

Staffordshire European Partnership

Staffordshire-Europe 2013

A European Funding Action Plan for the
Staffordshire Sub-Region



June 2007

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Section 1: Introduction

European Union Funding and Staffordshire: context and rationale

This Action Plan is designed to support applications to the array of European Union (EU) funding programmes over the 2007-2013 period. It is the outcome of a process of research, consultation and development work initiated by the **Staffordshire European Partnership (SEP)** in Autumn 2005 as it looked forward to the opportunities for accessing support from European Union sources in the 2007-2013 funding period.

A key role of the Partnership is to **facilitate and encourage a flow of European funding** that can be accessed for the purposes of enabling additional regeneration actions to be pursued in the sub-region, to **prioritise needs and opportunities** in that respect, and to **coordinate an integrated and effective approach** to project development across the wide range of partners involved.

Regeneration activity in **the Staffordshire sub-region has hitherto been widely supported by funding from the European Union.** This has involved a range of sources, including the Structural Funds such as Objective 2, and Objective 3, and schemes such as the 6th Framework Programme, Leonardo da Vinci, TACIS, and INTERREG. From the Structural Funds alone, it is estimated that some £250m of support has been deployed in the sub-region since the mid-1980s and a range of important economic and community regeneration initiatives undoubtedly owe their origins to such support. Some of those successful European supported projects are detailed in a companion document - Staffordshire in Europe: a User-Partner Guide - that sets out the basic challenges and opportunities for the sub-region, and establishes the major bases of the Staffordshire 'offer' in terms of experience, expertise and project development capabilities and aspirations.

The Action Plan is **aspirational and deliberately designed as a flexible document** that can underpin and give structure to responses to funding opportunities as they emerge. Some details on the scale of support available are known, but, in general, the document has been created at a time when the precise magnitude and, to some degree, types of funding that might be available for regeneration action in the sub-region are still to be determined. The range of support available transcends cohesion policy and the Structural Funds (€55.78b over the 2007-2013 period), with areas such as the 7th Framework Programme, Lifelong Learning, Competitiveness and Innovation, Rural Development, and various other non-Structural Fund Programmes (in total some €167b) offering significant opportunities for the sub-region. Moreover, there is a value in creating a responsive approach as a basis for accessing funding opportunities as they arise.

Within this context, the **rationale** of the Staffordshire-Europe 2013 Action Plan is to:

- provide a **clear operational structure** around the activities of the SEP;
- identify clear SEP **strategic themes** to be pursued in project development that envisages funding from European sources (Structural Funds or other European Union sources); and to,
- **match these** to Regional Economic Strategy and other strategic structures;
- set out **guidelines** for maximising the benefit of project developments, including transnational activities, and for collaborative working;
- **initiate and support the building of SEP projects** through **priority or project working groups** operating on a 'task and finish' basis; and, if appropriate,
- **assemble bidding** and/or other specialist teams or sub-groups;
- set in place **research and communication mechanisms** for maintaining awareness of funding opportunities; and,
- effectively **co-ordinate activities and actions**.

It is an approach that is designed to be 'owned' by the SEP and a blueprint for effectively co-ordinated activity that will serve to maximise the capacities and opportunities available to the sub-region.

In developing the Action Plan and its companion materials, the SEP is fully attuned to the need to **link project development proposals to the priorities established within the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas**, whether that relates to cohesion policy and the reform of regional policy or to the array of other EU sources. In these terms, the guidelines for cohesion policy from 2007 provide a basis for project approaches in general in that they stress a greater ownership of this policy on the ground and, in particular, the priorities of:

- improving the **attractiveness of regions and cities**;
- encouraging **innovation, entrepreneurship and growth** in the knowledge economy;
- creating **more and better jobs**; and,
- **territorial cohesion**, adapting policy to the needs and opportunities confronting individual regions in terms of cities, growth and jobs, the diversification of rural areas, and cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation focused on growth and job creation.

With its addition of an environmental dimension to Lisbon, the Gothenburg Agenda focused on sustainable development, stressing a need to prioritise the key issues of,

- combating **climate change**;

- ensuring **sustainable transport**;
- addressing **threats to public health**; and,
- **managing resources** in a responsible way.

In combination, the Lisbon and Gothenburg aspirations very much set the agenda for European Programmes over 2007-2013 and thus have formed a basis for Staffordshire-Europe 2013.



Section 2

Staffordshire-Europe 2013: the ethos of the Action Plan

Built from an extensive process of consultation with regeneration practitioners and other stakeholders within the sub-region, a clear ethos for the Action Plan has been established.

