

EUROPE

The Newsletter for Objective 2 Partners in the Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire Area



Welcome, to this, the first edition of *At Home in Europe*, the new Newsletter for European Funding in the GMLC, produced by the Government Office North West's European Secretariat.

As this is the first issue we'll be taking a retrospective look at some of the things that have gone on in the past, as well as a look at what's happening now. And of course here at the Government Office we always have an eye on the future. European funding is a complicated business but hopefully this newsletter will give some flavour of what's happening around the region and perhaps offer a little introductory insight into the world of Euro funds for those not versed in its speak.

Any ideas and comments for future editions will be gratefully received. Part of this newsletter's intention is to create a more open exchange of information concerning Europe and the North West.

Marianne Nevile-Rolfe
Regional Director
Government Office for the North West

He Painted Matchstick Men and Matchstick Cats and Dogs

In the city of his birth, a centre bearing the name of one of the North's most popular and enduring artists is being built. The Lowry project on Salford Quays is set to become one of the most important cultural developments in the country. October saw the announcement of its official opening date: 28th April 2000. It was also announced that the word 'Centre' has been dropped from the title. With more than £15 m in European ERDF funding, the project will bring together the unique heritage of the region with the area's dynamic vision for the future.

The bidding for the funding for the Lowry was done through the forward thinking City Pride Partnership. The partnership of Manchester, Trafford, Salford and Tameside borough councils and other representative bodies, shares a vision of the Manchester area becoming an international city of outstanding

commercial, cultural and creative potential. With the help and support of European financing, The Lowry is a profound step in the right direction.

The development will consist of two theatres, two galleries and many varied facilities for conferences, banquets and general hospitality. It will be an architectural flagship with a unique identity. Designed by architects Michael Wilford & Partners the building is already being internationally acclaimed. Over 56 acres of derelict land will be transformed. A new footbridge will be constructed across the Manchester Ship Canal which will link Trafford Park, the site for the new Imperial War Museum for the North, with the Quays. A public plaza, connecting roads and parking facilities will also be created. The Centre will attract visitors day long and year round. It will be a vibrant forum for

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A Vision of the Future - how the Lowry will look when complete



Speaking Objectively

Objective 4 represents a new avenue of development for European funding in the UK. The 1998 programme is the first time that Objective 4 money has been made available.

Objective 4 is concerned with the adaptation of workers to changes in industry and systems of production through measures to prevent unemployment. Projects seeking funding under this Objective should be centred on new skills: anticipating trends on the labour market and future requirements for skills; vocational training and retraining to this end; assistance for the adaptation of training systems.

In October, some 120 projects received approval under Objective 4. This translated into more than £4.2 million to help the North West workforce adapt to change. Announcing the awards, Marianne Neville-Rolfe, Regional Director for the North West, said:

“ This new ESF programme will make a significant impact on the economy of the North West by enhancing the employability of individuals in all parts of the region, and by anticipating future skill requirements.”

For more information on Objective 4 funding, contact Liz Dearden on 0161 952 4377.



The Money Train - Full steam ahead through Lancashire's countryside

All Aboard With Europe

The East Lancashire Railway is a journey into the past for Lancashire. It is also a journey into the past for European funding. Yet it remains an outstanding example of what can be achieved; preserving the very individual identity of the region's industrial heritage with the assistance of European money.

Having just celebrated its tenth birthday last year, the railway still continues to attract visitors from far and wide. Nowhere is the nostalgia and exhilaration of steam powered transport better preserved. Restored to its former glory, the railway offers an enthralling 16 mile trip along the River Irwell between Bury and Rawtenstall.

And its success has meant that it is now set to expand to include a line to Heywood, a line that will be used to transport freight as well as people.

The East Lancashire Railway has proved to be a masterstroke of funding application. It has generated tourism to areas that were suffering industrial decline and are now bustling centres of culture and commerce. One need only walk along the busy streets of Ramsbottom to see how vibrant the village has become. Thanks, in no small part, to the railway. With the right planning, European funding can help to create a profoundly positive impact on local life.

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culture and learning. The overriding artistic policy will be to combine all aspects of art and theatre in a melting pot of creativity.

The new centre will also be the permanent home of Salford's vast collection of Lowry's work: the largest and most representative in the world. This outstanding heritage asset already attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. By bringing the collection together and locating a study centre in the tower, an understanding of the importance of L S Lowry will be better achieved. The man who once said "All the art in the world is not worth a good potato pie" has truly left his mark.



