



SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE
RURAL
PARTNERSHIP

22 December 2006
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Dear Paul

**Future European Structural Funds Programmes in Lowland and Uplands Scotland 2007-13
South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership Response**


Please find enclosed the formal response of the South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership to the above consultation.

The Rural Partnership has adopted an integrated and strategic approach to addressing economic, social and environmental issues under the umbrella of the Community Planning Partnership. We consider that this model is resource efficient and could be used to deliver an integrated programme of rural support linking ERDF, EAFRD and local funds. Developing policy and practice alongside each other can bring significant operational and resource benefits.

The Partnership welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Structural Funds Consultation and to play a part in influencing the shape of rural development support over the next six years. We feel that the introduction of a rural component in ERDF Priority 3 is positive and creates an opportunity to adopt an integrated and effective delivery framework that reflects the breadth of interests in Scotland's rural areas and builds on established relationships and partnerships.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eileen Logan'.

 Councillor Eileen Logan
Chair South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership



Europe and Scotland
Making it work together

FUTURE EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMMES IN LOWLANDS & UPLANDS SCOTLAND 2007-2013

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

Name: *South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership*

Postal Address: *30 Hope Street, Lanark, ML11 7NE*

1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)
- (a) as an **individual** *go to Q2a/b and then Q4*
- (b) **on behalf of** a group/organisation *go to Q3 and then Q4*

Individuals

- 2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all We will treat your response as confidential

- 2b. **Where confidentiality is not requested**, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please tick one** of the following boxes)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

On behalf of groups or organisations:

- 3 The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

Yes

No We will treat your response as confidential

Sharing responses/future engagement

- 4 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes

No



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South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership Response to the Consultation on the Future of European Structural Funds Programmes in Lowland and Upland Scotland 2007-13

1. Context

The South Lanarkshire Rural Partnership [SLRP] operates under the umbrella of the South Lanarkshire Community Plan. The Partnership has adopted an integrated approach to economic, social and environmental issues and has successfully worked with communities to establish service priorities within a policy framework. This has created the strategic basis for influencing the policies and activities that determine the nature of South Lanarkshire's rural area.

A Framework for Action, informed through community events and involvement, has been established with the key objectives of:

- ❑ Allowing local people to find local solutions to the challenges they face
- ❑ Improving and maintaining the life chances of local people
- ❑ Protecting the countryside
- ❑ Encouraging rural regeneration
- ❑ Maintaining sustainable development as an underlying principle

The Partnership has also been the Local Action Group for the LEADER+ Programme and through this has assisted in:

- ❑ Developing an integrated approach to rural community and economic development that has brought partner organisations together under a common rural agenda
- ❑ Enabling partners to appreciate and balance organisational, economic and community development drivers
- ❑ Developing new and innovative approaches to rural service delivery
- ❑ Establishing a structure for engaging with rural communities
- ❑ Establishing a momentum of activity that can keep rural issues high on the local economic development and enterprise agendas
- ❑ Identifying and leveraging in a range of funding that can be utilised alongside Leader to achieve strategic objectives

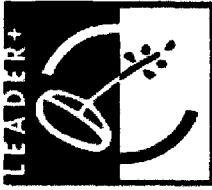
SLRP welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Structural Fund Consultation and to play a part in influencing the shape of development support in Scotland over the next six years. The Partnership appreciates the importance of the decisions now being taken and is keen to ensure that a balanced approach is adopted that reflects the

critical role of rural Scotland in establishing a thriving and sustainable economy. We recognise that the Consultation covers a wide range of issues however have concentrated our response on those areas that impact most on the Rural Partnership's ability to deliver an integrated package of community and economic development support.

2. General comments

SLRP believes that the adoption of an integrated approach to rural development is essential if we are to ensure a strong local economy, a vibrant society and a high quality environment across our rural area. This approach to rural development, focusing on spatial rather than sectoral issues has been a key component of our strategy. It has established a process through which the economic, social, environmental and cultural resources of communities can be managed and developed together in a manner that takes account of local conditions, options and sustainability. It has shown that if policy and practice are developed alongside each other, then significant benefits can be achieved.

We consider it essential that the theme of integration and partnership is carried through into the delivery of the Structural Funds. It is important that we maximise the effectiveness of Structural Fund support given the significant reduction in overall availability in Lowland Scotland. It is therefore essential that we ensure complementarity between the Structural Fund support and the European Agricultural Fund For Rural development [EAFRD] and adopt a locally co-ordinated and strategic approach that maximises the potential impact of both interventions.



3. Response to the Consultation Questions

1. Are there any additional socio-economic factors to be considered – and which the structural Funds can address – in addressing the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the region?

No. We are pleased that the importance of Scotland's rural areas has been acknowledged through the inclusion of a Rural Development theme in the ERDF priorities.

2. Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-13 ERDF Programme in LUPS address the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the region?

Yes. However, critical to their effectiveness will be the level of budgetary allocations and how funds can be focused for maximum impact. In the rural areas it is essential that there is a clear understanding of how Priority Three and the EAFRD can operate in a complementary manner in order to ensure there is no overlap of objectives.

3. Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-13 ERDF programme in LUPS show appropriate coherence and concentration?