In seeking to make **full and effective use of available regeneration funding** from all European Union sources, the **primary objective** of the Plan is the successful acquisition of funding that can be accessed for the purposes of enabling additional regeneration actions to be pursued in the sub-region over the 2007-2013 period. Within that context, the Plan **prioritises needs and opportunities**, and sets in place **processes to enable an effectively co-ordinated and integrated approach** to project development across the wide range of partners involved in order to make the most effective use of that resource.

The **ethos** of the approach is as follows:

- Foster and support a **strong partnership/consortium approach**.

Given the array of expertise and experience embodied in the SEP, the increasingly competitive environment for European funding, and the need to identify regeneration solutions that are within the influence and concern of individual stakeholder organisations, a strong partnership approach is both desirable and necessary.

- Instigate and ensure a priority **need and opportunity rather than funding led** approach.

The Partnership will proactively strive to secure resources for genuine needs and opportunities and not simply react to a funding opportunity regardless of priority needs.

- Recognise the **Lisbon principles** in the prioritisation process.

It is fully accepted that the Lisbon Agenda provides a blueprint for the prioritisation of project areas and the types of action envisaged.

- Support the principles of **sustainable development** as outlined in the European Strategy for Sustainable Development adopted at the European Council's Göteborg Summit in 2001.

In its array of environmental, economic and social dimensions, sustainable development is critical to the long-term future of the sub-region.

- Align with the **priorities of key public funders** such as the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, Business Link, and Advantage West Midlands (The Regional Development Agency).

Project actions supported by European funding origins must be aligned with the priorities and hence actions of other funding agencies and organisations.

- Support the **priorities established in Local Area Agreements**, Community Strategies and others.

Locally based and agreed priorities provide an essential direction for individual communities within the sub-region and, in the spirit of territorial cohesion at the grassroots level, must be respected.

- Seek to **build inclusiveness** - engaging all sectors, including the Voluntary and Community Sector.

An holistic approach to regeneration action is an effective way forward for the sub-region and there is great value in fostering projects and partnerships with all stakeholder groups, including the voluntary and community sector who have not been so active in previous phases of European funding development.

- Learn from the **experience of the sub-region** and from others.

An embedded, action-based learning ethos is fundamental to the approach of the SEP which is constantly seeking to improve its actions, activities and operational approach.

- Engage in, and collaborate with, **wider sub-regional and regional partnerships and initiatives**, where appropriate **building new networks** to foster common interest and expertise.

Aligning the activities of the SEP within wider networks of opportunity, and building a strong mutual understanding across sub-regional and regional structures, will strengthen its potential success in securing and sustaining European funded actions.

- **Celebrate success, encourage aspiration, and eliminate negatives** in the sub-regional economy.

Building a positive attitude to potential regeneration is critical and part of that process is to celebrate successful actions and activities.

- Promote the **Staffordshire Sub-Region as a 'leader' rather than a 'follower', and as proactive rather than reactive.**

At the core of the SEP approach is a determination, within the spirit of territorial cohesion, to enact a proactive, leadership role for the sub-region.

This ethos for the Staffordshire approach underpins the guiding principles which will be used to prioritise project developments. These are set out in the following section.

Section 3

Guiding principles in the development of European funded projects

Guiding principles are designed to reflect the economic, community and environmental **drivers of the emerging Sub-Regional Action Plan**, as **project development criteria** based on good practice and fresh ideas, as **tools to prioritise actions and activities**, and as **bases upon which to design, develop and judge projects** and other actions that impinge on the area. In this way guidance is offered to secure desirable outcomes - based on good practice - and as a feasibility check for future actions, designed to minimise effort and maximise the potentials of development work.

Based on a mix of criteria established elsewhere by the consultancy team, and supported by or added to by ideas emerging from the consultations in terms of exemplary projects and/or good practice ideas, the following **guiding principles** are suggested.

Projects and related actions should be prioritised on the basis of the following **general principles**.

They should:

1. **Recognise and enhance the aspirations for the short to medium, and long term development of the sub-region** as established by the Staffordshire European Partnership and set out as priority areas for intervention, where these are expected to,
 - respond to **recognised needs within the local economy and community** such as: diversification challenges and the acquisition of high value activities, the needs of disadvantaged communities; or the creation of opportunities for young people;
 - draw on recognised **opportunities** for the area; and,
 - support and add value to **priorities at local, sub-regional, regional, national, and European levels.**
2. Where possible, build on, or at least recognise, the **activities and outcomes of previous actions.**
3. Have a **clear sense of valorisation** - in terms of both the evaluation and dissemination of outcomes.
4. Foster and support a **strong partnership approach** to regeneration working, where possible building connections between all potential stakeholders, including the private sector and community and voluntary groups.
5. Enhance the **long-term sustainability of the local economy** by promoting projects and developments that have durability, and that will have a lasting effect on the focus

beneficiaries and areas.

