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SOSEP news

"South of Scotland is a model rural economy"

So said David Martin MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament on his recent visit to the South of Scotland to learn at first hand how the Partnership is investing millions of euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to help in area regeneration.

During Mr Martin's visit to the Scottish Borders, he met the Leader of Scottish Borders Council, John Ross Scott, Chief Executive David Hume and Scottish Borders Tourist Board Chief Executive, Riddell Graham to understand the critical role played by the New Ways economic development strategy in deciding local priorities, and its impact on the management of our European Structural Funds Programme.

He then visited projects which are contributing directly to the Programme achieving its objectives, Ettrick Riverside in Selkirk and the Rural Resource Centre in Newton St Boswells. He met Hugh Tasker, Chairman and officers from the Scottish Enterprise network who explained how European Structural Funds increased the impact of the SE Network investment on rural regeneration. In between times, he managed to squeeze in presenting the awards to the Most Enterprising Student at the Scottish Borders Environmental Placement Programme/Shell Technology Enterprise Programme, which is supported through the ERDF Objective 2 funded South of Scotland Business Efficiency Initiative. The top prize was won by Chris Donaldson from Lauder for his work with Mainetti Ltd.

Mr Martin said: "The South of Scotland European Partnership, local government officials, politicians and people of the South of Scotland have made an excellent case for continued EU involvement and having seen what they have achieved already, I will be supporting their case in Brussels.

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welcome

"A model rural economy" It is heartening to hear directly such interest and endorsement of the Partnership's efforts from David Martin who plays such a pivotal and influential role in the European institutions.

It is over twelve months since we produced our first South of Scotland European Partnership newsletter.

I can fairly say that the 12 months since that last one have been very exciting in terms of the new policy initiaitives launched and also all the development work done within the groups organisations and individuals who have contributed their time and energy into making the Programme work and leave a lasting impact of the investments agreed across the South of Scotland.

Keeping up the momentum presents us all with challenges but that is the only way in which we will achieve our objective of actually turning round long-term downward trends. These were emphasised by the recent reports from the 2001 Census. Clearly demonstrated were the demographic changes over the ten year period since the previous Census. The challenge for us now is to ensure that we use the investment available through Europe to actually increase employment, increase the historically low wage base across the South of Scotland. Strengthening community confidence would be so much easier against a background of a strengthening economy.

We have now committed almost £21 million, and the investments made are now bearing fruit. Meeting those who are actually delivering the results, outputs and impacts of the Programme and hearing at first hand their enthusiasm for the difference Structural Funds have made is without doubt the best part of my job. I am sure that our visitors from Brussels feel exactly the same way. Rachel Lancry, our Desk Officer in DG Regio recently met with partners in high profile projects, Ettrick Riverside in Selkirk and the North West Resource Centre in Dumfries. In differing ways they are both exemplar projects and show how whether overcoming constraints to business development or addressing social justice, Objective 2 funding can help make a real difference to the people of the South of Scotland.

Donald MacKinnon, Programme Director

cover story continued >

South of Scotland is a model rural economy

Mr David Martin

Mr Chris Donaldson

Later, Mr Martin made a whistle stop tour of Dumfries when he told the local media: "I am hugely impressed by what the people of Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders have done to regenerate their economy and communities with European funding".

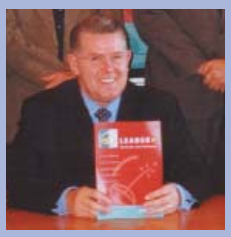
His visit focussed on the Crichton site, with a tour of the new university facility in the completely refurbished Browne House which now provides state of the art facilities at its Centre for Enterprise Competitiveness and he was greeted by local MP Russell Brown and John Forteath, of Dumfries and Galloway Council and business leaders who explained the benefits of their businesses being located in the Crichton Business Park and the crucial importance of telecomms infrastructure to their respective businesses.

The Brussels-based Scot also visited North West Resource Centre in Dumfries; a project delivering numerous strands of local economic regeneration services and an exemplar demonstration of local partnership working. Mr Martin said of his visits: "From my visit here today and the Borders last Tuesday I have the clear impression that the South of Scotland is growing into a vibrant European region, and I am proud that the European Union has been able to contribute £21 million so far from the European Regional Development Fund through the South of Scotland Objective 2 Programme, which runs from 2000 to 2006."

"I was particularly impressed at the Crichton Campus, especially with people's determination to rebuild and renew their community. The desire by the local people to develop new skills, to access opportunities and to go on to further learning augurs well for the future." He added:"That spirit was also evident at the North West Community Resource Centre where over thirty local groups have come together to improve their lives.

Now that I have seen what the people of the South of Scotland can do with a little help from the EU, I will be taking the example of what has been done here throughout my travels in the existing and applicant Member States.
I will hold up the South of Scotland as a model European rural economy working for its future. I have made a lot of new friends in the area and I will be back to celebrate your further successes."