Well Under Way - The Lowry construction site on Salford Quays

ERDF, ESF, Wot the 'Eck? A Beginners Guide

Abbreviations, abbreviations, abbreviations, ah! where would we be without their poetic beauty. Order in the chaos. Method in the madness. But what do they mean? What are these abbreviated European Funds that water the seeds of local inspiration? Hot air or hot stuff?

The European Regional Development Fund or ERDF is aimed at offering assistance to areas within the European Union that are at an economic disadvantage. The fund supports projects that are designed to assist regeneration. These range from infrastructure and capital projects to business development, tourism, research and technical initiatives, environmental technology and more. The most important factor in securing the funding, is displaying the economic benefits to the community.

The ESF, or European Social Fund, was established under the treaty of Rome. Its aim is to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the European Union. ESF funding is specifically geared towards improving employment opportunities. This often takes the form of financial assistance towards vocational training schemes, guidance and counselling projects and other job creation measures. In 1997, there were almost 1.2 million ESF beneficiaries in Britain.

ESF funding is available to any legally constituted organisation that receives financial support from a public match funder. Local Authorities, Training and Enterprise Councils and Colleges of Further Education are all regular beneficiaries of ESF money. Grants can also be paid to voluntary and non-profit making organisations.

The funds are there for a reason: to help. The extent to which they do this varies but funding can reach up to 50 % of the total cost. All in all, pretty hot stuff. Examples of what these beautiful European funds help to do, can be seen in the humble pages of this newsletter.

The Global Economy

The Globe Centre in Accrington is a £3.5 million project supported by European, Government and Private Sector Funding. It is a foundation of success upon which the East Lancashire Partnership wants to build.

The Centre provides high quality premises for growing businesses. With over 70,000 square feet of prime office space, conference rooms, secure car parking and more, it has provided the citizens of Accrington and beyond with a world class facility. It offers a vibrant business and recreational environment for the town.

In addition to housing businesses the building also plays host to a catering training school for Accrington and Rossendale College; the students run a ten room hotel, a-la-carte restaurant and brasserie.

The East Lancashire Partnership have made the Globe Centre their home. It is the base from which they are trying to achieve, with the help of EU funding, their goal of making East Lancashire: 'a cohesive sub-region with a competitive, diverse economy and educational, employment, health, communications and recreational facilities equal to the best available in UK and European cities of comparable size.'

The East Lancashire Partnership's European and External Fund Unit can be contacted on 01254 380658.

A Global Vision - The Globe Centre in Accrington



Hope and Glory

An old school in Wigan has been turned into the site for a very new and innovative business project. The Hope Enterprise Centre, formerly Hope School, has been developed with the assistance of EU funding to help the creation of new enterprises. It seemed that in Wigan there was an untapped entrepreneurial potential just waiting to emerge.

The Enterprise Centre acts as an incubator for small new businesses,

offering them low cost accommodation with a range of central facilities and advisory services on sight. Centre Manager Alan Evans explains what Hope is all about : "It's about linking the local economy through helping local businesses, the better their success, the better it is for employment in the town, the better it is for the town."

Opened in 1995 by local Euro MP Terry Wynn, the Enterprise Centre was so successful that it looked to expand almost immediately. This it did in 1997.

A partnership of representatives of the local authority, officers and community representatives from City Challenge, local businesses and the Centre Manager, have worked together to ensure Hope's success. The centre has now helped over 25 businesses get started. And the success looks set to continue.



Hoping for the Best: Wigan's Hope Enterprise Centre

A STROLL IN THE PARK

Wigan's new Martland Park Industrial estate is a flagship development. It is set to revitalise the North West of the borough. Covering an area of some 47 hectares, it is an ambitious undertaking. Three phases of the development are already complete with phases 4 and 5 underway.

The Martland Park project has received over £1,000,000 in EU funding and created a total of nearly three hundred new jobs. With many investors already in place, the Park hopes to attract more as it



The location of the Martland Park Development

draws towards its completion. A number of small businesses are showing an interest in the site and companies such as JJB Sports, HJ Heinz and GUS have already acquired land.

Martland Park has come about thanks the creation of the Martland Park Partnership. Wigan MBC, Greater Manchester Property Venture Fund and English Partnerships have pooled their holdings in a unique combination of Public and Private Sector interests. A comprehensive masterplan has been prepared, incorporating extensive landscaping, together with design and plot density guidelines, in order to create and maintain a quality business environment. It is the aim of the partnership to see that, in the end, the community is the beneficiary.

