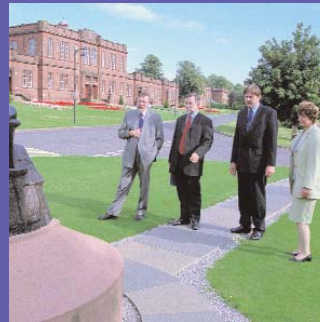




Europe and Scotland  
Making it **work together**

# SOSEEP

NEWS



## £9.3 Million for the South of Scotland

European investment in the economy and infrastructure of Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway continues with the announcement that a further £9.3 million has been approved for projects across the South of Scotland. This follows on from the £6.5 million announced last April.



Peter Peacock MSP

Peter Peacock MSP, Deputy Minister for Finance and Local Government, made a whistlestop tour of the South of Scotland on the 28 and 29 August. He met important figures behind development plans and Project Managers while dispensing the good news.

Allocations under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Objective 2 Programme include support for the Eyemouth Port Development Project, the Dumfries and Galloway Business Loan Scheme, the Business Creation Centre, Ettrick Mill, Wigtown, Scotland's National Book Town and the Scottish Borders Film Initiative Phase II. In all, 30 separate projects will contribute to the economic regeneration and sustainable development of the area.

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Mr. Peacock, who was educated at Hawick High School, began his tour in the Scottish Borders, visiting **Kelso Showground** which will be able to upgrade its facilities and attract more visitors due to a grant of £277,464 from ERDF (see article on page 4). He then moved onto home territory, visiting **Drumlanrig Tower**, Hawick where he was welcomed by Scottish Borders Council leader **Andrew**

**Tulley**, who emphasised to the Minister that Structural Funds had, under previous programmes, been essential to many developments across the Borders. He then stressed the importance of partnership to effect delivery of successful projects. Mr. Peacock announced £200,000 for the New Ways Business Loan Scheme, a project jointly developed by Scottish Enterprise Borders and Scottish Borders Council to provide low interest loans to Borders SMEs.



In the afternoon, the Minister met **Tony Taylor**, Chairman of Scottish Enterprise Borders. They visited the Selkirk Riverside Industrial Estate to announce a £90,000 grant to support the regeneration of the **Selkirk Riverside** area after which he went on a tour of the **Ettrick Mill Business Creation Centre** which is receiving over £1million of ERDF.

The following day Dumfries and Galloway region played host to Mr. Peacock. The visits began at 10 a.m. when **Roy Surplice**, Chair of **Wigtown Book Town** welcomed the Minister and the news that ERDF had allocated £112,312 to enable the town to continue its development into a world class attraction for book lovers.

Then it was onto **Kirkcudbright** where an announcement of £749,896 to **Councils of Voluntary Service** was made, followed by another of £677,916 for the **Lincluden House Project** which will convert an empty building into a community resource centre.



By this time, the entourage was running late due the Minister's enthusiasm and the interest that he showed in the projects and people that he was meeting. It was on to the beautiful grounds of **Threave Gardens** near Castle Douglas where the **National Trust for Scotland** will now be able to upgrade the 19th century **Threave House**

into a corporate venue and conference centre through a grant of £59,556. The morning closed with the announcement of a £1.3 million grant to **Dumfries and Galloway Tourist Board**.

In the afternoon, representatives of the **Crichton Development Company**, the **Universities of Glasgow and Paisley** and **Dumfries and Galloway College**, were present when the announcement was made where £484,627 was awarded to establish a research and training centre.

The tour of the Crichton Campus that followed lasted an hour longer than planned as Peter Peacock looked, asked questions and admired this educational and business development that is bringing a new dimension to life in Dumfries and surroundings. The day closed with the award of £1.3 million for the "**Dumfries and Galloway Business Loan Scheme**".

