

# Scottish Executive

## Consultations

### Future European Structural Funds Programmes in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland 2007-2013

**Information about you**

Please complete the details on the Respondent Information Form below. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately.

**Name:** LYNO RETALLICK \* Required

**Organisation: (if applicable)** BORDERS COLLEGE

**Postal Address:**  
 THORNDIEAN HOUSE  
 MELROSE ROAD  
 GALASHIELS

\* Required

**Post Code:** TD1 2AF \* Required

**E-mail:** lreta@borderscollege.ac.uk

**Telephone Number:** 01896 662662

**1. Are you reponding as: (please tick one box) \* Required**

- An individual (go to Q2a/b and then Q4)
- on behalf of a group or organisation (go to Q3 and then Q4)

**2a. INDIVIDUALS**

Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Executive library and/or on the

- Yes (go to 2b below)
- No, not at all (We will treat your response as confidential)

Scottish Executive website)?

**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

**3. ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS**

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?

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- No we will treat your response as confidential

**4. SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT**

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

**SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

*Responding to all questions*

# **Draft Response to Scottish Executive's Consultation Papers on the Lowland and Upland Scotland's European Regional Development and European Social Fund Programmes 2007–2013**

As the FE provider for the Scottish Borders we would like to respond to the Consultation Papers on the proposed Lowland and Upland Scotland's European Regional Development and European Social Fund Programmes 2007- 2013. Appendix 1 contains responses to questions raised in the Consultation Paper which the South of Scotland Alliance have collated and which we fully endorse.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The European Structural Funds have made important contributions to economic development in the South of Scotland, with Borders College participating in both the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway 5(b) programmes 1994–99 and under the current provisions, the South of Scotland Objective 2 Programme and the Scottish Objective 3 Programme. This participation has directly aided economic development in the Scottish Borders, specifically through providing an effective training infrastructure and addressing skill shortages and access to employability.

Borders College supports and looks to develop future activity to compliment and facilitate the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy 2007–2013 which was agreed in May 2006. This document was developed from the economic development strategies of both Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

It provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses together with the issues and challenges facing the economy of the South of Scotland and sets out a vision, a series of priorities and an action plan for taking forward the development of the region. The strategy envisages resources to support the action plan coming from a variety of sources including European, national government and agencies, local authorities and other local public agencies, businesses, communities and voluntary groups.

The South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy 2007-2013 is designed to meet the requirements European Council of Ministers Lisbon Agenda on economic competitiveness and the UK Government's National Strategic Reference Framework for European Union's Structural Funds. The Competitive Strategy 'sits within' the Scottish National Economic Development Framework and Scottish Enterprise's Smart Successful Scotland and 'sits above' the Economic Development Strategies on both Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway which are due to be reviewed in the next eighteen months.

### **Proposed Programmes**

The overall vision of the Lowlands and Uplands Scotland ERDF programme is to contribute towards the sustainable growth of this area's economy by balancing

support for underlying sources of national as well as regional competitiveness. The programme has three priorities:

- Priority One – This supports enterprise development, concentrating on innovation, research and development and addressing barriers to enterprise development such as the availability of finance. This priority is to be delivered on both a commissioning and challenge funding basis.
- Priority Two – This supports community regeneration and recognises the distinctive problems arising from concentrations of severe deprivation in parts of the region. This priority is to be delivered on a challenge funding basis involving selected Community Planning Partnerships
- Priority Three – This supports the particular economic needs of rural areas. The paper states that ‘ a portion of the funds under this priority would be allocated on a commissioning basis for rural areas in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway, reflecting the scope for supporting significant, region-wide projects of strategic importance. Partners here would be invited to develop an annual plan for spending the funding by identifying key strategic projects that would support the region as a whole in line with the region’s Competitiveness strategy’

The overall vision of the Lowland and Uplands Scotland ESF programme is to contribute towards sustainable growth in the size and skills of the area’s workforce within the context of the European Council of Ministers’ Lisbon competitive strategy. The programme has three priorities:

- Priority One – This supports groups facing employability challenges in entering the labour market and staying in work.
- Priority Two – This supports improvements to the quality of the skills base within the area’s workforce with a particular focus on both ensuring sustainable employment and progression for vulnerable low skilled groups and offering support for entrepreneurship and company growth.

