trustees meeting three times a year to consider applications. The next deadline for applications is 30 September (for a November decision)

Applicants must have an expenditure budget of less than £60,000 a year. The Trust concentrates on sustaining existing work rather than funding new work because many funders prefer new projects. The Trustees also give priority to charities tackling work that is unattractive to the general public or unpopular with other funders. They particularly give priority to helping to improve the lives of marginalised, disadvantaged or isolated people and are happy to fund the core costs of small charities whose work falls totally within their objectives

For further information go to: www.yappcharitabletrust.org.uk/

Refugee Integration Awards Scheme (England)

UnLtd, a Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, has announced that it is seeking to provide grants to small groups of or individual refugees to develop projects that will benefit their local community. UnLtd is providing grants of between £500 and £5,000 to refugees to set up projects that will make their communities a happier, safer, healthier and more just place.

The scheme will aim to fund and support more than 75 projects over two years.

For further information go to:

www.unltd.org.uk/template.php?ID=55&PageName=newsandeventscout

Department of Health (DoH) Announces Launch of new Section 64 Grants Scheme Bidding Round

The DoH are inviting applications for funding under its Section 64 Grants Scheme. Under this scheme, over 500 voluntary and community sector organisations will share a £24m pot of government grants whose activities support the DoH policy priorities. The Grants

Scheme will give an average £47,000 to over 300 organisations that promote health and wellbeing. This scheme also includes the DoH Opportunities for Volunteering (OFV) scheme, which will allocate £6.7m to support local health and social care projects, enabling them to involve volunteers in their work and complement local service delivery.

For more information visit:

www.gnn.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=204672&NewsAreaID=2

The Allen Lane Foundation

The Foundation is a charitable Trust which makes grants to UK voluntary not-for-profit organisations where the work benefits groups of people who are unpopular in UK society today. The Foundation is particularly interested in unusual, imaginative or pioneering projects which have perhaps not yet caught the public imagination. The grants are relatively modest. Single, one-off grants range from as little as £500 up to £15,000.

For further information visit: www.allenlane.org.uk/

The Charles Haywood Foundation

Support (up to £20,000) will be provided to innovative activities covering a variety of themes including heritage, improving community facilities or supporting older people. The Foundation is interested in funding projects covering arts, preservation and the environment. New charities that are not yet registered may be considered for start-up funding if they are able to demonstrate good governance and sound financial management.

For further information visit: www.charlesheywoodfoundation.org.uk

Foyle Foundation

The Foyle Foundation will support charities registered in the United Kingdom, whose main purpose is to benefit either learning, the arts or health. The Foundation will consider both revenue and capital projects.

Organisations and projects that provide direct benefits and services to the public, rather than special interest groups will be favoured. The majority of grants will be in the range of £10,000 to £50,000. Applications for less than £10,000 will generally not be accepted. The maximum amount of a large grant will not normally exceed £500,000

and may be payable over several years. There are no deadlines for submission. Applications will be received year round. It may take up to four months or more, from receipt of a completed application, to obtain a decision from the Trustees.

For further information e-mail information@foylefoundation.org.uk or visit www.foylefoundation.org.uk/

The Camelot Foundation

The Camelot Foundation provides support for organisations that help young people who have slipped out of the mainstream of society, or are in danger of doing so. Grants worth from £10,000 and £60,000 can fund equipment, training for project users, volunteer expenses (e.g. travel), running costs and requests that have an effect on the users' quality of life.

For further information visit: www.camelotfoundation.org.uk/

Lloyds TSB Foundation – Important news

Following a review of the way that the Lloyds TSB Foundation works, they have decided that it would be preferable to visit every potential applicant who is considering applying for a grant of £5,001 and above. They have decided that a visit must take place before a charity completes an application form. Consequently all applicants must contact Lloyds TSB Foundation before applying.

For more information contact Sylvia Green, Manager North West, Lloyds TSB Foundation, Unit M8 The Gateway, 89 Sanket Street, Warrington WA1 1SR or telephone 01925 234177.