**These grants will enable many projects that are already developing the economic and social infrastructure of the South of Scotland to continue while new projects can get underway and benefit us all in terms of employment, wealth and lifestyle.**



# European Funding: Crucial



Manfred Beschel

**"European funding has and will continue to play a crucial role in developing the Borders economy"**

said **Tony Taylor**, Chairman of **Scottish Enterprise Borders**, in a thank you speech given during the visit of **Manfred Beschel**.

Senior European Commission official, **Herr Beschel**, is Head of Unit, Regional Operations for Ireland and the UK. He visited **Scottish Borders** and **Dumfries and Galloway** to see and hear about the area's economic issues for himself during a day that took him to projects along the **Selkirk Riverside** and **The Crichton Complex for Learning and Enterprise** in Dumfries.



Dumfries and Galloway Council Leader, **John Forteath**, met Herr Beschel at the offices of The Crichton Development Company. He said after the meeting,

**"We have often felt like the forgotten part of rural Scotland and we welcomed the opportunity to speak to Mr. Beschel about future funding programmes".**

The current **South of Scotland Objective 2 Programme** which continues to operate in the South of Scotland until 2006 was shown to be working well in supporting economic development initiatives and creating sustainable jobs.

The visit also gave Herr



Beschel the opportunity to see some of the most remote parts of the South of Scotland as he travelled through the scenic **Ettrick Valley** and past **St Mary's Loch** from Selkirk to Dumfries. The journey to Glasgow by the **Dalveen Pass** gave the Commission official another chance to see what the economy and infrastructure are like away from the centres of population.

# SOSEP | What, Why and How?

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**SOSEP** stands for **South of Scotland European Partnership**. This is a body responsible, along with the **Scottish Executive**, for the management of funds set aside by the **European Commission** in order to support the economic and social conversion of the **South of Scotland**. This programme or set of objectives is known as **Objective 2**. But why do Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders need "conversion" and why is the **EU** involved?

One of the advantages of membership in Europe is the recognition of the need to encourage greater social and economic cohesion across the fifteen countries which are members of the EU. The Union as a whole will benefit from improvements in the standard of living and lifestyle in its relatively poor areas. Hence, poorer regions of Europe or areas undergoing change and difficulty receive assistance from "European Structural Funds."

The South of Scotland receives such assistance from a fund known as the **ERDF** or **European Regional Development Fund** and can also benefit from the **ESF** or **European Social Fund** managed on the basis of a geographical area, covering all of Scotland, except the Highlands and Islands. The money available from ERDF in the South of Scotland until 2006 is €73 million or £45 million, and this will be more than doubled by national funds and private funds, known as matched funding.

**Why do we need this money and will it make a difference?**

The **South of Scotland** is undergoing considerable change both economically and socially. The way we work and the way we use our leisure time cannot remain the same. Manufacturing in the Scottish Borders has declined; investment by large companies into Dumfries and Galloway has declined and companies have relocated; agriculture in both regions has undergone radical change and work on the land and profits from it have declined and the traditional market-towns that were the economic centres across the South of Scotland no longer have markets. Wages fall, public facilities can't keep abreast of the times, and infrastructure begins to decay. Young people leave the regions and take their skills and energy with them.

There are factors that go some way to offset such a grim picture but the point is that the rural economies of Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders are in a process of conversion and Objective 2 is there to help. Its stated vision is: "The South of Scotland: a confident, creative community realising its potential in the global economy."

This breaks down into encouraging enterprise consistent with

the types of change now remaking the regions; using the regions' environmental resources; developing links between communities, including links abroad, and deepening cooperation between local agencies. In figures the goal is 3,175 new jobs; 920 jobs safeguarded, and an additional GDP of £58 million. But how does this translate into action?

In the end, action comes from us, all of us, collectively and individually. The distribution of funds is in effect a partnership between distributors and proposers. Proposals are drawn up in the form of projects. Projects - such as those outlined elsewhere in this newsletter - have to involve the public sector somewhere in their formation. A private company cannot come along on its own and request Objective 2 funding, but can benefit in partnership with a local authority or Scottish Enterprise.