Priority Three – This supports efforts to increase access to post school learning by developing innovative approaches to participation

## **2. GENERAL**

Borders College supports the South of Scotland Alliances view of the overall proposals contained within the Lowland and Upland Scotland’s European Regional Development and European Social Fund Programmes 2007–2013. The South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy provides the basis of future European support to both the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

The inclusion of Rural Development as one of the ERDF priorities is invaluable to those partners working towards a sustainable economic environment in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway - “a portion of the funds under this priority would be allocated on a commissioning basis for rural areas in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway, reflecting the scope for supporting significant, region-wide projects of strategic importance. Partners here would be invited to develop an annual plan for spending the funding by identifying key

strategic projects that would support the region as a whole in line with the region's Competitiveness Strategy".

For the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy to reach its full potential there needs to be inclusion for rurality in other priority areas especially Priority One ERDF and all of the European Social Fund priorities.

The need for a special allocation to the South of Scotland is justified by: the point made in the case for NUTS 2 statistical status to the UK Government by the South of Scotland Alliance, in which the South of Scotland was described as a large rural area with similar issues and challenges to the Highlands and Islands (Indeed the South of Scotland programme 2000–2006 was the only wholly rural European Objective 2 programme area) ; the work on the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy which sets out how the South of Scotland intends to take forward its development over the period 2007-2013; and the encouragement given to the development of the Competitiveness Strategy by the European Commission together with the ways in which the strategy has been positively received by both the Scottish Executive and Scottish Enterprise.

### **3. LOWLAND AND UPLANDS SCOTLAND EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND PROGRAMME 2007-2013**

With respect to the Lowland and Uplands Scotland European Regional Development Fund Programme 2007-2013 Borders College has the following specific comments to make:

- There is a need for more recognition of the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy in the analysis and linkages to the strategy
- In Priority One ERDF, there is a need for flexibility in the approach to innovation. Rural areas such as the South of Scotland where the academic and research base is developing but is not yet strongly linked to local and national industries needs significant investment to be able to make a meaningful contribution to this priority. Rural areas need this link as most industries are either micro businesses or SME's within regional industrial sectors e.g. textiles.
- In Priority Two ERDF, there should be a rural indicator to supplement the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation for the identification of community regeneration areas and needs of small towns should be recognised.
- In Priority Three ERDF, there should be more flexibility on the type of interventions that can be undertaken. This is important for the delivery of the seven priority themes in the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy. The definition of rurality also needs to be tightly defined and should only cover those rural local authorities with a population density of less than 50 people per sq kilometre.

#### **4. LOWLAND AND UPLANDS SCOTLAND EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND PROGRAMME 2007-2013**

With respect to the Lowland and Uplands Scotland European Social Fund Programme 2007-2013, Borders College welcomes the three objectives of the programme i.e. Progressing into Employment, Progress through Employment and Access to Lifelong Learning as these fit well with the South of Scotland Competitive Strategy and builds on previous ESF programmes.

However we would emphasis that:

- It is vital that the South of Scotland gains access to all of the ESF priorities to deliver the priorities contained in the South of Scotland Competitiveness Strategy 2007-2013. As with Priority 2 ERDF there is a need to recognise rural areas that do not fall within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as regeneration and the needs of small towns are equally vital to economic sustainability.

#### **5. MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF PROGRAMMES**

As with the current Programme Borders College feels that the Committee Structure should include advisory structures which recognise the need to communicate advice from the different regions of Scotland. This advisory practice has been invaluable in progressing projects in the past with the advisory groups local knowledge increasing the value of their input.

This would involve the establishment of a South of Scotland Advisory Committee to provide feedback on applications, advice on progress with the implementation of the programme and support the development of policies and procedures. This advisory group would link closely to South of Scotland intermediary body responsible for the delivery of the South of Scotland's sub-programme. The South of Scotland Alliance should also be represented on the Programme Monitoring and Management Committees established to oversee the operation of the programmes.