Capacitybuilders - Improving Reach Programme

Capacitybuilders has launched this new initiative, which is part of the ChangeUp programme of strategic investment in infrastructure. (Infrastructure includes the physical facilities, structures, systems, relationships, people, knowledge and skills that help front-line organisations to achieve their aims.) Proposals are invited from infrastructure bodies that contribute to the improved provision of support and assistance to front-line organisations to enable them to shape and deliver public services, and to engage communities in improving quality of life.

Revenue funding of between £50,000 and £100,000 is available for projects that improve access to capacity building and support for a range of marginalised front-line groups/organisations (i.e. black and

minority ethnic/refugee groups, migrant and faith groups, or isolated rural groups) that may not have been reached in previous ChangeUp funding.

Eligible applicants are constituted bodies in England which are either charities, voluntary and community organisations, or social enterprises. Proposals are invited from individual organisations, partnerships or groups of eligible organisations and consortia currently in receipt of ChangeUp funding.

The closing date for applications is 10 October 2006.

For more information, please go to:

www.capacitybuilders.org.uk/fund/newfund/default.asp

Other Information / Reports

Department for Communities and Local Government Replaces ODPM

The Government has announced the creation of a new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that will be the successor department to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was created on 5 May 2006 with a powerful remit to promote community cohesion and equality, as well as responsibility for housing, urban regeneration, planning and local government.

The new department will be undertaking the following additional functions previously held by several government departments:

- It will unite the communities and civil renewal functions previously undertaken by the Home Office, with responsibility for regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and local government (previously held by the ODPM)
- It will bring together responsibility for equality policy, including policy on race, faith, gender and sexual orientation. The Women and Equality Unit moves to the DCLG from the Department of Trade and Industry. The DCLG will also be the sponsor department for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights

To find out more please visit: www.communities.gov.uk/

Office of the Third Sector

In recognition of the increasingly important role the Third Sector plays in both society and the economy, the Prime Minister announced a new Office of the Third Sector in May 2006. Ed Miliband was appointed as the new Minister for the Third Sector, working in the Cabinet Office to Hilary Armstrong, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The Office has been set up to drive forward the Government's role in supporting a thriving sector, and brings together sector-related work from across government. The Third Sector includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, faith groups, cooperatives and mutuals. The sector is diverse in its needs and priorities, and that diversity will be fully reflected in the approach of the new Office.

The Office will work as an advocate for the Third Sector across government, as well as delivering its own policy programmes. For instance, it will work closely with the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on embedding the role of Third Sector organisations in communities and decision-making at a local and regional level; and with the DTI on promotion of enterprise and creating the environment for business success.

The new Office brings together the work of the Active Communities Directorate (ACD), formerly in the Home Office and the Social Enterprise Unit (SENU), formerly in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Third Sector Commissioning Task Force report - Breaking down barriers for the Third Sector

Thanks to a new report launched by the Department of Health's Third Sector Taskforce, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will be encouraged to consider local voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations when commissioning health and social care services.

The Third Sector Commissioning Task Force report sets out practical tools for PCTs, advising them how to make the most of the Third Sector, which can bring additional benefits to patients and service users with a wide range of high-quality and personalised services. It also advises the Third Sector how to bid more successfully for contracts, providing a proposed model contract for discussion.

For further details please visit:

www.gnn.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=213633&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=False
and to respond to the ideas set out in the report and contribute to the next commissioning framework, then please visit:
www.dh.gov.uk/stakeholders

Forecasting voluntary sector trends

A Third Sector Foresight conference which was held in Birmingham on June 20 looked at strategic trends and how they will affect the operating environment for the voluntary sector over the next few years. Susanne Martikke, the research officer from GMCVO attended the event and her report on its proceedings can be viewed at: www.gmcvo.org.uk/viewpage.php?recid=1099

VCS National Learning Alliance

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) has received start up funding from the UK Workforce Hub for the VCS, to develop and pilot a National Alliance for VCS providers of adult learning and training in England. The word 'providers' potentially covers a range of organisations from those delivering learning as their main activity through to those delivering some learning and who might like to know or do more in this field.

NIACE feel that VCS providers need a strong and influential national 'voice' to represent their views to government, alongside those of other advocacy organisations supporting private training providers, FE colleges and local authorities. This would complement the role of the UK Workforce Hub as a 'voice' for learners' views across the range of VCS learning and training opportunities.

