

Joint Strategic Economic Committee

Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership

1 April 2015

Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) – Progress report for Joint Strategic Economic Committee (JSEC)

1. In summer 2013, Swindon and Wiltshire received a provisional allocation of £41m European structural funds by government. SWLEP's European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) strategy¹ sets out the rationale for investments for activity on four broad themes. It came about following over 20 policy building seminars and workshops attended by nearly 200 people in 2013-14.
2. The strategy sets out four investment themes with 12 discrete activity areas which are:
 - SME Growth – allocated £10.89m from a mix of structural funds.
 - Innovation for sustainable growth – allocated £12.975m from a mix of structural funds.
 - Skills for growth – allocated £6.725m from a European Social fund.
 - Skills for inclusion – allocated £10.5m from a European Social fund.
3. All ESIF monies will be matched by either public or private means, so that the £41m of ESIF will be amass to around £88m of total investments in the area between 2015 and 2023. Most investments will be for provision of services - revenue spend will probably account for about 90% of the allocation.
4. SWLEP aims to support up to 9,000 participants in workforce skills, employability and social inclusion schemes. Over £13.5m will be matched to Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funds, whilst another £2m will be matched with Big Lottery funds to promote social inclusion. Job Centre+ (JCP) / DWP will match the remaining £3m of European Social fund monies. Skills brokerage method will be encouraged to match employers' demands and employee supply. Support will be focused on:
 - Key sector businesses to improve their workforce skills, with help to younger aspirant workers get into careers using STEM (science, technology engineering and mathematics)
 - Lower waged workers to achieve level 3 and higher qualifications and career progression
 - Younger and older workers at risk and those needing most help to sustain their employment
5. Over 3,000 SMEs will be supported creating over 1,500 new jobs. A £3.9m allocation of rural development funds will support rural SMEs, focused on food & drink and tourism sectors.

¹ <http://www.swlep.biz/docs/1>

6. A shadow ESIF committee² has met on three occasions. Once all ESIF Operational Programmes have been agreed between government and European Commission - expected in 'late June' – it will become a full sub-committee of the national programme committee.
7. Officers drawn from both unitary authorities work together to commission, scope and specify calls for projects in agreement with government departments and Committee. An annual Implementation Plan³ sets out the calls to be made. All final decisions are to be made by the relevant government departments (acting as Managing Authorities). The Committee's role is to ensure ESIF investments are locally relevant. Committee members will make calls for projects and to advise and endorse decisions by reaching consensus with Managing Authorities.
8. The ESIF committee has begun to make calls for projects based on its provisional Implementation Plan. This is deemed necessary for two reasons. Firstly, prior to the forthcoming general election, government-funded opportunities such as for Growth Deal related investments need to be expedited. Secondly, the allocation must be invested efficiently so that projects can begin. The Committee must work to prevent poor financial performance. The spending profile will be reviewed in 2018.
9. A summary of current ESIF activity includes Officers working:
 - With Big Lottery, SFA and JCP to agree priorities before specified calls for projects can be issued in summer 2015.
 - With DCLG to agree priorities on calls for BIS national products (such as for exporting and manufacturing),
 - With DCLG and partners on a call related to Growth Deal funding and the life sciences sector.
 - To bring into scope calls for key sectors, SME growth, tourism and food & drink sectors.

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² Appendix 1 – SWLEP ESIF Committee membership

³ Appendix 2 – SWLEP ESIF Provisional Implementation Plan