In The Country

Bolton might not be the first place to spring to mind if someone mentioned the countryside, but you might be surprised. At Bolton's Moses Gate Country Park, formerly industrial wasteland and now part of the Croal Irwell River Valley project and the Red Rose Forest initiative, an ESF funded course in Countryside Management has been taking place. It has offered unemployed people from the town, with an interest in working in the countryside, the chance to improve their prospects. The course has been set up with the help of St. Helens College.

This innovative training project was developed in response to a number of regional studies carried out by organisations such as the Bolton and Bury TEC and the North West Tourist Board. These studies showed that employment opportunities in the tourism sector were expanding but this expansion would be slowed if a pool of skilled labour were not available.

To find out more call Mike Winstanley at Rock Hall Visitor Centre on 01204 571561.



Another Hard Day at the Office: A Countryside Warden at work in Moses Gate Country Park

Bolton's Bright Young Things

Fifteen ambitious Boltonians have set out on the fast track to success, thanks to an ERDF funded Young Entrepreneur Programme.

The lucky 18 to 30 year olds are to receive generous financial assistance and top advice from local business experts, these 'mentors' will be on hand to give constant guidance. The programme has been put together through Bolton Council and Business Link Bolton and Bury. It will be delivered through the council's Enterprise Services with the support of numerous private sector sponsors. It is an excellent example of working in partnership for the benefit of the community.

Mr Steve Burns, Head of Economic Development at Bolton Council spoke of his



hopes for the new scheme at its launch in October. He believed that the new businesses could help to bring prosperity to the town, stating: "There's some real potential here."

For more information, contact Ross Bullock at Bolton Enterprise Services on 01204 391494.

The Euro Is Coming

James Ross, Chairman of The Littlewoods Organisation, has been appointed Chairman of the North West Euro Forum, established to help the region's small and medium size businesses (SMEs) prepare for the introduction of the single currency - the Euro, on 1st January 1999.

The establishment of Regional Forums was announced in July by Lord Simon, the Treasury Minister with responsibility for preparations for the Euro. The North West Euro Forum, co-ordinated by Government Office for the North West, brings together representatives from

businesses, the banks, Business Links, the CBI, TECs, Trade Unions, local authorities and public sector bodies.

Recent research has shown a low level of awareness amongst SMEs in the region of the business implications of the Euro. The Forum will help businesses think



about and prepare for the opportunities and challenges the introduction of the Euro will bring, so they can compete more effectively in this new environment.

James Ross warned that businesses needed to take action now. "We are only three months away and yet most small

businesses still believe that they will not be affected by the Euro - they are mistaken. Practically everyone will face some changes and they need to identify them now in order to effectively prepare."

He said, "the Forum will provide a central focal point in the region for information and practical assistance and will support activity at a local level. Businesses should, therefore, take full advantage of the support available."

Free Euro information factpacks are available by calling the Government Euro office on 08456 01 01 99. For practical assistance contact the Euro Info Centre North West on 0151 298 1928 or your local Business Link on 0345 567765. There is also a Treasury Euro website at <http://www.euro.gov.uk>



RECHARge Your Glass

The World of Glass in St Helens will open its doors to the public in March 2000. It is designed to be a visitor centre of both regional and national importance, exploiting the town's close historical relationship with the manufacture and development of glass.

The 14m heritage based visitor centre will be a combination of new buildings and a refurbished Grade II listed, Victorian Glass Furnace. The scheme has had funding from a variety of sources, including the European



A Glass Act - an artists impression of what the World of Glass will look like



Community Initiative Programme RECHAR - designed to assist areas affected by decline in the Coal Industry. Indeed, the location of the development is over an old coal site.

Work began on the visitor centre in September, with a special ceremony taking place in November to commemorate the groundbreaking. At this ceremony guests witnessed an icon made from float glass, bearing information about the history of the project and its supporters, be placed into a specially prepared chamber in the buildings foundations.

In addition to celebrating the history of glass making and the proud history of St

Helens' industrial past, the World of Glass will act as a showcase for the achievements of the brightest young glass makers in the country. There will also be permanent exhibitions from the Pilkington Glass Collection and the St Helens MBC local social and industry collections. A space allocated for a temporary exhibition gallery will be able to host glass exhibitions from national and international glass museums. Visitors will also be able to witness the glass making process at a hot glass demonstration area.

Further information on The World Of Glass, can be obtained by phoning 01744 21515.

