

NETWORK FOR EUROPE

EU Funding 2014-2020

Notes from BIS EU Roadshow – 17 Dec 2012 Preston

The roadshow held in Preston just prior to the Christmas holiday was the last in a series of 12 roadshows organised by BIS as part of their ongoing consultation about the future EU Funds.

The event was attended by about 100 people from the NW with a good attendance from VCS organisations across the region.

The event was chaired by Sir Howard Bernstein in his role as Deputy Chair of the ERDF Local Management Committee (LMC) for the North West.

The panel of speakers/presenters was made up of representatives of the govt departments responsible for developing or managing the funds, namely DWP, CLG, BIS and DEFRA.

The key address was given by Angus Gray the Head of ESF England, from the DWP.

Below are some of the key points from his address:

Angus Gray – DWP

Quotes:

‘Better focus on fewer things’

‘Potential for Leader Groups to deliver ERDF and ESF’

Operational Programmes will be approved by the National Growth Programme Board
A common set of eligibility and guidance for the different funds.

Q&A's

Q – How to ensure representation from wider stakeholders on National Growth Board / on LEPs?

A – EU definition of growth is wider than UK Govt have talked about so far. LEPs will be asked to widen their partnerships and embrace a broader agenda.

Q – How will the process ensure that social inclusion actions are embedded in the programmes.

A- Discussions are taking place with Big Lottery Fund about what role they could play. Also Community Grants have been important in this programme. Community Led Local Development is available to use as a tool.

Q – What about Community Grants?

A – Talks are ongoing with Big Lottery re co-financing.

Q – How will skills assessments take into account geographical differences?

A – Skills assessments will vary dependent on the needs in each area.

Q – What about transition areas?

A – Still to be determined, but probably will be higher intervention rates and greater flexibility in transition areas. However, the benefits will be proportional to the GDP 'gap' in each area, so will be marginal in some areas – eg: Cumbria GDP/capita is 89% of average – hence little different to non-transition areas, whereas Merseyside, at 79%, will receive greater support.

Q – What will be the role of the Common Strategic Framework Growth Teams in decision-making?

A – CSF Growth Teams will provide advice on eligibility but will not make decisions on individual projects. They will facilitate good ideas and projects coming forward from the LEPs.

Q – How local is 'local'?

A – LEP areas will be treated as functional economic areas.

Q – How will the potential hiatus between the current and new programmes be dealt with?

A – This should not be a significant issue for ERDF / ESF as there will be some overlap between the programmes. It may be more of an issue for Leader / RDPE. DEFRA is keen to ensure transition between programmes. It is intended that LAGs will work closely with the LEPs.

Q – Will there be a Technical Assistance budget for the LEPs?

A – Technical Assistance is part of the EU programmes but no decisions have been made yet about who will receive technical assistance in the new programmes.

Q – How will the Local Nature Partnerships feed into the process?

A – They 'should be encouraged to get involved in the LEPs'. 'It is key that they work together well'.

Q – How will LEPs work across boundaries?

A – There may be some pooling of funds: 'collaboration where it makes sense'.

Q – Simplification – how will it be achieved?

A – Administration will be carried out through the Growth Teams, who will aim for greater harmonisation. Good ideas on the design of systems will be gleaned from those using them currently.

Q – Transparency of the national process?

A – Work in progress. Would welcome ideas. *(There was a strong message from the floor that some kind of detail from govt was needed about this aspect of the process, and quickly.)*

Q – Could LEPs be formally delegated authority to approve projects?

A – Possibly but only if they are ITI's (Integrated Territorial Investment). – Still not clear whether it is will be an option in the UK. LEP may make decisions which are then ratified by National Growth Board.