NIACE are consulting widely about the VCS National Learning Alliance over the next few weeks. They would like to know your views on this new development. This should take about 15 minutes to complete. The deadline for responses is Thursday 21 September 2006.

Please refer to the following link:

www.niace.org.uk/VCSNationalLearningAllianceSurvey

LSP Guide

Urban Forum and Community Development Foundation (CDF) have published a third edition of their highly-popular LSP Guide, aimed at voluntary and community sector groups. The third edition of the popular LSP Guide will equip you with the information you need to get involved in local decision making.

The Guide is intended to help voluntary and community sector representatives make sense of the often confusing Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) process. It also explains how LSP's work and how groups can get involved. The new edition covers:

- Techniques and strategies for how to get involved at a local level
- The new responsibilities and opportunities being given to LSP's
- Updated information about the role of LSP's and community networks
- Information on new initiatives like local area agreements, local public service agreements and sustainable community strategies

For further information see:

www.urbanforum.org.uk/pdf_files/LSP_Guide_2006.pdf

Partnership Development Publication

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has published guidance on how to develop partnerships. Information is included on the benefits of joint working agreements, how to monitor projects, resolve disputes and exit a partnership.

For more information please go to www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/

New SFP publication: Before signing on the dotted line – all you need to know about procuring public sector contracts

NCVO's Sustainable Funding Project, in partnership with Futurebuilders England, has produced a guide to enable small and medium sized organisations to navigate the complex rules, procedures and practices that constitute the public sector procurement process. As well as case studies highlighting the key issues to be aware of, it provides practical advice, useful checklists, and details of where to go for further information.

To view the document go to:

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/sfp/earning/contracting/

Clarifying mission and vision

Consultancy nfpSynergy have released a guide to assist organisations to create a powerful mission and vision. The report, entitled Mission Impossible, follows research that found that over a fifth of the UK's largest charities fail to communicate their vision, values or purpose to either supporters or their staff. This hampers the extent to which individuals can feel affiliated to the organisation and its work. A

summary or complete version of the report can be downloaded from www.nfpsynergy.net/freereports

CIPFA launches new qualification for charity sector

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) new Certificate in Charity Finance and Accounting has been specifically designed to meet the needs of those working in the finance functions of charities, but who do not yet hold a recognised finance qualification directly relevant to their work. The course will commence in autumn 2006. Potential applicants for this course should contact Nigel Scott on 020 7815 7760 or email cipfchar.enq@lsbu.ac.uk for further details on how to enrol.

Full Cost Recovery training for development workers

ACEVO and NAVCA (formerly NACVS) are coordinating a programme of training in Full Cost Recovery for development workers and other staff in local infrastructure organisations. The training aims to provide knowledge, skills and tools to offer affordable and sustainable support in Full Cost Recovery. At the conclusion of the training, advisors will be able to cascade their knowledge to third sector organisations operating at local level.

Visit www.fullcostrecovery.org.uk to download a booking form with venues and dates, and go to www.acevo.org.uk/events for online bookings. You can e-mail orli.gorenski@acevo.org.uk or call 0845 130 1627 for any enquiries.

Research indicates culture gap between grantmakers and charities

Research commissioned by the Four Acre Trust suggests there is a broad culture gap between grantmaking trusts and charities. For example, although most charities support longer-term contracts and better communication with grant-givers, 92% of trusts said they did not find long-term funding 'of benefit'. Seven out of 10 trusts disagreed with the statement that meetings or dialogue with grant applicants would improve the relationship between giver and receiver. Third Sector magazine interviewed key players on their response to the research and you can read the full article at www.thirdsector.co.uk/charity_news/full_news.cfm?ID=18973

Improved guidance from HM Revenue and Customs

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs has updated and improved their detailed guidance notes for charities about the audit of charity repayment claims (such as Gift Aid). The guidance is available at

www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities/guidance-notes/chapter7/audit-background.htm

Race and Faith Equality Website

The Government's Department of Communities and Local Government have produced a new website to promote race and faith equality. There are some useful sections on religious hate crime, asylum and immigration, community cohesion (i.e. improving our society through the community), grants and funding and lots more. There is even a section on case studies, which show what is happening across the country to promote race and faith equality. To access the website click on the following link:

www.raceandfaith.communities.gov.uk/raceandfaith/.

