

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee
DATE	4 March 2010
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	North Sea Commission, CPMR and European Funding Update
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/10/039

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update on the Council's membership of the North Sea Commission (NSC), Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and seeks approval for Member and Officer travel to the General Assembly of the NSC (Stavanger from the 16th of June to the 18th of June 2010) and Project Development meetings for the development of new transnational projects. Committee are also asked to note the success of the External Funding Unit in drawing down £2,285,702 in external money.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

1. Approves travel and attendance by an Elected Member and up to 2 officers to the NSC General Assembly (Stavanger, Norway) in June 2010.
2. Approves Member and Officer travel and attendance to relevant NSC meetings (NSC Executive meetings in April and October / November) and CPMR meetings (Political Bureau 11th June – TROMS, Energy Group in October) and Officer travel to European Project development meetings within Europe Member States in 2010/2011. Locations and timings of project development meetings will vary in the year as and when the lead partners call for the meetings.
3. Approves the Council's participation in the following European projects and officer travel to project meetings:
 - Age Sustainable Communities (Interreg IVB North West Europe)
 - Torry Community Wetlands Project (Life+)
 - Greenspace Infrastructure (GIN) (Interreg IVB North Sea Region)
 - Creative Spaces (Interreg IVB North West Europe)

- Lively Cities (Interreg IVB North West Europe)
 - European crossed exchanges intra Europe and Mundi (Intelligent Energy)
 - Renewable Public Transport Enterprise (REPUTE)
 - The Torry Point Battery
4. Notes the success of the Council drawing down £2,285,702 in 2009/10 of external monies to be utilised in EU projects over a period of three years

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The programme has been developed in line with a broadly similar level of funding as in 2009/2010.

- Costs for the Elected member attending various meetings of the NSC will be met from the Elected Members travel Budget and will cost approximately £2,000
- Costs for the Officer accompanying Elected Members (Approximately £2,000) and officers attending NSC and project development meetings will be met from the relevant Service's Budget. 50% of these costs will be recovered from the projects if successful. Where the Manager for EU Policy and External Funding has to travel on NSC thematic group work all costs are covered by the North Sea Commission
- Match funding to partner EU funded projects will be met from existing budgets, from the relevant Services. Any new projects will be forwarded to Committee for consideration, subject to budgets being available.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

European policy, representation and best practice supports the Council's objective of representing the interests of the people and organizations of Aberdeen within North East Scotland, the UK, and Europe. It also facilitates greatly the promotion of Aberdeen's City Vision, to be "a city which is vibrant, dynamic, forward looking – an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high-quality services that meet their needs".

Several of the challenges of the Community Plan are also supported, such as: Leading the City, Being Informed, Getting Involved, Land Use and the Environment and Clean City, Transport and Connections, Prosperity and Jobs, and Aberdeen's Image.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- Travel

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.

- Risk Management

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. This level of participation will help to increase the understanding of the new programmes and will assist in developing the capacity to successfully develop new projects and work with other European cities that will benefit Aberdeen City.

- Human Rights/Equalities/Diversity

European Policy takes full account of the Equal Opportunities Policy of the Council.

- Sustainability

Aberdeen City Council has a clear contribution to make to sustainable development with an emphasis on enhances productivity through improved resource efficiency, new business opportunities in the developing market for sustainable technologies and delivering better and more efficient Council services. By attending these events, it will give us the opportunity to look at the possibilities of best practice and drawing down more funds from EU programmes to raise the quality of life through increasing economic opportunity for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis.

- Environmental

European activities are implemented in line with the aim of achieving a quality and sustainable environment.

- Social

The principles of Social inclusion underpin European cohesion policy.

- Economic

European representation and inter-regional; networking 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.

6. REPORT

- **Travel and attendance at NSC and Project Development meetings**

In order for the Council to take full advantage of our role in influencing European Policy, and drawing down EU funds it is important that the Council, where possible, is well represented on the Executive Committees of the Council of Peripheral Maritime Regions, North Sea Commission and on the various EU funding programmes in order that we are kept fully informed of all new European Policy and funding opportunities through its continuing attendance and input into the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), NSC, the various

thematic groups and project development meetings. Such activity will also contribute in us being able to draw down external monies to develop and deliver projects for the Council.

The meetings that we know to date are:

- NSC Executive Meeting in April and October/November
- CPMR Political Bureau on 11th June

The advisor to the Sustainable Development Group of the NSC will be travelling to various meetings at various times on behalf of the NSC and all costs are covered by NSC.

Participation in projects will require travel to project development meetings, which are hosted, usually, in the lead project partner member state or a mutually agreed location across Europe. Where possible, Aberdeen City Council will host partner meetings in order to keep costs to a minimum. The number of meetings per project will vary.

- **Participation in EU Funded Projects**

The Council has been invited to participate in the following projects:

1. Age Sustainable Communities

The project's aim is to increase the engagement on a social level, support integration and create effective and functional structures in urban districts in order to develop a life cycle proof neighbourhood.

This project will aim to integrate young migrants in the community and will form partnerships with younger and older people within the community, focusing on recently arrived migrant workers and their families in the Tullos area of Aberdeen.

Intergenerational and intercultural programmes will be developed which address the community's priorities and will be tailored to need local needs and build upon local assets. Through this working programme older and younger residents will be encouraged to work together with agencies to develop Aberdeen City local solutions to resolve local challenges including interaction with future resident and the local environment.

2. Torry Community Wetlands Project

This project aims to create a 4.5 Ha area of wetlands and woodlands around the line of the East Tullos Burn within the St Fitticks Community Park, Torry. It aims to achieve a Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS) designated status and create a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) close to the coast and tackle the problem of diffuse pollution and run off.

