

ARGYLL AND BUTE CPP EUROPEAN FUNDING PACKAGE– UPDATE REPORT

1. EUROPEAN FUNDING UPDATE

- 1.1** Management Committee members will recall that a sub group of Community Planning partners was established in early 2008 to prepare a bid for ring fenced European funding from the Highlands and Islands Structural Fund Programme 2007-13. The bid development process was facilitated by the Council and, in accordance with the guidance available at the time, submitted for approval to Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme in July 2008. The funding was available from two sources European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) for capital and European Social Funding (ESF) for training and revenue activities.
- 1.2** It was clear from partnership interest and proposed activity that the ESF elements of training, development and employability in the bid were stronger and of higher financial value than the ERDF or capital activities programmed by partners.
- 1.3** It was also clear that the bid demonstrated an integration of activities across 3 priority action areas within the Programme. This illustrated a comprehensive and integrated partnership approach to delivering skills, employability and training in Argyll and Bute.
- 1.4** There was no clear strategic programme of ERDF eligible activities across the area, with most capital investment, such as ACHA community facility in Campbeltown, dependent on the outcome of the Council's CHORD townscape and waterfront regeneration project development process.
- 1.5** Advice was taken from the Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme on the validity of submitting a bid that led with ESF activities, spread across a range of priority actions. A positive verbal response was received in the absence of written guidance.
- 1.6** Following submission of the bid in July 2008, written guidance was issued as part of a paper including bid assessments at a meeting of the Highlands and Islands Partnership in August 2008. This indicated that the basis upon which the bid had been submitted was not in fact appropriate. It stated that the bid must be led by ERDF eligible activity with ESF activity complementing this. It also stated that there was a minimum threshold for project

Community Planning Partnership - Management Committee – 20 May 2009
Ag Item 8

size and that the project activity in the bid had to be restricted to one priority action in the programme. The bid was therefore approved subject to:

- Removal of bid elements under the project threshold of £30k
- Removal of bid elements from 2 of the 3 priority programme categories
- Submission of an ERDF bid to complement the remaining proposed ESF bid elements.

1.7

This reduced the scope of the bid considerably and created issues for some of the projects included in the bid that were time critical. The CHORD project development process clearly created an opportunity for match funding an ERDF type bid, but the timescale was not suitable for the initially identified ESF projects.

1.8

The ESF eligible projects were either postponed, submitted individually to the Programme, reduced in scope or accessed alternative funding. This was frustrating for partners who had invested time in preparing the bid. The bid has therefore been withdrawn in its initial format. There remains an option to develop and resubmit a bid as an integrated package of ERDF and ESF eligible actions. A discussion held on this at the Funding Hub in February resulted in a positive indication by partners attending to revisit the bid process.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1

It is recommended that the CPP Management Committee agrees to:

1. The preparation of a renewed and integrated bid for the ring fenced European funding.
2. That this process be remitted to the Funding Hub.
3. That the group report back to the Management Committee prior to bid submission.

For further information contact:

Jane Fowler, European Manager, Argyll and Bute Council

Telephone

01700 501371 / 07901 510668