European News

Final European Structural Funds Regulations Published

The European Commission has published its final Structural and Cohesion Funds Regulations for the 2007 - 2013 funding period. The Regulations have now entered into force.

To view the new regulations please see: www.eurlex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:SOM:EN:HTML>

Cross Cutting Themes best practice website launched online

A website has been launched to share best practice in the Cross Cutting Themes (CCT's) of Equal Opportunities, the Information Society and Sustainable Development. The site features case studies and guidance from the North West's European programmes, to guide and shape current or forthcoming projects and to ensure that future domestic and European programmes have the benefit of the region's experiences. Each of the three themes has its own area within this site which can be accessed at www.bestpracticenw.eu.

Other European Funding

PROGRESS Programme

The PROGRESS programme is due to replace, for the period 2007-2013, existing Community programmes and budget lines in the fields of employment, social inclusion and protection, working conditions, gender equality and anti-discrimination. The decision-making

procedure is now well under way and the final adoption of the PROGRESS programme should take place in October 2006. In order to ensure smooth transition between the current programmes and the PROGRESS programme, the Commission will publish, by the end of September, an open Framework Call for Proposals addressed to organisations active in combating discrimination (action 1), promoting gender equality (action 2) and promoting integration of disabled people in society (action 3).

More details can be found at:

www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/faqs_en.html

Grants for Growth

Lancashire Grants for Growth offers grants of between £1000 and £6000 to organisations working to get disadvantaged people back into employment or training. More information is available on the website: www.lancashire.gov.uk/grants_for_growth

An information event is also being held at Coldwell Activity Centre on Wednesday 6 September at 10.30am. For further details on this event then please contact Dave Walton on 01282 601819

Econtent Plus Work Programme

Under the European Commission's econtentplus work programme, projects that make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable will soon be able to apply for funding. The deadline for submissions is: 19 October 2006.

For further information see:

www.europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/econtentplus/index_en.htm

Competition for Treaty of Rome Birthday Logo

March 25 2007 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. As a result, the institutions of the EU have launched a competition logo. The aim is to design a birthday logo, which will be the official symbol of the 50th anniversary, and will be used by the EU in all events related to the anniversary. Funding will be available for this via the grant application guide. The deadline for submission is 30 September 2006.

For more information see: www.logo-competition.eu/

2007 Year of Equal Opportunities for All

2007 has been designated as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The aim of the Year is to launch a major debate on the benefits of diversity for European societies. It will also seek to make people in the European Union more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination. Funding is available for projects that provide information and promote the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The activities undertaken during the Year focus on the discrimination individuals or groups may suffer owing to their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, age, sexual orientation or disability, all of which are grounds for discrimination that can be addressed at European and national levels. The deadline for submission of tenders is 8 September 2006.

For further information see:

www.ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/tenders/tenders_en.cfm?id=705

CULTURE 2007

The Culture 2007 programme has now been formally adopted by the EU and is intended as "a coherent, global and complete tool for multicultural co-operation in Europe and should contribute actively to the development of a European identity from the grassroots".

The general objective of the programme shall be "to enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans and based on a common cultural heritage through the development of cultural co-operation between the creators, cultural players and cultural institutions, of the countries taking part in the programme with a view to encouraging the emergence of European citizenship".

The specific objectives of the Programme are:

- to promote the transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector
- to encourage the transnational circulation of works and cultural and artistic products
- to encourage intercultural dialogue

Further details can be found at: www.culture2007.info.

European Events

NCVO Eurogroup Event

NCVO's Eurogroup will be holding a special fringe event at the forthcoming Labour Party Conference in conjunction with Solidar. An MEP and a Chief Executive from a voluntary sector will join the European Commission to speak on the theme of "Globalisation, the EU and the Voluntary Sector."

The event will be held on Wednesday 27 September from 12.45pm-2.00pm in the Richter Room at the Radisson Hotel Manchester.

For more information please email Nolan Quigley at:
Nolan.Quigley@ncvo-vol.org.uk

The Fifth European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion

16 - 17 October 2006 Tampere, Finland

This event will focus on poverty and social exclusion in present-day Europe. The event will explore approaches to promote sustainable social protection. Four workshops will be held on active inclusion, the role of social services, mainstreaming social exclusion and social rights and minimum social standards.