This project will aim to create opportunity for educational activities in the park, including academic research and school visits. Approximately 10,000 trees will be planted within the Community Park, enhancing its recreational use and the attraction for wildlife.

St Fitticks Community Park is currently underused within the City and the creation of Wetlands and Woodlands will enhance this greenspace and have significant impact on the City.

3. Greenspace Infrastructure

This project is in-keeping with the Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) project funded 2009/10 and aims to take SURF to a higher, more political level. GIN aims to recognize the importance of greenspaces as an essential component of more sustainable communities in both urban and rural environments.

Green Infrastructure will aim to improve North Sea Region (NSR) competitiveness for investment, enhance quality of life through increase health and wellbeing, and promote biodiversity and more sustainable use of natural resources. This project will be both practical and policy based.

A free to use GIS based decision support tool will be provided for planners and other users which can be used during the development process. This will also be used in the implementation stages of the Torry Community Wetlands Project.

This project will provide the council with more utilised greenspaces and will build upon the work that SURF is undertaking.

4. Creative Spaces

This project aims to develop new and innovative European urban policies for strengthening the creative spaces in medium-sized cities. As a partner, the city will cooperate transnationally in order to create exemplary spaces for the creative and knowledge economy.

The project also aims to increase the number of creative businesses in the region and to create a better link between the creative and knowledge economy in Europe.

5. Lively Cities

The aim of this project is to improve the environmental quality and attraction of towns and cities including the sustainable use of the cultural heritage, tourism, the creative economy and sustainable and innovative energy practices.

6. European crossed exchanges intra Europe and Mundi

This project aims to bring together digital content on maritime areas from European regional libraries and cultural institutions to address aggregation of exiting digital cultural content in order to increase the quantity of quality content available in Europeana.

The digital content will include a variety of materials including maps, film materials, paintings, books, archives, photos etc. These will be taken from the different project partners and can cover any time period.

This will benefit the City due to the vast maritime heritage that is embedded within it and will impact upon researchers of maritime to the city.

7. Renewable Public Transport Enterprise (REPUTE)

REPUTE is aimed at accelerating and expanding the potential to change to renewable energies in public transport vehicles by exploring all possible avenues, and by enabling the commercial realization of the potential. It will endeavour to link with many other initiatives in the field, especially those funded by the CIVITAS programme dealing with the sustainable development of cities.

8. The Torry Point Battery

The Torry Point Battery, which has commanded the entrance to Aberdeen harbour since 1860, is one of the best-loved historical monuments in the City. It has had a long and varied history - as a coastal defence battery, emergency post-war housing and latterly as a sanctuary for migratory birds. Its varied and valued history led in 2000 to its scheduling by Scottish Ministers as a monument of national significance. That led in turn to recognition that such an important structure deserved the best of physical care and protection, to ensure its long-term preservation as a source of pride and enjoyment for the people of Torry, Aberdeen and beyond.

Funding is currently being sought from Historic Scotland to ensure the architectural preservation of the Torry Battery and raise its profile by making it more attractive and accessible for locals, visitors and tourists. As this will only provide part of the funding required, we will approach the Landfill Communities Fund (via Aberdeen Forward and the Veolia Trust) for additional support.

Conservation works on the Battery site will look to improve the extent of wear and vandalism that the site has encountered over the years. An ashlar and rubble construction featuring a main gate, un-roofed buildings and various armaments, the site has been loosely repaired over the years, but requires some attention if it is to be a safe and accessible visitor site. The conservation will entail the consolidation of wallheads, repointing of masonry and minor landscaping works to the periphery of the site to enable better visitor access. A full architectural report has been commissioned to identify the extent of works required. In addition, new interpretation boards, depicting the site from a post conservation phase will be commissioned and there will be a need to improve the car parking facilities to accommodate for additional visitors.

- **Past success in drawing down £2,285,702 in external monies to be utilised in EU projects over a period of three years.**

The Council in 2009/2010 had a success rate of over 90% in the submission of applications for the development of projects from different EU funding programmes. As such the Council was successful in drawing down £2,285,702 in 2009/2010. These funds are for the following projects, which cover a period of up to three years.

	ACC Money	EU Money
SURF – North Sea Programme	£190,607	£190,607
SURF Management Costs		£318,284
Care North – North Sea Programme	£186,364	£186,364
North Sea Sustainable Energy Planning – North Sea Programme	£200,425	£200,425
EU Direct Centre – European Commission	£24,773	£19,545
PeriUrban – Interreg IVC	£29,587	£88,764
Eco Schools Net – Comenius Regio		£22,182
Total	£631,756	£1,026,171

	ACC Money	Scottish Government Money
Safer Places Improved Spaces - Town Centre Regeneration Bid	£418,000	£686,031
Retail Rocks – Town Centre Regeneration Bid	£307,500	£573,500
Total	£725,500	1,259,531

Sustainable Urban Fringes (SURF) – To enhance underused greenspaces on the Urban Fringe

Care North – to develop regional transport strategies approved by Scottish Government and improve transport within the City

North Sea Sustainable Energy Planning – Developing a city wide strategy in Aberdeen for low carbon developments

EU Direct Centre – One of the main tools used by the European Commission to offer information on the EU to citizens at local level and to give feedback to the EU institutions

Peri Urban – to increase community involvement in managing suburban parks and greenspaces

Safer Places Improved Spaces – To enhance the town centre’s in the areas of Mastrick, Rosemount, Peterculter and Cults

Retail Rocks – To make use of the empty shop spaces in the Torry area and allow local’s to set up new businesses.

Eco Schools Net – to allow teachers to develop and share approaches and skills on environmental education

It must be noted that most European Funding programmes require the Council to put up match funding and the rate of match funding can vary from programme to programme.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None