

**FUTURE EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS PROGRAMMES IN
LOWLANDS & UPLANDS SCOTLAND 2007-2013 SOUTH AYRSHIRE
COUNCIL RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS**

Question 1: Are there any additional socio-economic factors to be considered - and which Structural Funds can address - in assessing the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of Lowlands & Uplands Scotland?

The main concern for South Ayrshire would be that the dramatic decrease in funding and the concentration on the Lisbon agenda has narrowed the scope of the funds to address specific local concerns in particular infrastructure. Nearly half of the ERDF for the 2000-2006 programme went to infrastructure and tourism development projects both of which were important in the South Ayrshire context. With only 25% of the structural funds being available for actions outside of the Lisbon agenda scope to support other local priorities will be limited

Question 2: Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-2013 ERDF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland address the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the region?

The previous comments also probably apply here. Our main concern would be the demographic differentiation between the Rural and Urban areas. South Ayrshire like many other Council areas has a mix of both. However given the limited scope we feel the priorities respond adequately to the analysis.

Question 3: Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-2013 ERDF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland show appropriate coherence and concentration?

The analysis would indicate that the West of Scotland fares worst in several economic indicators.

This would indicate a need for spatial targeting of ERDF priorities 1 and 2. Without spatial targeting of priority 1 in particular there is a fear that the more prosperous areas such as Edinburgh could attract the majority of funding for this. This is the pattern that has emerged in the SMART and SPUR programmes. There is clearly a need to build capacity in the research and development sector and entrepreneurial growth in the West of Scotland.

Question 4: Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-2013 ESF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland address the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the region?

The priorities would appear to be appropriate. The West of Scotland European Consortium (WOSSEC) mentions the demographic change that will happen in the next 20 and its impact on labour supply. We agree with them that this would form a useful addition to the analysis.

Question 5: Do the proposed priorities for the 2007-2013 ESF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland show appropriate coherence and concentration?

The English and Welsh ESF programmes contain only 2 priorities And there could be an argument for Scotland to subsume priority 3 Lifelong learning into the first 2 priorities. However given the demographic factors mentioned in section 4 we would be in favour of retaining it as a separate priority as it might enhance the ability of delivery bodies to respond to these changes and also encompass a wider client group.

Question 6: What are your views on the proposed balance of funding between priorities for the future ERDF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland?

We would agree with WOSEC that without spatial targeting in Priority 1 there may be a drift of funding to more prosperous areas and additionally there may be a slow uptake thus encountering the chance of decommitment under N+2 (European decommitment policy). WOSEC have proposed a 40%, 40%, 20% split we would prefer to retain the 23% for priority 3 and add the 8% from priority 1 into Priority 2 bringing it up to 37%.

Question 7: What are your views on the proposed balance of funding between priorities for the future ESF programme in Lowlands & Uplands Scotland?

As discussed earlier we would be in favour of retaining priority 3 but would agree with WOSEC that the proportion of funding be reduced to between 10-15% and the balance be split evenly into priorities 1&2.

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

While recognising the need for convergence between national and European policies, we would agree with WOSEC that more recognition of some local non executive strategies would be useful, e.g. 'Ayrshire Scotland's Western Gateway'.

Question 9: What are your views on how the principle of environmental sustainability has been integrated into the Operational Programmes?

Environmental Sustainability has been a horizontal measure in the current and previous programmes and as such a considerable amount of experience has been amassed in integrating this into projects. It is interesting to note that specific projects on this theme would be eligible for funding under this theme.

Question 10: What are your views on how the principle of equal opportunities has been integrated into the Operational Programmes?

Equal Opportunities has been a horizontal measure in the current and previous programmes and as such a considerable amount of experience has been amassed in integrating this into projects.

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

We would agree with WOSEC that the section on complementarity should include all the cooperation Programmes that the LUPS area qualifies for.

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

As well as refining the best fit with local strategies approach more emphasis should be given to the qualitative aspects of projects. This would almost require a separate points evaluation. This concern arises from a view that some projects are considered to be relevant and worth trying but fail to score adequately on the measured outcomes.

Question 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?

Community planning partnerships could have a linking role between the programme and local strategies. They may also be able to have a role in allowing smaller but worthwhile projects to be supported which would struggle under the mainstream challenge funding, where it is envisaged only large strategic projects will be considered.

Question 14: What are your views on spatial targeting for community regeneration under ERDF Priority 2 and ESF Priority 1?

Under ESF priority 1 we would advocate a client based approach to targeting similar to the way it works at the moment. South Ayrshire has a relatively low percentage of datazones in the worst 15% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Therefore a client focussed approach would be appropriate for our area. In order to address the reduced funding issue the client criteria would have to be more focused than it is at present. Under Priority 2 ERDF we would agree that spatial targeting would be appropriate. However there would need to be a flexible approach to this and perhaps delivering through community planning partnerships would allow local circumstances to influence this.

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

The issue of rurality and how to define it has been the subject of debate over many years and will continue to be so. Spatial targeting in rural areas is problematic and therefore difficult to support. Given the limited amounts of funds available a fairly prescriptive range of eligible measures may be how to manage this. An alternative would be to limit the geography to accessible small towns and remote small towns (Scottish Executive Definitions) as these have the potential to deliver on some of the objectives in priority 3 as mentioned in the consultation. This might be complemented by the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), which could potentially cover the rest of the rural area.

Question 16: Do you have any additional comments on the draft Structural Funds Operational Programmes for Lowlands & Uplands Scotland?

The delivery and management arrangements being proposed are markedly different from the current programme. We would agree with WOSEC that any commissioning proposals should be for a pilot period and thoroughly evaluated. We would also support their suggested management and decision making structures.