6. Recognise the **environmental consequences** of potential actions, ensuring that the benefits to the environment are maximised and the limitations minimised.
7. Prove their viability as **innovative vehicles for lasting, durable, and long-term sustainable development** in local economic and community problems, drawing on and **emulating good practice** wherever possible.
8. Encourage interventions that are **equal opportunities** aware and inclusive.
9. Prioritise actions that generate effects and benefits that create **additional benefits** to those which would have occurred in the absence of the intervention.
10. Focus on both the **achievement of outputs** - and the generation of acceptable outputs in line with government output guidance - but also on the **generation of outcomes** that enable a maximum benefit from the project or initiative to be achieved - and that trickle down effects are, where possible, recognised, built into the project approach, maximised, and, in terms of succession, available after the completion of any funding programme.
11. Provide a **genuinely holistic approach** that offers a clear sense of the links between the various actions proposed.
12. **Encourage a culture of self-support** in the area in terms of business and communities.
13. **Complement existing economic activities and planned developments**, and fit with existing policy and strategy approaches - in terms of European, UK regional, and local initiatives.
14. Encourage the **mainstreaming of projects** and their related actions within the activities and resource allocations of key statutory organisations such as the local authorities involved in the area, the Learning and Skills Council, and others.
That is, ensuring that actions that are not currently central to the activities of such agencies are, as a medium-term goal, given greater prominence in the future.
15. **Build the expertise and capacity of the Partnership** and its members in project and related actions in order to support the sustained development of the sub-region over the medium to long-term.
16. Focus clearly on **outcomes that meet the requirements of the Lisbon Agenda for Jobs and Growth** in terms of:
 - Stimulating economic growth
 - Helping to deliver more and better jobs
 - Securing social inclusion
 - Delivering environmental improvements

- Providing attractive places in which to live and work
Where possible, **specific Lisbon targets** should be included as criteria.

In terms of **transnational projects**, additional guiding principles are:

17. The robustness of **potential partners**.
18. The extent to which the envisaged project will, where possible, **build from effective past international relationships**.

Projects aspiring to **good practice recognition** would be judged on the extent to which these principles are followed and, in retrospect, recorded over the duration of the project actions. This will also be assisted by the achievement of **awards or external recognition** from established origins, and through evidence from **project-based beneficiary evaluation** results.



Section 4

A Summary of European funding opportunities for the Partnership

Although the fine detail of the opportunities available to the SEP is yet to be agreed, and further potentials are likely to emerge over time, a number of areas have been identified as potential funding sources for the sub-region.

Structural Fund Programmes

The sub-region should, in principle, be eligible for the two Structural Funds available in the West Midlands region - the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). For ERDF and ESF in the West Midlands, an allocation of €729m Euros (£495m) has been made for the 2007-2013 period.

Regional Competitiveness and Employment - ERDF (formerly Objective 2)

The Operational Programme for this source is currently in consultation. The proposed Priority Axes are:

- Promoting innovation and R&D
- Stimulating enterprise development
- Achieving sustainable urban development
- Developing transnational activity

www.gos.gov.uk/european/strucfunds0713/?a=42496

The National ESF Operational Programme - ESF (formerly Objective 3)

The Operational Programme for this source is currently in consultation and the Regional Skills Partnership are finalising the Regional Strategic Framework 2007-2011.

The proposed indicative activities are:

- Increasing employment and reducing unemployment and inactivity
- Developing a skilled and adaptable workforce
- Tackling barriers to employment
- Linking access to employment actions to the jobs being created

www.gos.gov.uk/european/strucfunds0713/?a=42496

It is envisaged that the actions within this Objective will be wholly co-financed and delivered by key agencies such as Business Link and Jobcentre Plus. In this sense, the Action Plan is designed to set out needs and aspirations from the SEP perspective as messages for these core organisations in the employment arena.

European Territorial Co-operation Objective (ETCO) - Interregional Co-operation (INTERREG) Programme 2007-2013

Developed from the former INTERREG Programme, this element of the Structural Funds includes opportunities for cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation.

INTERREG IVb will focus on cooperation with transnational zones (€350m for North West Europe), and INTERREG IVc on networks for co-operation and exchange of experience (€321m allocated for all Member States).

Priorities for the North West Programme Area (INTERREG IVb) have been specified as:

- Knowledge based economy and innovation
- Natural resources and risk management
- Sustainable transport and ICT solutions
- Strong and prosperous communities

Priorities for INTERREG IVc are proposed as:

- Innovation and the knowledge economy
- Environment and risk prevention

http://www.nweurope.org/upload/documents/programme/2215.NWE_OP_draft_22_December_2006.doc

Non-Structural Fund Programmes

In addition to funding opportunities deriving from the Structural Funds, there are a range of other European Programmes that can contribute to the regenerative development of the sub-region. These are as follows.

