

COUNCILLOR LEN SCOULLAR, DEPUTE PROVOST AND SPOKESPERSON FOR EUROPEAN ISSUES**1. INTRODUCTION**

This Spokesperson's Report provides a brief update on the following matters:

- The EU Offshore Wind and Marine Energy Seminar, and;
- The West of Scotland European Forum.

A brief update on these matters will be provided in turn.

2. THE EU OFFSHORE WIND AND MARINE ENERGY SEMINAR

Argyll and Bute Council hosted an important seminar on EU offshore wind and marine energy on Friday, 2 March at the Scottish Marine Institute, Dunstaffnage which is home to the Scottish Association for Marine Science. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss how European policy and funding can be used to help develop the renewables potential of the west coast of the Highlands and Islands to encourage sustainable economic growth in the area.

Top ten messages of the afternoon were:

1. Collaboration is vital to both optimise the sustainable economic development benefits and the requisite investment streams ("Team Scotland" was a recurring theme of the event). Collaboration is both –
 - Vertical - local, national and EU
 - Horizontal – private, public and communities
2. There is scope for better strategic planning in regard to infrastructure on the West Coast (emphasis on collaboration and not competition) and funding of infrastructure
3. Collaboration will minimise the uncertainties and risks in relation to the development of infrastructure, labour supply / skills and supply chain
4. European funding will be vital for i) stimulating private sector investment and ii) unlocking the sustainable economic benefits for communities
5. There is scope for funding innovation in relation to European Funds (e.g. alignment of European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Marine and Fisheries Fund) and alignment with private sector investment plans and other funding sources (e.g. European Investment Bank)
6. The new Structural Fund regime commencing in 2014 provides an opportunity to progress this agenda
7. European funding options need to be mapped for each stage of a project's development (research; development and validation; demonstration; deployment) with the links with private and national funding
8. Systemic interaction between public and private sectors will facilitate the matching of demand and supply and optimise leverage of public funding (EU and national)
9. Articulating and securing the benefits for our communities is a vital component of collaboration and accessing EU funding and influencing EU policy
10. It is incumbent on us all to collaborate in order that this opportunity is realised and that the European Commission is responsive to the scale of this opportunity for securing its longer term strategic goals, such as Europe 2020.

The presentation slides and workshop summaries are available on the Renewable Energy pages of the Argyll and Bute Council Website at the following link: <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/renewable-energy>.

3. West of Scotland European Forum – Represents the interests of the Helensburgh and Lomond area of Argyll and Bute.

A meeting of the West of Scotland European Forum took place in Irvine on Monday 19 March 2012. The meeting addressed a number of European Policy areas and related issues relevant to the council. In summary these are as follows:

- WOSEF will be responding to various European Commission consultations which are expected to be launched over the coming months.
- The Assisted Area map, which is the State Aid mechanism used to determine how and where national regional aid can be awarded, is under review. It is this mechanism which has enabled Scottish Government monies to be awarded for the renewable energy activities in Machrihanish. The current Commission proposals, covering the period 2014-2020, would mean such investments to large companies would not be possible. WOSEF will be submitting a response to this consultation arguing for as much assisted area coverage as possible for Scotland, as well as the ability to enable awards to assist investments by large companies. This is a complex area of policy and WOSEF officers will keep all member authorities up to date on developments.
- Through WOSEF, Argyll and Bute Council are members of the UK wide Industrial Communities Alliance (ICA) network. The ICA represents the needs of Britain's industrial areas, aiming to attract resources to assist in their economic, social and environmental regeneration. In September, the ICA plan to hold their AGM in Glasgow and have asked WOSEF to support this event. In return for some of event costs being met by WOSEF, the event will be joint branded. This will be met by the existing WOSEF budget and there will be no extra cost to partner members.

The next WOSEF meeting is scheduled to take place in September 2012, prior to the ICA AGM. The next meeting will seek to establish relevant activity for the Forum looking towards the 2014-2020 European programming period.

For further information contact: Councillor Len Scoullar Depute Provost and Spokesperson for European Issues.