For more details please visit:
ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/conf_en.htm

Regional Events

Working with Local Area Agreements conference

A free conference is being held on 7 September 2006 in Preston. The conference seeks to introduce key partners such as local authorities and the voluntary and community sector to the policies and processes of Local Area Agreements. The event will also showcase the development and delivery issues faced by 1st and 2nd round pilots. This event is hosted by CLES and RENEW Northwest, the Northwest's Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities, and is endorsed by Government Office for the North West (GONW).

For further information and to book a place visit the RENEW website www.renew.co.uk/section.asp?eid=1015&s=5. For information on the programme please email Matthew Jackson at:
matthewjackson@cles.org.uk

Enterprising Communities 2006 – DTA Annual Conference

The Development Trusts Association (DTA) is holding its Annual National Conference for community practitioners, policy makers, funders and community champions in Birmingham from 17 to 19 September. For further information and details on how to book your place please contact dta@eesolutions.co.uk or call 01633 411732.

Creative rural economy conference

A conference looking at the role of arts and culture in rural areas is to be held in Lancaster from 11 to 13 September. For more details please ring 01706 827961 or visit the following website: www.littoral.org.uk

Rural communities –“Fit for the Future” conference

The LGA annual rural conference is being held in Chester from 12 to 13 September. For more details please visit: www.lga.gov.uk

A Practical Approach to Community Development (a ‘bottom up’ approach to influencing the decision making processes)

An Annual Day Conference organised by the North West Community Development Network (NWCDN) is being held on Monday 25 September 2006 from 10.00am to 4.00pm at The Broadwalk Centre, 51 Belvedere Road, Salford.

The Conference is for all community workers and activists (paid & unpaid) who use a community development approach and principles in their work. This annual event aims to bring all practitioners together to share ideas, information and experience in good practice, across a wide range of issues and perspectives from the community/voluntary and statutory sectors in the North West of England.

To reserve a place at the conference, please contact:

Hilda Reidy - Administrator
Community North West
1st Floor, 91 Manchester Road
Nelson
Lancashire, BB9 7HD
Tel: 01282 692323
E-mail: info@communitynw.org.uk

Knowledge, Networking & Nosh

Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation is holding the above event on Friday 15 September 2006 from 11.30am- 2.00pm at

St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester.

The event is being led by Carole Hughes, Programme Leader for the Foundation Degree in Voluntary Sector Management at the University of Derby. This event should be of particular interest to people working at management/senior management/trustee level within the voluntary and community sector who may wish to achieve a Higher Education qualification directly relevant to their role. For further details contact GMCVO and book by Monday 11 September.

Preparing successful bids for statutory grants and tenders

Two days of 'hands on' training on how to win more funding from local authorities, central Government, Government agencies and the European Union are being run in the autumn. The workshops run by Action Planning in association with ACEVO and Third Sector are being held in Manchester on October 3 and 4 2006. You can download further details from: www.fundraising.co.uk/news/6877.

Directory of Social Change Charityfair 2006

Directory of Social Change Charityfair 2006 is being held in Manchester on 13 and 14 September. The Charityfair will encompass a wide range of charity issues but will include a fundraising seminar stream, a debate on the national lottery and 'meet the funder' sessions. A full programme can be found at www.charityfair.org.uk/

Volunteering

GoldStar Good Practice website now live

GoldStar, an Office of the Third Sector funded programme set up to promote good practice for volunteering from socially excluded groups, has launched its website www.goldstar.org.uk.

The website is part of the GoldStar Volunteering and Mentoring Exemplar Programme which is a national initiative designed to encourage and enable voluntary organisations to realise the potential of volunteers, mentors and befrienders from socially excluded or disadvantaged groups by sharing good practice in engaging people from these groups and giving them the opportunity to enrich their own and other peoples lives.

The website contains information about volunteering, mentoring and befriending as well as more detail about GoldStar. You can also find good practice examples, tools and guidelines supported by case

studies as well as discussion forums, bulletin boards and podcast downloads of key events.