7th Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration (FP7) (€50.52b). The Framework Programme is the main European funding source for research and development. FP7 makes provision for international cooperative research (Cooperation), fundamental frontier research (Ideas), Marie Curie Schemes focused on training and learning for researchers (People), and the enhancement of research and innovation capacities of organisations and regions (Capacities).

http://ec.europa.eu/research/future/index_en.cfm

http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm

Lifelong Learning Programme (€6.97b). This suite of initiatives involves Comenius (school education), Erasmus (Higher Education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational education), Grundtvig (adult education), the Transversal Programme (policy development, data and statistics, language learning, and dissemination actions), and the Jean Monnet Programme (integration in the academic field).

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/newprog/index_en.html

Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) (€3.62b). This new programme is focused on the provision of support for entrepreneurship and innovation, ICT policy support, and an enlarged Intelligent Energy - Europe element. It merges several existing measures into one comprehensive programme to boost the competitiveness and productivity of European businesses (especially SMEs) while at the same time proposing support for eco-innovation and sustainable energy.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/cip/docs/com121_en.pdf

<http://cipprogram.com/>

Culture Programme 2007-2013 (CULTURE 2007)(€400m) The specific objectives of the new Culture Programme are:

- to promote the transnational mobility of people working in the cultural sector;
- to encourage the transnational circulation of works and cultural and artistic products;
- to encourage intercultural dialogue.

There are three strands as follows:

Multi-annual co-operation networks, cooperation, and special measures (Strand 1), supporting networks of operators, culture organisations, culture institutions, etc. with a view to implementing structured culture projects within and outside the Community.

Support for bodies active at European level in the field of culture (Strand 2)

Support for analyses, the collection and dissemination of information and for promotional activities in the fields involving the cultural sector, such as cultural co-operation, cultural heritage, synergy between education and culture, additional vocational training for artists, and employment in the cultural sector (Strand 3).

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_372/l_37220061227en00010011.pdf

http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2007/cult_en.html

Progress (within the social policy agenda)(€658m). This programme covers actions focused on employment, social inclusion and protection, working conditions, gender equality, and anti-discrimination.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/docs/com2006_440_en.pdf

Marco Polo II (€400m). Marco Polo II focuses on the environmental performance of freight transport and aims to generate improvements, reduce congestion, and enhance inter-modal transport. It involves transnational links between private sector businesses.

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/doc/2005%2006%2022%20-Greenwich.pdf>

Trans European Networks (TEN) (€8b). The TEN programme supports actions that enhance the development of the network.

<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l24094.htm>

Rural Development (€78.15b).

The future Rural Development policy 2007-2013 will focus on three areas in line with the three thematic axes laid down in the new rural development regulation: improving competitiveness for farming and forestry; environment and countryside; improving quality of life and diversification of the rural economy. A fourth axis called 'Leader axis', based on experience with the Leader Community Initiatives, introduces possibilities for locally based bottom-up approaches to rural development. National rural development strategies are to be developed on the basis of six community strategic guidelines:

- improving the competitiveness of the agricultural and forestry sectors;
- improving the environment and the countryside;
- improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification;
- building Local Capacity for Employment and Diversification;
- translating priorities into programmes; and,
- complementarity between Community Instruments.

http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm

Life+ (€2.1b). This programme targets the environment and focuses on three components: nature and biodiversity; environmental policy and guidance; information and communication.

http://www.iucn.org/places/europe/rofe/documents/0611_relevantfunding.pdf

Other programmes include:

Health (€366m) - with protection for citizens from risks and threats.

Citizens for Europe (€235m) - supporting transnational mobility of people, town twinning, and related actions.

Youth in Action (€885m) - with exchanges and projects to encourage participation in democratic life.

Media (€755m) - providing training and production grants for film and television schools.

Other **opportunities may emerge** and the Partnership will, via its proposed Project Development Groups, respond as appropriate.

Section 5

Strategic themes and priority project areas

In this section, we set out strategic themes and priority project areas as determined by the SEP.

Sub-regional priorities

The Partnership has agreed sub-regional priorities around the following themes:

- Diversification - in both the urban and the rural economy.
- The development of embryonic high value-added business.
- Focusing on new, growing and emergent sectors - knowledge-based business such as medical technology; and digital media; and others including tourism, and distribution;
- Maximising use of underdeveloped strengths such as the mature workforce.
- Recognising and dealing with key socio-economic challenges - such as low skills and low horizons, and tackling economic and social deprivation through interventions.
- Capitalising on the advantageous locational setting of the sub-region.
- Identifying and supporting key success areas and best practice to foster and reinforce competitive advantage for the sub-region.

Whilst this sets the scene for the Action Plan, five strategic themes have been developed around what the SEP views as priority areas for future European funding. These are broadly linked with emerging priorities at regional and/or Fund level, which have been developed with specific cohesion and wider European Union priorities in mind, and relate to the following.

