

Appendix 2: ESIF Programme Update March 2017

The ESIF Programme was originally scheduled to run 2014-2020; despite the Brexit process, opportunities will remain over the next four years to access funding via the ESIF programme; the Autumn Statement in November 2016 confirmed the Government's commitment to honour the remaining period of the current programme:

- The Government has confirmed that it will guarantee funding for ESIF projects that continue after the UK has left the EU.
- Funding for new projects will only be honoured by the UK Government if they are good value for money and are in line with domestic strategic priorities
- The CA has begun to co-ordinate activity and a working group is being established with senior level input from the CA and LEP to identify the most pressing issues and coordinate action.

New calls continue to be released, the latest being a call to support SMEs; a bid is being developed for Halton based around managed workspace. It is also anticipated that further specialist input by the FDO will be required to support the ESF-funded apprenticeship hub scheme which is being led by HBC's Employment Learning and Skills Division.

Although funding was allocated to LCR under the ESIF Programme, this still needs to be applied for and managed through a rigorous application, assessment and monitoring process. Specialised resource is required to do this and to maintain Halton's excellent reputation in the draw down and delivery of European Structural funding.

The Funding Development Officer (FDO) post has proven crucial to the delivery of the European Programme for the Borough and has resulted in additional investment into the Borough of around £4 million to date in the form of ERDF, ESF and matching funds.

The FDO's role has been to support colleagues, internal and external, in developing and delivering projects for the European Programme, including bid writing, project development, claims and liaison. This role has been of invaluable support, in particular to HBC colleagues.

Key projects supported:

Ways To Work

This is an LCR wide scheme to support people into employment; the Halton element is worth £3.3 million (£1.2 million of this is ESF drawn down as part of the current European Programme; and £833,000 Youth Employment Initiative Funding). The FDO post is currently supporting the Council's Employment, Learning and Skills Division and the 14-19 Programme Teams in managing the project which will be delivered over a three year period.

One element of the project will support local businesses and individuals with temporary work for a period of 6 -12 months, providing individuals with the opportunity to develop their skills. The FDO has been supporting the project in making quarterly claims to the Combined Authority, carrying out a procurement exercise for specialist mentors/coaches and recruitment of staff for the project. In the future the FDO will prepare for Article 13 and 16 audits from DWP, monitor performance and eligible expenditure throughout the lifetime

of the project, keep up to date with ESIF programme rules and regulations, and continue with project development and exploring continuation funding.

LCRIBS

Liverpool City Region's **Business Growth Programme**. This project is part of a wider City Region Integrated Business Support Project (**LCRIBS**) which has secured £450k in funding for Halton alone over three years (£288,000 of this is ERDF drawn down from the current European Programme). The FDO has been supporting the project with the recruitment of staff and specialist consultants, the latter via a lengthy procurement process, ensuring that ERDF regulations are being followed and reflected in necessary paperwork, and in preparing for quarterly claims for the Combined Authority.

BBO Digital

This project will be worth £60,000 for Halton and is a project to support over 50's in accessing training and support to 'go digital'. Sessions will be delivered throughout the Borough and the FDO has been instrumental in developing the Halton element of this LCR-wide project.

Low Carbon

HBC submitted an outline bid under the Low Carbon call in October. The project is to develop a Green Business Park in Halton. Part of the project is to create a solar farm on St Michaels Golf Course that provides renewable energy to local businesses and HBC buildings as a demonstration site for the Liverpool City Region that contributes to our regional MW generation output target. The project also links to HBC's ambitions to develop Boroughwide green business parks and also links to wider Sustainable Urban Development projects such as cycling / walking networks within the LCR.

Forums and Groups

In addition to supporting with specific project development and delivery, the FDO also represents Halton on a number of groups and networks, such as the Ways to Work Performance and Compliance Board, the Local Authority Delivery Partners Group and the LCRIBS Board, Delivery and Marketing meetings.

The post also provides support for HBC's European Portfolio Holder, Cllr Cargill, who is the Halton representative for the Combined Authority on the **ESIF Committee**. This consists of briefing Cllr Cargill on relevant papers prior to ESIF Committee meetings and dealing with any issues coming out of these meetings.

The FDO also represents Halton on the **Mersey Rural Local Action Group**, which involves attending Board meetings, assessing bids, making recommendations for projects to be progressed.

In order to keep up to date with current European Issues the postholder attends the **Local European Issues Forum** where current work programmes are discussed and attends briefing sessions and workshops on current EU calls and funding opportunities.

In summary, the FDO has played a key role in representing Halton at LCR level and in ensuring Halton's profile and reputation are maintained and that the Borough accesses the funding it is eligible to draw down.