No. The South Lanarkshire administrative area has a mix of 'urban' areas that exhibit significant levels of disadvantage and a large 'rural' hinterland that has challenges of economic and community sustainability. We are concerned that this 'accessible' rural area does not fall into a policy void between 'urban' and 'rural' definitions. It is important that Priority Three is available to complement EAFRD interventions and be available to rural areas across the LUPS area, not just those rural authorities that are wholly rural in character.

6. What are your views on the proposed balance of funding between priorities for the future ERDF programme in LUPS?

We are comfortable with the proposed balance of funding between the priorities and are particularly pleased to see a meaningful level of support within Priority Three.

8. Do the proposed priorities outlined in the draft Operational Programmes focus sufficiently on the right priorities in Scottish domestic policy?

Yes. We are happy that the priorities reflect the issues identified by the Rural Partnership in the on-going and community based approach we adopt to local rural strategy development. Of particular importance is the concept of sustainable communities, which we consider to be a central and fundamental component.

9/10. What are your views on how the principle of environmental sustainability/equal opportunities has been integrated into the operational Programme?

These two horizontal themes are both embedded into the operation of the Rural Partnership in general and the LEADER Programme specifically. However, we



believe that both these principles can be most effectively adopted through an integrated approach that also considers community and economic sustainability.

11. *What are your views on how the Operational Programmes will ensure complementarity between Structural Funds and other EU funding streams?*

It is essential that the Structural Funds and EAFRD complement each other and do not support overlapping activities. Delivery of EAFRD support in Scotland will be through the Scottish Rural Development Plan, which in turn has two main delivery strands, Land Management Contracts [LMC's] and LEADER. The Rural Partnership has argued for greater linkages between the two SRDP delivery mechanisms in order to ensure that available resources are applied in an effective and strategic manner, maximising their utilisation and ensuring complementarity. This equally applies to Priority 3 of the ERDF Programme where in our view there are considerable common areas and therefore scope for getting out of alignment. We consider, therefore that common delivery mechanisms for both EAFRD and the Structural Funds should be developed. This could most effectively be achieved through an integrated system linked to Community Planning Partnerships. This would enable a common sense approach to be adopted that would prevent overlap and duplication at a locally appropriate level. A logical consequence of this would be the establishment of single outcome agreements tied into a local rural development strategy linking both EAFRD support [principally LEADER] with Priority 3 of the ERDF Programme. This would ensure resource efficiency and fund complementarity. Within the SRDP it is currently proposed that there be two strategic levels [at least!], one at LEADER Local Action Group level and one largely informing LMC priorities, at a Regional level. It is important that the partnership and administrative structures developed to deliver the Structural Funds are tied onto this framework, particularly as the Managing Authorities for the two Programmes are different.

12. *How can the challenge-fund approach be improved to make it more effective in delivering outcomes and more efficient in operation?*

The main driver of rural policy and priorities in rural South Lanarkshire is our strategy 'Working Towards Sustainable Rural Communities'. This is an integral part of the Community Planning Partnership and has been developed using the bottom-up LEADER based method of involving communities in all stages of both preparation and implementation. It is the document that informs the use of LEADER funding alongside other external support such as Lottery based support [Scottish Community Foundation Fair-Share Programme] and renewable energy community benefit monies. The Rural Partnership would therefore suggest that greater strategic integration at a local level would beneficially inform the challenge- fund process. Again logically this would lead towards the use of single outcome agreements to deliver locally strategically developed priorities in an integrated and resource efficient manner.



13 What would be the most effective approach to using Community Planning Partnerships and other local partnerships for the delivery of elements of the programmes?

The integration of the LEADER Local Action Group and rural strand of the Community Plan, the Rural Partnership, has been highly effective in ensuring both close partnership working and the development of common and complementary objectives and priorities. The principles of approach between LEADER and community planning are similar and complementary. In our view therefore it is both logical and resource efficient to build on established mechanisms that exist within a statutory framework.

The most effective LEADER areas have established strong regional/local partnerships that have a clear strategic vision with appropriate delivery mechanisms that create an understanding between the stakeholders and a balanced programme of actions. We consider that integration with Community Planning has the potential for public sector and community agencies to initiate rural regeneration through collaboration. It is a statutory responsibility on local authorities and public agencies and therefore opting out of the process is not an option for rural areas, rather there is a need to ensure that its principles are adopted in a manner that integrates with other rural strategy development and adds value.

15 What are your views on spatial targeting for rural development under ERDF Priority 3?

The effective targeting of resources is also an issue for both the SRDP and LEADER. It is important therefore that there is consistency between the approach adopted by the Structural Funds and EAFRD. The Rural Partnership believes that the main factor in establishing eligibility should be the cohesiveness of the area. This is a vital element of the LEADER approach. It is important that we avoid 'post-code' lotteries and instead adopt a common sense approach based on appropriate and cohesive territories. Priorities for resources are established through the approval of local strategies developed through CPP's to a guideline framework developed by the Managing Authorities. This approach would ensure both complementarity and resource efficiency.

We do not consider the ring fencing of allocations under this Priority to be appropriate. Our approach would be to adopt the suggested South of Scotland annual spending and strategic plan model on a wider basis. South Lanarkshire's rural area is contiguous with both the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway and exhibits many of the same issues. This is evidenced by a number of significant LEADER projects that we have developed jointly between the areas. We already work closely with the two authorities, particularly through the Southern Uplands Partnership, and it is an area of partnership that has brought benefits to each area and that we would wish to see extended in the future.