- Strategic Theme 1 Encouraging innovation in business development**
- Strategic Theme 2 Stimulating and supporting enterprise development**
- Strategic Theme 3 Nurturing sustainable communities**
- Strategic Theme 4 Developing skills and employment**
- Strategic Theme 5 Fostering transnational activity in the regeneration arena**

In the following section, **priority areas for project development** within each of these Strategic Themes in the Staffordshire sub-region are identified, with links to the sub-region's challenges and opportunities, and an indication of whether the project areas are either aligned to emerging priorities within individual Funds or sources, or whether they may need to be viewed as **aspirational in terms of known funding regimes**.

Whilst they will be **developed on a partnership basis** by one or more of the proposed Project Development Groups, **potential suites of projects** are suggested, although lead agencies are not identified at this stage. Given the limited funding that is expected to be available, and the competitive environment within which it will be allocated and disbursed, there is likely to be value in developing some **sub-regional level projects** that are innovative and original, and which clearly align to the focus of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas. The SEP will, in this respect, provide a structure to facilitate such developments.

The **extent to which priority action areas are aligned** to local policy structures, as well as reflect the Action Plan ethos and guiding principles, will be covered during the project development process.



Strategic Theme 1 Encouraging innovation in business development		
Priority action areas		Alignment of action areas to expected funding resources (at March 2007) Other sources may be added
Priority focus	Prioritisation factors	
1.1 Innovation support	Recognised need for innovation and knowledge-based activities to enhance high value economic base and to support the diversification process	RCE CIP
1.2 Knowledge transfer	Untapped potential and clear opportunities to enhance the flow of knowledge	RCE CIP FP7 INTERREG IVb participation opportunity
1.3 Development of employment space	Diversification need; successful track record of incubation and managed workspace creation; recognised need for additional developments	RCE

This theme is focused on the promotion of innovation in business development, involving support for innovation and knowledge transfer with particular regard to SMEs. The aim is to engage as much as possible with the potentials of the knowledge economy, as well as generally supporting innovative business developments within both new and traditional sectors, including manufacturing, professional and support services, the farm economy and tourism.

Initial project development activity could be framed around the following actions:

- 1.1 The further extension and development of successful existing projects - such as Pristine and the Local BICs initiatives which provide innovation support and grants.

Sub-regional demonstration project.
- 1.2 Building project actions from the experiences gained during participation in the DRIVE transnational INTERREG IIIc project.

Graduate placement scheme - focused on mature SMEs.

ICT support for innovation development - e-business and ICT solutions. Virtual

outreach or direct contact support.

- 1.3 Additional managed workspace and/or live-work space schemes, perhaps developed in new and innovative formats.

These are some **initial project ideas** - projects will be identified and developed by the Group.

There will be opportunities to link projects developed within this theme to actions developed within Strategic Theme 4 Developing skills and employment.



Strategic Theme 2 Stimulating and supporting enterprise development		
Priority action areas		Alignment of action areas to expected funding resources (at March 2007) Other sources may be added
Priority focus	Prioritisation factors	
2.1 Confidence building actions	Recognised need for enterprise support and nurturing, and potential to create growth, especially for groups such as women and ethnic minorities with a low start-up profile	RCE CIP
2.2 Business support schemes in high value and other locally important sectors	Support schemes necessary to underpin enterprise development, especially in the most deprived areas; business network support and holistic approaches reaching all parts of the urban and rural economy; opportunity for innovative approach	RCE CIP
2.3 Environmental sustainability linked activities and initiatives	Improving the environmental impact of SMEs will support sustainability in (business) economic and (area) environmental terms	RCE CIP INTERREG IVb
2.4 Social enterprise development	Creates enterprise and builds capacity whilst supporting social needs	RCE
2.5 Learning and training initiatives (linked to enterprise)	Skills enhancement is necessary to support the progressive development of the sub-regional SME base	RCE

This Theme envisages continued support for the diversification challenge and the enhancement of enterprise development through confidence building actions, including the continued development of business advice and support, and the disbursement of business grants to aid competitiveness growth - via relocations, new products/processes, and so on.

The SEP recognises the importance of a wide focus to capture all areas of potential, including new growth sectors, energy-related enterprise, rural, and visitor economy activities. A role is envisaged for the voluntary and community sector in some areas of this Theme.

Initial project development activity could be framed around the following actions:

- 2.1 Investment readiness support around enterprise 'cold spots'.
- 2.2 High growth start-up scheme's, including virtual outreach e-support.
Fast tracking actions for start-ups in key sectors.
- 2.3 The further development of existing schemes such as Staffordshire Business Environment Network (SBEN.)
- 2.4 Proactive business advice and support focused on developing social enterprises in deprived neighbourhoods.
Build actions around existing environmental sustainability projects such as Greening for Growth.
- 2.5 Management and leadership mentoring.