Strong Support for the New Development: (Left to right) Mike Doyle - leader of St Helens Council, Paolo Scaroni - Head of Pilkington Glass, Prof. Graham Ashworth - Chairman of the Executive Committee and Steven Feber - Director of the World of Glass, at the groundbreaking ceremony.

A Word About Action Plans

Action Plans, what are they and why do we have them? How do they help to improve the distribution of funding? Whatever people may think of them, they are here. The North West is pioneering their development: the first region in the UK to adopt them as procedure. It is important we understand what they hope to achieve.

Following a 1996 review of the European Structural Funds process, involving extensive consultation with relevant bodies, Regeneration Minister at the time, David Curry, stated:

“We intend to revise radically the present administrative arrangements and to delegate to partnerships considerable

responsibility for project selection within an agreed Action Plan. This will ensure that partnerships are able to take a strategic view of the development of projects to deal with issues facing their areas and can bring to bear the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund alongside domestic regeneration programmes.”

So Action Plans are a radical approach. They certainly aren't simple. What they do offer is a more localised approach to funding. Partnerships are empowered to take greater control of implementation. Decision making has been transferred to the appropriate level. A more localised and specialised knowledge can be employed to ensure the most effective use of resources.

The transition from project based bidding may not be a simple one but in the

long run it is designed to produce a more dynamic, efficient and practical way of administering European Structural Funds. In particular it has been the intention to maximise the interaction of the ERDF and ESF activity. The buzzword for this more streamlined approach has been strategy.

This is perhaps not the forum for an in depth analysis of adapting to the Action Plans process; Action Plan Guidance Notes 1 and 2 have all the relevant details. Yet, as with project based bids, it is important to remember that a methodically structured approach, which carefully matches the funding requirements, is the most effective way of bidding.

For more information concerning Action Plans and how to deal with them, contact Chris Musson on 0161 952 4382.

Planning for Action: The Halton - Vale Royal Action Plan Partnership

Following the approval by the European Commission of the Objective 2 Single Programming Document 1997-1999, the Halton - Vale Royal Partnership was formed to prepare a Business Support Strategy and an Action Plan for the Widnes - Runcorn travel to work area.

The Strategy and Action Plan were submitted to the Government Office for the North West last year, and a £1 million European grant was approved in January 1998. The Partnership approved the following projects in June:

Provision of Innovation Technology & Export Development Counsellors and Personal Business Advisors; advice on Assembling Financial Packages; Business Start-Ups and Micro Business Counselling (North & Mid Cheshire TEC, Business Link and the Chamber of Commerce) Training to support SMEs and NVQs in Engineering and Manufacturing (Halton College).

The partnership has now secured a further £1.9m in funding and is looking to sponsor projects concerning the following:

Workforce Development

Enhancing the Customer Base

World Class Agenda

For further information on Halton - Vale Royal European Partnership: Planning For Action, contact Ann Steel, European Officer, Halton Borough Council, on 0151 471 7410.

New Deal

Some good news on match funding for ESF. The following New Deal strands have been verified as being eligible as match funding:

New Deal for Lone Parents

New Deal for Disabled People

Check out the ESF News website at

<http://www.esfnews.org.uk>
for more information.

The Bustle In Brussels

Mark Gallagher from the
European Commission gives us
an inside view:

Following the agreement of a European programme, day-to-day management of it is the responsibility of the region itself. The European Commission is, however, represented on the Monitoring Committee. As a "desk officer" in the UK Unit of DGXVI (Regional Policy and Cohesion), I represent the Directorate General at these meetings. There is separate representation from DGV.

The Commission plays a number of roles. One of its key concerns is to monitor the financial progress of the programme, to ensure that it draws down resources from the European Union budget in a timely fashion. Related to this is the need to carry out modifications to the programme where necessary, including what we call virement (the moving of part of the programme budget from one year to another, or from one measure to another). Although decisions on individual projects are the responsibility of the region, there is separate notification to the Commission of the largest projects (e.g. infrastructure projects costing more than €25 million), and we are required to approve the use of Technical Assistance or of ERDF for venture capital fund projects. We are also very much concerned with monitoring the physical progress and economic impact of the programme, so the Commission is involved in the annual reporting exercise for each programme and, jointly with the UK government, for evaluation of the programme's impact. The Commission also plays a less easily defined role as a catalyst, encouraging programmes to continue to focus on their strategy, to promote certain priorities, such as environmental sustainability (we recently organised a conference on the issue in Manchester), and in stimulating exchange of ideas between regions.