Dumfries and Galloway Leader+ Programme



The Minister for Finance and Public Services, Andy Kerr MSP announced £1.8 million of EU funding for the new Dumfries and Galloway Leader+ Programme on a visit to Dumfries on Monday 2 September 2002.

The funding comes through the Leader+ Community Initiative, which will support innovative and experimental approaches to local rural development in the region over the next five years. Together with match funding from the public and private sectors, the programme value will be some £4.3 million.

The Dumfries and Galloway Leader+ Programme will focus on making the best use of Dumfries and Galloway's natural and cultural resources and improving the quality of life in rural areas. In doing this, Leader+ will build on the region's promotional message of being The Natural Place to live, work or visit.

Interested agencies, organisations, community groups and individuals will be able to benefit from financial support that will be directed at social, economic and cultural sectors, such as encouraging entrepreneurship, environmental tourism and new ways of promoting local cultural heritage. Special consideration will also be given to activities involving women, young people, micro or small businesses and the under-employed.

Ros Halley will manage the Dumfries and Galloway Leader+ Programme on behalf of a Local Action Group (LAG), which is a partnership of 14 key public, private and voluntary organisations. Information packs and procedures for the application process are now being finalised and the programme should be fully operational at the end of September.

For further information contact Ros Halley, Leader+ Programme Manager at Castle Douglas Community Centre on 01556 504906 or email roslynh@dumgal.gov.uk.

Scottish Borders Leader+ Programme

The Depute Minister for Finance and Public Services, Peter Peacock MSP launched the Scottish Borders Leader+ Programme on Thursday, 22 August 2002 in Newtown St Boswells.

The Scottish Borders Leader+ Programme totals £4.3 million. It will run until 2006 with £2 million of the funds coming from the EU Community Initiative and the balance from public and private sector organisations and groups across the Borders. The programme will be implemented by the Scottish Borders Rural Partnership and administered by Scottish Borders Council.

The overall aim of the Scottish Borders Leader+ Programme is to empower and enable local communities, individuals and businesses to take advantage of the many unrealised opportunities relating to the sustainable use of their local natural and cultural resources.

For further information contact Bryan McGrath, Development Officer at Scottish Borders Council on 01835 824000 or bmcgrath@scotborders.gov.uk

2004 International Book Town

The fourth European Book Town's Festival is to come to Wigtown, Scotland's national Book Town, in 2004. The Book Town was developed through financial assistance from Dumfries and Galloway Council, Scottish Enterprise and ERDF investment from the Dumfries and Galloway Objective 5(B) 1994-1999 Programme. On-going revenue support of £90,000 ERDF has also been invested by the current Objective 2 Programme.

The success of the Book Town has resulted in the establishment of several new businesses and the creation of new employment. Wigtown will host the European Festival which is only held every 2 years.

Sandra McDowall, Councillor for the Wigtown area and one of the main driving forces behind Wigtown Book Town stated that "I have been lucky enough to attend all three of the European Book Town Festivals and have delighted in their individual charms and hospitality. We, as the westernmost book town in Europe, intend to provide a fun festival in 2004, with a wide range of attractions for the bibliophile and for wider interests and we will make it an uniquely Scottish event".

"The Book Town is an excellent example of communities working in partnership with the key local agencies to secure long term benefits from investment of public money including European Structural Funds."

Congratulations to all those who had worked hard to secure hosting such a major international festival in Wigtown in 2004.

Mid Term Evaluation

Regeneration consultants, Roger Tym and partners have combined with the Taylor Clark Partnership to undertake the mid-term evaluation of the Programme, with Nick Skelton leading the team.

The purpose of the evaluation is to establish how well the Programme is delivering its objective, assess the continued relevance of the Programme's strategy, consider the extent to which the Horizontal Themes have been integrated into projects, and make recommendations which may be required to improve the quality and performance of the Programme.

This study will be conducted over the next few months and will involve a programme of bottom-up analysis, with the emphasis on wide ranging consultations and rigourous beneficiary research. The evaluation should engage with project managers, project beneficiaries and major stakeholders. Only if these people are targeted will we know if the Objective 2 Programme works, and how it could be made to work better.

The evaluation will do more than skim the surface, but really address that key questions.

More information at http://www.tymconsult.com

Euromontana Conference

The third Annual Conference on European Mountains took place in Inverness during May.

The event focused on issues which are common to all rural areas, but especially on the impact of globalisation, loss of employment opportunities and population decline in some areas. Enlargement of the Union was at the forefront of discussions. Michel Barnier addressed the conference and emphasised his recognition that rural areas in the present member states should not lose all structural funds support after 2006.