A number of **potential cross-cutting projects within Strategic Theme 2** could be developed. For example, start-up and enterprise development research.

These are **initial project ideas** - projects will be identified and developed by the Group.



Strategic Theme 3 Nurturing sustainable communities		
Priority action areas		Alignment of action areas to expected funding resources (at March 2007) Other sources may be added
Priority focus	Prioritisation factors	
3.1 Community development, capacity building and engagement	Existence of deprived and underachieving groups and communities; build capacity to generate economic and social benefits; continuing to focus on social inclusion will benefit both the community and the economy	RCE
3.2 Sustainable transport and access initiatives	Encouraging a wider use of sustainable transport modes will enhance the image of the sub-regional economy and contribute to wider health and environment goals; enhanced access to employment, education and training	RCE Marco Polo II - possible opportunity FP7
3.3 Environmental regeneration and improvements	Enhancing the sub-regional environment will help build a positive image and spill over into economic competitiveness	RCE LIFE+
3.4 Business and environment initiatives	Encouraging local businesses to develop improved environmental practices will support the local and the global environment and economy	RCE LIFE+
3.5 Cultural activities and developments	Cultural developments recognised as contributing to economic regeneration; the sub-region has a good track record; there is potential for actions	Aspirational - and selected opportunities via: Media Possible CULTURE 2007

This Theme envisages a focus on regenerating the environment, including high quality and choice of green space and landmark parks, addressing climate change through policy

initiatives, developing energy efficiency initiatives, reducing the need to travel and improving accessibility to jobs and services by non-car means and supporting the development of a network of safe, attractive off road routes for pedestrians and cyclists; community development, including community capacity building, engagement and participation; and cultural activities and developments, including cultural venues, a festivals and events programme and creative consultancy, in support of both community development and the developing visitor economy.

Initial project development activity could be framed around the following actions:

- 3.1 Innovative long-term capacity building schemes focused on the most deprived sub-region wards.

Social inclusion enhancement initiatives.

Village agents scheme to support rural economy capacity building and diversification.

- 3.2 Transport-related initiatives to enhance non-car connectivity.

Need-opportunity link project, perhaps drawing on and linking with the experience of projects such as Greening for Growth.

- 3.3 Build new phases and developments from existing project successes such as Greening for Growth.

Enhanced access to valued and protected environments initiative.

Actions focused on the re-use of derelict land.

- 3.4 Waste reduction and recycling growth project.

Carbon emission reduction project.

Sustainable management practices training for local SMEs.

- 3.5 Cultural-economic development projects to build economic growth and community capacity from the sub-region's recognised heritage.

These are **initial project ideas** - projects will be identified and developed by the Group.

Strategic Theme 4 Developing skills and employment		
Priority action areas		Alignment of action areas to expected funding resources (at March 2007) Other sources may be added
Priority focus	Prioritisation factors	
4.1 Development of enterprise skills and attitudes	Crucial element of the diversification endeavour; retaining young people in the area; building a sustainable local economy around a stronger commitment to the enterprise culture at all ages, including primary school level; nurturing social enterprise development in the community and voluntary sector	RCE
4.2 Developing employer - education links	Potential sub-regional base that should be exploited more fully; benefits to employers and the growth potential of the area	RCE FP7
4.3 Skills issues in Knowledge transfer	Low levels of graduate retention; improving these will add to the capacity of the sub-region to develop high-value businesses	RCE FP7
4.4 Widening participation in the sub-regional labour market	Including the potentially excluded (NEETS and others) will generate social and economic gains by building effective pathways to work and removing barriers	RCE PROGRESS
4.5 Retraining for redundant or at risk employees	Recognised need; potential to build on existing innovative actions in the sub-region; social and community benefits	RCE
4.6 High skills development	Linking workforce developments to innovations and the knowledge-based economy is important in nurturing high value business	Aspirational

<p>4.7 Basic skills enhancement and enhanced participation in the learning environment</p>	<p>Supporting the enhancement of basic skills and greater learning participation will help to build a stronger workforce and reduce social problems associated with underachievement</p>	<p>Aspirational</p>
<p>4.8 Foresighting for skills development</p>	<p>Assessing and planning for future skills and labour needs will help to sustain the regeneration of the sub-regional economy</p>	<p>FP7 Aspirational (RCE support restricted to the convergence objective)</p>
<p>4.9 Intelligence/advocacy service to inward investing employers</p>	<p>The inward investment potential of the sub-region (and region) will be enhanced with recruitment and training support</p>	<p>Aspirational</p>

This Theme has been developed around emergent clusters of ideas linked to support for growing the entrepreneurial culture and the development of enterprise skills and attitudes amongst young people, graduate retention in the sub-region, widening participation in the sub-regional labour market, especially focusing on young people with disabilities, and other 'high risk' groups, continuing work to improve basic skills and to encourage lifelong learning, and, raising sub-regional aspirations amongst the workforce and the business community, as well as focusing on management and leadership skills.

