Connecting Scotland – how Scottish organisations engage internationally

South of Scotland Alliance

Officer Note on European Cooperation

The South of Scotland Alliance which comprises Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Enterprise recognises the importance of European funding and co-operation to support its aims of developing the economy of the South of Scotland.

The European Funding Programme for 2014 – 2020 is just getting underway and the South of Scotland Alliance and its partners have been focusing on maximising their participation in the Scottish European programme in order to access assistance from the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development Fund including LEADER and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

In the previous European Funding Programmes 2000- 2006 and 2007 - 2013 the South of Scotland Alliance and its partners have been involved in a range of European cooperation programmes.

Dumfries and Galloway Council was able to take advantage of the Interreg IVA 2009 – 2013 Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland. This included the very successful Sail West project. This was a marine tourism project led by Donegal County Council designed to promote the west coast of Scotland, Northern Ireland and North West Ireland as a world class sailing destination. The project had 20 partners from across the area, with funding of €7 million secured in 2010 for a series of projects. The project included the development of shore support facilities such as shower and toilets at Stranraer.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is currently involved in discussions about its involvement in the Interreg IVA 2014 – 2020 Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland.

CREATE (Connecting Rural Enterprise for A Transnational Economy) is an innovative new project joining a group of like-minded organisations spanning public sector authorities, private sector representative groups, and business development agencies. The six partner organisations are from France, the UK, Ireland and Belgium, who share a joint vision of encouraging economic development. Herefordshire Council is the Lead Partners and Scottish Enterprise is the Scottish partner. The project ends in the summer 2015.

The project was awarded European funding through the INTERREG IVB North West Europe programme in 2013, to develop and pilot best practice techniques which encourage rural small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to take up and fully exploit the potential of faster broadband. CREATE can also help SMEs identify opportunities to work with other small rural businesses across North West Europe to share best practice and learning. The South of Scotland has been involved in this project.
CREATE looks to overcome the barriers to growth and competitiveness experienced by SMEs in predominantly rural areas. These barriers include geographic isolation, lack of infrastructure, lack of scale, poor joint working opportunities and critically, lack of ICT expertise. Faster broadband and advanced ICT have the potential to overcome these barriers and transform the productivity of rural SMEs.

Both Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council have been involved in European cooperation initiatives through LEADER Rural Development Programmes. Scottish Borders Council has been involved in a partnership initiative with the Sjuharad area (near Gothenburg) in Sweden. This initiative resulted in a number of youth development and tourism projects funded under the Scottish Borders LEADER+ Programme. The funding for the new LEADER Programmes up to 2020 has just been announced and opportunities are being investigated for further European cooperation.

The South of Scotland Alliance has limited capacity in terms of staff resources and match funding to be involved in European trans-national projects. It recognises that are European innovation and research and development cooperation programmes such as Horizon 2020 could provide considerable potential benefits to the South of Scotland.

The Alliance is keen to get more commitment from national agencies to give equal consideration to the needs of the South of Scotland in the development of transnational and research & development projects being put forward for European Funding. The South of Scotland Alliance is a member of Scotland Europa and is working with this body to look at opportunities for more involvement in European cooperation projects.

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On behalf of the South of Scotland Alliance
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