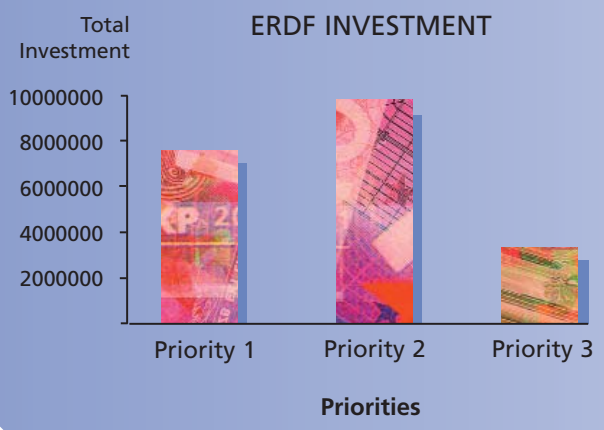
Around 38% of the EU territory consists of mountain regions, which are home to over 30 million inhabitants (10% of the total population of the EU). Currently over 95% of these regions are eligible for Structural Fund assistance through the 2000-2006 Programmes. The Commission's second report on **Economic and Social Cohesion in Europe**, recognised the requirement to continue EU intervention to such regions beyond 2006.

With this in mind the conference examined a range of issues relating to the future economic cohesion of such areas. A number of thematic workshops further explored the issues of sustainable development of forestry resources, the preservation of cultural identity, the development of the social capital and the social, environmental or territorial impacts of mountain farming. The Commission will organise a special **Mountains** seminar which will assist in establishing a more concrete perspective for the period beyond 2006.

EUROMONTANA

Annual Progress Update

This is the first annual update on the general progress of the Programme. £21 million of ERDF will be invested in the 73 projects approved during the first four application rounds of the Programme. Distribution of this investment across each of the Programme Priorities is relatively even with £7,820,667, 45% allocated to support for SME development, £9,797,353, 54% for industrial and tourism development, and £3,411,230, 40% for community and social inclusion projects.



Progress of the Programme has been constantly assessed ever since the first application round in January 2001. Already several difficult strategic decisions have been taken by both the Management and Monitoring Committees in light of guidance from the European Commission and Scottish Parliament. In order to ensure that maximum benefit of Structural Funds are achieved it is recognised that projects should be:

- strategic in their approach through direct links with local, regional, Programme Area and national policy
- partnership projects which have been developed at a pan-Programme wide level to respond to the needs of businesses and individuals
- be able to demonstrate the ability to leave a lasting impact
- and a direct result of recent in-depth analysis

Business Infrastructure Encouraged

The Programme Monitoring Committee met in Dumfries. Caroline Lindsay of SOSEP with Monitoring Committee members Anne Chaudhry, Diane McLafferty and Barbara Kelly welcoming Rachel Lancry (centre) from the European Commission to the South of Scotland. Diane (second from right) is Convenor of all the Programme Monitoring Committees in Scotland and leads the Scottish Executive European Structural Funds team.

The Committee noted the recent decision by the Management Committee to actively encourage business infrastructure projects, following an in-depth analysis of the range of projects across all measures of the Programme. This analysis highlighted that a significant high number of tourism infrastructure projects have now been approved under Measure 2:1 (Sites, Premises and Locations). The Committee considered the results of the analysis and agreed that in order to balance the investment from Measure 2:1 and to ensure that all of the Measure level targets are met that partners should be actively encouraged to bring forward proposals for business infrastructure projects. Future tourism infrastructure and countryside access proposals should be discouraged by the PME at least until the mid-term evaluation is completed and considered by the Programme Monitoring Committee.

To date some £5 million of ERDF has been claimed by approved projects with a total public and private sector investment in the range of £12 million. Both the total ERDF awarded from the Programme and the level of spend by approved projects is encouraging in terms of meeting the regulatory requirements. Continued success could result in additional money for investment in the South of Scotland.

Details of all 73 approved projects, the decision making process and those involved in taking decisions are available on the SOSEP website at **www.sosep.org**

RELAUNCH OF SOSEP WEBSITE

The relaunch of the recently re-designed SOSEP web site will provide users with a more interactive service. Whilst all previous areas and information are available additional pages have been included to ensure that the partnership have access to the latest news items, policy development and Programme information. New interactive facilities which allow users to add their details to the Partnership mailing list, ask questions and request additional information and to provide comments on the usefulness of the site are now also available. We hope that you find the changes made enhance the service provided. Please forward any comments or observations on the site to info@sosep.org

www.sosep.org

FUTURE ROUNDS

2003 Closing Dates

The Management Committee have agreed the project rounds for 2003 as being

Sixth Round Closing Date	17 April 2003
Formal Decision	17 July 2003
Seventh Round Closing Date	18 September 2003
Formal Decision	18 December 2003

Partner organisations are encouraged to speak to the PME to discuss any potential project ideas prior to the submission of applications.

NEW OFFICES - CONTACT DETAILS

The Dumfries office will be relocating to new premises early November 2002. However we are not moving far, just across the car park. Existing telephone and fax numbers and e-mail addresses will remain unchanged, the new address and contact details from November are:

South of Scotland European Partnership, Dumfries Enterprise Park, Tinwald Downs Road, Dumfries DG1 3SJ.
Tel: 01387 251360 Fax: 01387 252733 E-mail: info@sosep.org Website: www.sosep.org

South of Scotland European Partnership, St Mary's Mill, Level Crossing Road, Selkirk TD7 5EW.
Tel : 01750 725104

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