As I imagine most people working in the North West in the European programmes would probably agree, it's a very interesting area of work. Sometimes

bureaucratic constraints or the pressures of "partnership working" can be frustrating, but at the end of the day the work brings real benefits to the people of the North West and everyone can see these across the region.

It is important that people can influence the process too. European regional policy is unusual in that people have a very close link, principally through elected representatives from their local councils who sit on the Monitoring Committee. But other actors are represented as well to ensure that there is a range of economic actors involved to drive the programme forward: the private sector, voluntary and community groups and training bodies are also members of the Monitoring Committee.

Members of the European Parliament are always very interested in the progress of European programmes in their constituencies. They can stimulate exchanges between their constituencies and the Commission, and their experience of the European programmes is no doubt very useful when they come to debate the operation of European regional policy in the Parliament. Regional policy is currently being reformed as part of the Agenda 2000 package, and the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers "co-decide" draft legislation governing regional policy, following provisions introduced in the Maastricht Treaty.

The Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Cheshire Objective 2 programme will be affected by this reform. The Commission has proposed greater concentration of regional policy and there have been economic changes across the EU which will also probably lead to a change in the status of certain currently eligible areas. There will be a transitional period which means that any part of the GMLC area which does qualify for Objective 2 status after 1999 will actually continue to be eligible for a further four years. The effect of this is to ensure that there will be European Regional Development Fund being spent across the whole of the currently eligible area at least until the end of 2005. But under "new Objective 2" this could be within a larger programme which integrates our response to the needs of rural, urban and industrial areas in a single programme.

From Small Acorns... - A family gathering seeds at the 'Seed Gathering Sunday' event in Heaton Park, Manchester



Seeing the Wood and the Trees

Over the next forty years, much of Greater Manchester's urban landscape will be transformed.

The Red Rose Forest initiative seeks to create over 290 square miles of wooded landscape, it also plans to help create and maintain local jobs. A European Grant of £860,000, paid out over the last three years, has gone a long way in helping the project begin to achieve its long term objectives, in particular, it's work in supporting forestry related SMEs.

The Red Rose Forest is a partnership of the Countryside Commission, the Forestry Commission and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Trafford, Wigan and the Cities of Manchester and Salford. Other partners include landowners, businesses, government agencies, environmental and voluntary bodies, Countryside Warden Services, communities, schools and many individuals.

1997 saw the Rt. Hon. Lord Thomas of Macclesfield agree to be the Red Rose Forest's

first patron, giving the project a major boost. Lord Thomas is well known for championing environmental issues and supporting the North West. He describes the Red Rose Forest as: "an initiative that I truly believe in and wholeheartedly support."

The last twelve months have seen the development of Red Rose Forest's Community Network's 'Get Involved' campaign, which builds links between communities and the Forest and suggests a wide range of things that people can do to get involved. A recent example was the 'Seed Gathering Sunday' event which took place in Heaton Park in October. In total, over 450 community events have been held and more than 700 schools have been involved with the Forest. The project is doing everything it can to educate and involve the communities it is helping to serve.

For more information on the Red Rose Forest, contact Kerry Welsh on 0161 872 1660 or e-mail: team@redroseforest.co.uk

Take Me to Your Leader II

Although the majority of European Funding is ploughed into projects concerned with urban regeneration, there are substantial funds available to projects of a rural nature. In addition to having access to the main funds of the ERDF and ESF, rural areas also have specific funds available. The Leader II Initiative is one example.

Leader II supports rural development projects designed by local partners. With an emphasis on partnership, local inhabitants are encouraged to work closely with local associations and collective bodies. The more local people are involved, the better the specific needs of their area can be served. The public and private partners that draw up joint development strategies and want to receive financial assistance under the programme are required to form local action groups. Leader II is particularly concerned with projects that pay careful attention to the innovative and transferable aspects of measures.

Examples of work funded by the Leader II initiative in the North West include establishing a garden trail in the Forest of Bowland and improving disabled access in Caton: they are small scale, community driven projects, designed by local people to enhance their area. At the heart of the Leader II programme is the emphasis placed on the role of local communities in the process of economic development. Its aim is to preserve the economic and social fabric of rural society.

For more information about Leader II and other funds accessible for rural development, contact Roger Sallin on 0161 952 4548.



And Finally...

Leading the Way

Members of your local, dynamic EPS team showing how things are done at a recent training session.

Send stories, projects, contributions and ideas to:

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