

Oxford City Council European Funding

Oxford City Council has received relatively little in respect of European funding. There have been two successful bids for funding which are outlined below. The Council is hoping to access some European Funding which has been awarded to the Local Enterprise Partnership which is detailed in Appendix 1.

European Social Fund

Customer Services have successfully applied for a grant of £296,000 which has been awarded from the European Social Fund. This must be match funded from staffing costs giving a total cost attributable to the project of £592,000. The grant is intended to be used to deliver work related support to private sector tenants. The Council is currently halfway through a 12 month project and has worked with 200 customers with 40 employment outcomes.

Intelligent Energy Europe: Mobilising Local Energy Infrastructure

Environmental Development have been awarded £900,000 from Intelligent Energy Europe: Mobilising Local Energy Infrastructure. There is another £300,000 to be spent on the scheme giving a total of £1.2 million. The grant is intended to be used to develop energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across the county and to lever in capital investment. So far there has been £2m investment in Solar PV and microhydro installations financed by community share offers. The delivery of the Low Carbon Hub business plan is intended to secure investment and legacy for programme.

European Funding through the LEP

In March 2013 the UK government announced that the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) will be combined into the European Structural & Investment Funds (EUSIF) Growth Programme for England for 2014-2020. The new European Growth Programme will be a source of investment to encourage enterprise, innovation and skills to boost local economies and long-term growth, and to promote social inclusion and combat poverty. Oxfordshire will receive nearly £20m funding between 2014 and 2020. Each LEP area is required to produce a Structural and Investment Fund Strategy. The development of the Strategy was heavily support by the City’s economic development team with support from the benefits reform team (specifically on the social inclusion elements).

Although the EUSIF Strategy has been developed by the LEP and responds to local economic conditions, the use of EU funds is constrained by European Regulations. These regulations set out the EU's 11 overarching ‘thematic objectives’ that the funds should contribute to. These are underpinned by specific ‘investment priorities’ or ‘measures’ which describe the broad activities that can be supported by each Fund. Only 10 of the thematic objectives are relevant to Oxfordshire (the 11th focused on intuitional capacity is only applicable in less developed areas). Government then encouraged each LEP to focus its activity on a limited number of the EU's priorities and Oxfordshire therefore has no activities planned for TOs 5 and 7 (which are “Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management” and “Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures” respectively).

EU regulations also dictate the distribution of funding across the thematic objectives: in particular specifying the proportion that should be spent on low carbon and social inclusion activities.

In Oxfordshire the proposed distribution of funds across the thematic objectives has been specified in the LEP EUSIF Strategy:

Thematic Objective / Priority by fund				
I EU Thematic Objectives	Oxfordshire Priorities submitted in the ESIF Strategy	Fund	Proposed Allocation	Annual 7 years (mean)
TO1 Innovation	Collaborative networking between institutions	ERDF	£1,000,000	£142,857
	Commercialisation support	ERDF	£1,000,000	£142,857
TO1/TO3 Financial instrument	Access to finance fund (Fund total £3,020,000)	ERDF TO1	£1,150,000.00	£164,286
		ERDF TO3	£1,150,000.00	£164,286

		ERDF TO4	£720,000.00	£102,857
TO2 ICT	Roll out of high speed communication	EAFRD	£1,493,060	£213,294
TO3 SME Competitiveness	Building growth capacity	ERDF	£1,000,000	£142,857
	Fostering entrepreneurial culture	ERDF	£1,000,000	£142,857
TO4 Low Carbon	Building low carbon market	ERDF	£500,000	£71,429
	Non domestic LC technologies	ERDF	£500,000	£71,429
	Support for small scale renewable schemes	EAFRD	£373,320	£53,331
TO6 Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	Support for development and promotion of tourism, recreation and leisure	EAFRD	£231,000	£33,000
TO8 Employment / Labour mobility: Access to employment	Retraining older workers <i>Supports TO1/3</i>	ESF	£610,000	£87,143
	Literacy and numeracy for young people	ESF	£640,000	£91,429
	Gender in-balance in technology sectors <i>Supports TO1/3</i>	ESF	£610,000	£87,143
	Enhancing pathways for long term unemployed	ESF	£1,200,000	£171,429
	Support for job creation through promotion of tourism, recreation and leisure <i>Supports TO6</i>	EAFRD	£516,000	£73,714
	Support for job creation in small scale renewables projects	EAFRD	£373,200	£53,314
TO9 Social inclusion: active inclusion	Programme to prevent young people becoming NEET, including family based interventions, and to develop opportunities for existing NEET to access employment	ESF	£920,000	£131,429

	Community Grants scheme	ESF	£432,330	£61,761
	Community led local development	ESF TO9	£800,000	£114,286
		ERDF TO3	£242,330	£34,619
TO10 Education, skills & lifelong learning	Development of SME capacity for higher skills placements and collaborative placement projects <i>Supports TO1/3</i>	ESF	£1,250,000	£178,571
	Programme to develop skills and deliver qualifications and apprenticeships at lower levels in employment growth sectors, targeted on un- and under employed and marginalised groups	ESF	£500,000	£71,429
	Accessible apprenticeships and traineeships in priority sectors <i>Supports TO1/3</i>	ESF	£1,300,000	£185,714

The Strategy for the Oxfordshire LEP was approved in February 2014 and resulted in an allocation for the area of £19.5m. Calls for projects won't open until March 2015 and it is unlikely that any activity will start until September 2015.