Social Enterprise

Department of Health launches Social Enterprise Unit

Launched recently by the Care Services Minister, it is claimed that this new unit will encourage social enterprises to involve staff and service users in designing and delivering services tailored to meet people's needs and also achieve greater value for money. A Social Enterprise Fund will be available from April 2007 to assist with set up costs. More at the Department of Health website:

www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/PressReleases/PressReleasesNotices/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4136537&chk=ytsGxl.

New business analysis tool for social enterprise

A new toolkit now available for social enterprises is Balance - an online business analysis tool. It gives a snapshot of current performance, strengths and weaknesses and benchmarks against a sample within the tool. Balance takes around an hour to complete and provides instant feedback, graphical snapshots and a link to a PDF file to download an action plan. Access is free to social businesses. Registration is required before using the tool and more details are available at the Balance website: www.socialenterprisebalance.org or call 0161 247 3951.

Toolkit to assist social enterprises to prove their value and impact

Another new toolkit has been launched: the new economics foundation (nef) has launched 'proveandimprove', a new interactive toolkit designed to help social enterprises prove their value and improve their contributions to local communities. 'Proveandimprove' is available in print form or online at www.proveandimprove.org. For more information call 0845 458 9911.

A what enterprise? booklet

Decoda, a small organisation in East Sussex, have written a guide which attempts to cover the questions individuals and organisations ask in setting up a social enterprise. The booklet draws on their own experience and includes local examples. The booklet is available via the website at www.decoda.org/SocEnt.htm either free as a download or £3 for the printed version.

Procurement

Government sets out vision for partnership approach to public service delivery

As part of the Government's public service reform agenda, a range of proposals have been announced, designed to ensure that the work of the voluntary and community sector is expanded on and properly supported. The initiatives will be brought together in the autumn, through the publication of the Third Sector Public Service Delivery Action Plan. Read the Press Release at:

[\[gov.net/WGArticle.aspx?WCI=htmArticleView&WCU=ARTCL_PKEY=39694\]\(http://gov.net/WGArticle.aspx?WCI=htmArticleView&WCU=ARTCL_PKEY=39694\).](http://www.wired-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

North West Network Information

North West Network was established by a consortium of voluntary organisations in 1993 as a direct response to the ever-increasing demand for clear, professional advice and information on how to access and manage funds from the European Union.

The charitable objects of North West Network are:

“To improve the efficiency of the administration of charities in direct pursuit of their objects and to further any charitable purpose in the present counties of Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire, Cumbria and Greater Manchester, by the provision of advice, training and information of educational value and in particular (but no so as to limit the generality of the foregoing) concerning the nature and assistance provided for charities by the institutions of the European Community.”

North West Network has developed significantly and now occupies a unique position within the region as an independent organisation.

Our strategic aims are:

- Maintaining voluntary sector confidence to access European Structural Funds
- Support for emerging networks
- Expansion of volunteer management and development Services
- Development of wider funding and grant support services
- Development of wider intelligence and information dissemination on European affairs

Our Services:

North West Network provides a comprehensive package of support services:

- Representation & Policy
- Telephone Support Service
- Website
- Information Mailings
- Training Seminars & Workshops
- Coaching for Volunteer Manager
- Monitoring, Evaluation & Auditing
- Information Provision
- Newsletter & Briefings
- Email Bulletin Service
- Individual Advice Surgeries
- Project Development
- Networking & Partnerships
- Outcomes Focused Planning

North West Network Staff Teams

Directorate

Chief Executive	Emile Pinel emile@nwnetwork.org.uk
Director of Development	James Hadleigh james@nwnetwork.org.uk
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Operations Manager	Jane Stanistreet jane@nwnetwork.org.uk
Communications Officer	Denise Marriott denise@nwnetwork.org.uk
Administrator	Karina Ponsaing reception@nwnetwork.org.uk

Volunteer Management Team

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Project Officer	Dan Farley dan@nwnetwork.org.uk

European Team

Senior European Officer	John Hacking john@nwnetwork.org.uk
Assistant European Officer	Angeliki Stogia angeliki@nwnetwork.org.uk

BME Regional voluntary Sector Network (One North West)

Project Director	Paul Harris paul@nwnetwork.org.uk
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