The final decision to fund projects lies with the Scottish Executive, hence the ministerial announcements such as those outlined in our cover story. However, much of the day to day running and implementation of the programme lie with **SOSEP**.

**SOSEP** is there to ensure European Structural Funds work well for the South of Scotland. It consists of representatives from local and national agencies, including the public sector, voluntary organisations, education, environmental and training agencies, and tourism. The core of SOSEP is the Programme Management Executive (PME), with offices in Dumfries and Selkirk. The PME team, pictured above, works with the Commission, and has a role in monitoring those projects that are funded. Its expressed aim is to assist with project development and that equates into an encouraging and motivating role. The PME wants our projects to work well for the South of Scotland. It boils down to the art of investing £45 million wisely to leave a lasting legacy.

**So, got any ideas for Objective 2 projects? Start talking with the PME or look at the European projects discussion forum at [www.dumgal.gov.uk/epdf](http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/epdf) - you'd be surprised how many projects are already working with SOSEP.**



# SOSEP Works with a Great Borders' Tradition



Peter Peacock MSP

The show ground is a focal point for any market town and Springwood Park is one of the cornerstones of Kelso's economy. Border Union Agricultural Society, a largely voluntary body that has managed **Springwood Park** since the early nineteenth century, developed its plans to enhance the show ground's facilities in 1999. It has worked in close conjunction with Scottish Borders Council, Scottish Enterprise Borders, Scottish Borders Tourist Board and SOSEP to achieve this end.

On 28th August **Peter Peacock MSP** met the Development Committee,

chaired by **Tom Arnott**, at the start of his whistle-stop tour of the South of Scotland. After listening with interest to a presentation and discussing the plans with the enthusiastic committee members, the Minister announced a grant from ERDF of £277,464. The grant represents 39% of the total cost of the project. After the announcement the Deputy Minister went for a walkabout the show ground.

In the year 2000 nearly one hundred thousand people attended events at Springwood Park and there is no doubt that enhanced facilities will enable those numbers to grow. Springwood Park will be an attraction for international events as well as the traditional Kelso Ram Sales, Championship Dog Show and the Border Union Show. The whole area will benefit from this economic boost.

The development is set to



take place between September 2001 and May 2003 in four phases. A new entrance, toilet and shower block will be built, roads will be resurfaced, a new electric supply will be installed and a large exhibition hall constructed. The hall will be 48 by 24 metres, offering nearly 1200 square metres of exhibition space. Landscaping will bring the work to fulfilment.

The development is expected to create 78 new

jobs up until 2008 and attract a further 175,000 visitors to Kelso - that should equate to an extra three and a half million pounds being spent in the Borders economy. It will enhance the lifestyle of local communities as well as enhancing the experience of visitors to the region and is an example of how Europe can work with the traditional culture of the South of Scotland.

## Dumfries and Galloway College Leads in IT



Carol Robson

ERDF has helped put Dumfries and Galloway ahead in IT. The "**Flexible Access Centre**" consists of **50 computers** loaded with the latest software and linked to the College's Intranet and the Internet.

The facility is available to students attending the college and, just as importantly, to members of the public. It is situated in a purpose-built room and offers an invaluable research and communications tool within the Dumfries area.

### Virtual Learning

The facility also ties in with the country's first **Virtual Company IT Learning Centre**, available to the region's SMEs. Funded by ERDF and SUFI (Scottish University for Industry) the scheme offers a flexible way

for businesses to integrate with IT and is an innovative solution for a rural economy to meet the Scottish Executive's Digitising Scotland Initiative.

Owners, managers and employees of participating businesses can work flexibly, linking via the Internet



either from the office or from home, into the College's resources, including the Flexible Access Centre. The teaching is software driven, requiring minimal RL - Real Life - tutor support. The aim is to make Dumfries and Galloway competitive through a thorough grasp of modern-day IT issues and methods.

**Objective 2 funding from ERDF is assisting many projects such as FAC and the Virtual Company IT Learning Centre across the South of Scotland.**