Given the co-financing basis of the RCE funding opportunity, SEP actions may take form of both messages and potential project actions.

Initial project development activity could be framed around the following actions:

- 4.1 Centre of Excellence for Social Enterprise
- 4.2 To be developed.
- 4.3 Project focused on graduate retention in the sub-region.
Enhanced support for self-employment.
- 4.4 Live-Work employability and training activities focused on the unwaged.
Employment taster programmes (targeted at young people, the hard to reach and others) - perhaps based on previous experiences.
- 4.5 Reskilling projects.
- 4.6 The development of management and leadership skills tailored to the sub-regional need.
Formation of a Centre for Entrepreneurship.
- 4.7 To be developed.
- 4.8 Training tailored to foresighting on future skills needs in the sub-region.
- 4.9 Intelligence-advocacy service developed around the sub-regional experiences of InStaffs (UK).

These are **initial project ideas** - projects will be identified and developed by the Group and developments progressed in liaison with the lead regional agencies. In this action area in particular, **a number of projects could be built around regional agendas, tailoring the Staffordshire actions to sub-regional needs**, necessarily working closely with key regional agencies.



Strategic Theme 5 Fostering transnational activity in the regeneration arena		
Priority action areas		Alignment of action areas to expected funding resources (at March 2007) Other sources may be added
Priority focus	Prioritisation factors	
5.1 Networking, collaborative activity, market access development and skills exchange between SMEs	Accessing new markets and fostering skills exchange will strengthen the small business base of the sub-region	INTERREG IVc Leonardo da Vinci CULTURE 2007 CIP
5.2 Exchanging experience on good practice in sustainable regeneration	Development of regeneration skills and expertise to further strengthen the capacity of the sub-region	INTERREG IVc Leonardo da Vinci
5.3 Regeneration skills interchange activities between practitioners	Development of regeneration skills and expertise to further strengthen the capacity of the sub-region	INTERREG IVc Leonardo da Vinci
5.4 Supporting actions initiated within Strategic Themes 1 - 4	To be completed as projects developed within Strategic Themes 1-4	INTERREG IVc Leonardo da Vinci

Initial project development activity could be framed around the following actions:

Learning for regeneration project - cross-cutting exchange of experience-based action
- initial focus for bid has been Leonardo da Vinci 2007-2013 with a follow-up regional level INTERREG IVc bid as a possibility in due course.

- 5.1 Actions building on existing/recent transnational projects.
Facilitating economic development rich initiatives around twinning experiences.
- 5.2 To be developed.
- 5.3 To be developed.
- 5.4 Projects involving international placements; transfer of experience; others to be added as appropriate.

These are **initial project ideas** - projects will be identified and developed by the Group.

Within the context of this Strategic Theme, it will be important for the Group to **engage with existing transnational networks** involving the West Midlands region as these constitute potential project and/or lobbying partners. These include:

ERRIN - European Regions Research and Innovation Network

Lisbon Regions Network

PURPLE - Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe

RuriPolitan - network of eleven city regions led by the West Midlands (INTERREG IIIc funded)

RETIS - European Transregional Network for Social Inclusion

SEN@ER - Silver Economy Network of European Regions)

ERIS@ - European Regional Information Society Association

POLIS - a network of European cities and regions that supports and advocates innovation in local transport

EPRO - Environmental Platform of Regional Offices

Although some of these networks may be marginal to the focus of the sub-regional priorities, it will be important for engagement to be maintained as far as possible.

Section 6

Managing a co-ordinated and integrated approach to accessing European funding in the 2007-2013 period

The Partnership

The Staffordshire European Partnership (SEP) has, in a variety of forms most recently, the Staffordshire Sub-Regional Group, been in existence since the mid-1980s when it was formed to manage EU Structural Funds across the sub-region. In preparation for the 2007-2013 funding period, the group has extended its terms of reference to include a stronger co-ordinating role. As such, its currently stated aim is, to focus on European funding and European policy related to funding - in particular, to make the case externally for more European funding for the sub-region and internally for organisations to maximise their uptake of available European opportunities (Terms of Reference, April 2006). Within this, it is setting out to inform partners on national and regional policy and funding; provide an interface between sub-regional and regional partners; contribute to regional programming; publicise, promote and support funding uptake; co-ordinate and deliver EU funded activities; provide a strategic view for the sub-region, working with theme groups to proactively develop projects and initiatives; enhance and develop collaborative transnational partnership activities; evaluate the impact and benefit of EU funding programmes in the sub-region; and, identify, develop and implement opportunities for the exchange of best practice between UK and other EU Member States.

