

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	13/06/13
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	LOWCAP Final Conference Travel Request
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/13/108

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to request permission for Councillors to travel to Brussels on the 26th of June to attend the final conference of the Low Carbon Regions in the North Sea (LOWCAP) project, of which Aberdeen City Council is lead partner. It should be noted that consultation with appropriate people is being undertaken and will be reported verbally to the Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Committee approves the travel for the Leader of the Council and one other elected member to attend the LOWCAP final conference which will be held in Brussels on the 26th of June.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of travel and accommodation for the two councillors attending the conference will be £1400. This includes travel accommodation and subsistence. This cost will be met by the External Funding budget and is 50% matched by European Regional Development Fund.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The LOWCAP project presents policy recommendations and best practice for improving energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions in the North Sea Region. The project supports the Council's objective of representing the interests of the people and organizations of Aberdeen within North East Scotland, the UK, and Europe. The Europe 2020 Strategy aims for a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Europe which is in the Council's 2011-2016 5 Year Business Plan.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Following Full Council approval on the 25 January 2012, officers have been working to deliver the LOWCAP (Low Carbon Regions in the North Sea) cluster project with eight project partners across the North Sea Region.

The LOWCAP cluster project is an Interreg-funded transnational project which has reviewed and exchanged knowledge and experiences from four carbon reduction and energy efficiency projects (Build with Care, Care NORTH, North Sea Sustainable Energy planning, and Carbon Capture and Storage) in the North Sea Region. The European Union's 2020 targets for carbon reduction and energy efficiency require innovative and practical initiatives to deliver change. LOWCAP has produced and is disseminating policy advice to help meet these targets within the North Sea Region as a key output of the project. Aberdeen City Council is lead partner of the project and is a partner in three of the four partner projects (Build with CaRe, CARE North, North Sea Sustainable Energy Planning). More information about the project and its partner projects can be found on the website: www.lowcap.eu.

The conference is a one-day event in Brussels to be held in Scotland House and in the European Parliament. The event will take place on the 26th of this month during European Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW) which is from the 24th to 28th of June and is an initiative of the European Commission that first took place in 2006 with hundreds of organisations and individuals participating each year. Through bottom-up efforts, organisers of EUSEW Energy Days, events and activities connect directly with citizens and energy stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. The combined results of EUSEW efforts are helping Europe reach its energy goals.

The project is due to end in June this year and to mark this end and the launch of its findings, the final conference will be held in Brussels to target decision makers during EUSEW. As part of the conference there will also be a reception in the European Parliament hosted by Alyn Smith MEP who sits on the Energy Committee in Brussels and who has given his support to the project. These events will be held jointly with a sister cluster project - Energy Vision North Sea Region, which looks at the transition towards Renewables. All of these activities are endorsed by and encouraged by the Programme Secretariat (the funding body) and are the responsibility of Aberdeen City Council given its position as lead partner. All costs pertaining to the event are 50% funded by ERDF monies and on top of this Aberdeen will receive a management fee from project partners for its role. More information about the details of the conference can be found on the website www.finalconference.eu

This is a very exciting event and it is hoped that it will be a great success with much impact. The two Councillors have been invited in order to show the support that Aberdeen has in pursuing such projects and transnational partnerships/exchange of knowledge. As well as this their presence will represent the importance of energy to the city and how we are proactively approaching the targets and objectives of the EU in order to reach its 2020

targets. This will position us well for further EU funding when budget negotiations are finalised and the new programmes are agreed. Please see the Smart Aberdeen 2020 document, in background papers, for more information.

6. IMPACT

The LOWCAP project supports the Administration's Aberdeen - the Smarter City vision objectives of a Smarter Environment and Smarter Mobility. By attending LOWCAP, Councillors will represent and promote Aberdeen City in Europe therefore increasing inter-regional networking which contributes to the City's overall effort to maximize opportunities and to promote its interests, both at home and overseas with the aim of creating a vibrant and sustainable economy.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

There will inevitably be some risks associated with overseas travel. As far as possible, measures relevant to the destination will be taken to reduce any risks in line with Council Policy.

It is important that Aberdeen is fully represented in all European matters and that all opportunities for influencing policy and the development of transnational projects for the City's benefit are grasped in order that opportunities are maximised. If this is not done the Council could be at risk of not being able to draw down European grant monies

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

LOWCAP Policy Recommendation document
Smart Aberdeen 2020 Document

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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