Within the context of known changes in the European funding opportunities over the 2007-2013, the reduced levels of resource, and the stronger drive for multi-agency working, it is clear that a **stronger partnership approach is needed** if the sub-region is to maintain its successful acquisition of European funding sources - the commitment of the Partnership to produce a curriculum vitae (the User-Partner Guide), and the present Action Plan, is testament to that.

Currently chaired by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and supported by Staffordshire County Council, its membership is drawn from previous Sub-Regional Group (SRG) partners, together with other European funding stakeholders from the regeneration arena. As well as cascading its activity profile to and through partners, it reports back to key territorial groups within the sub-region (such as the Stoke and Staffordshire Strategic Partnership) and has a role in regional programme management.

For example, the Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) programme for the West Midlands will be overseen by a **Programme Monitoring Committee** (PMC). This will be composed of senior representatives of the relevant agencies and partners across the region. The PMC will be responsible for ensuring the programme's overall strategic direction; driving it forward so that it meets agreed targets; and redirecting the work of the programme as and when necessary over its seven year life.

Currently at the consultation stage, this programme is envisaged as having four priority themes (as reflected in the Strategic Themes developed by the SEP). It is proposed that there will be **Priority Working Groups** for each of these themes. These groups will take forward the work of the programme in their priority area. They will take responsibility for both strategic commissioning activity and, where necessary, the management of individual project bids where gaps in activity are evident. They will be responsible for maximising match funding options; ensuring that key actions within the priority are being fulfilled; and checking and monitoring the progress of the programme within their priority area. The composition of the Priority Working Groups will reflect the relative importance of the various PMC partners to each specific priority. **Each of the region's Sub-Regional Groups** - including the SEP - will provide overall support and assistance to the programme. They will contribute to the development of project proposals where required; they will act as a two-way communication channel between the PMC and many of the regional and local partners, and they will help to monitor and evaluate the programme's progress. In this respect, it is expected that they will contribute to the Annual Implementation Reports. The Chair of each Sub-Regional Group with the relevant expertise will serve on each Priority Working Group whilst, in addition, sectoral representatives who happen to be based in the sub-region, are likely to be involved.

Beyond the RCE programme, the Action Plan foresees a role for the SEP in facilitating bids to the other sources of European funding set out earlier - such as Lifelong Learning, and so on. As such, the remit of the Partnership in terms of alertness to funding opportunities and to project development will be wider than the Structural Funds.

Within the broad SEP structure, it is proposed that five **Project Development Groups will operate to facilitate an effective and coordinated approach within the sub-region**. These will support the process by discussing project opportunities, providing mentoring opportunities for eligible agencies and organisations with limited experience of European funding in areas such as bid writing and collaborative working, and forming 'task and finish' sub-groups to design and deliver individual **project actions which will, of course, ultimately be led by individual partners**. Mirroring the Strategic Themes, the Groups will be as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Project Development Group 1 | Innovation in business development |
| Project Development Group 2 | Enterprise development |
| Project Development Group 3 | Sustainable communities |
| Project Development Group 4 | Skills and employment |
| Project Development Group 5 | Transnational activity |

Clearly, given differences in funding opportunities across the sub-region, there will also need to be **area-focused project development groups**.

Operational arrangements will be determined by the Partnership in due course.

Section 7

Staffordshire 2007-2013: communication and network issues

Communication is an essential element of the SEP role - facilitating links, cascading information and generally fostering a strong partnership approach.

In these terms, Partners have established a communication website for the purposes of disseminating SEP activities - providing meeting notes, discussion papers and consultations, publicising key outcomes, monitoring information, and keeping up to date with applications.

It is proposed that additional activities will include:

- short seminars and presentations to existing groups in Staffordshire, and perhaps sector specific themed workshops and seminars;
- an e-zine (Email newsletter) and SEP updates with hard copy sent to community groups and distributed more widely;
- formal engagement with West Midlands in Europe office, liaising over developments such as the West Midlands - EU Connects proposals/discussions with regard to the strategic engagement of the region in non-Structural Funds;
- signposting activity with regard to potential opportunities for additional partners who are unfamiliar with European funding;
- the development of a virtual network of existing and future transnational partners to exchange news, information, and consultation advice; and,
- formal mechanism to share good practice and help to complete applications.

In its general approach, and as part of the mentoring and supporting ethos, it is anticipated that the SEP will, in due course, produce supplementary guidance for participant agencies and organisations.

At the core of the SEP funding acquisition activities will be the network of project deliverers as proposed through the Strategic Themes. Clearly, much communication will take place through these sub-groups.

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