

Economic Development Committee Ref : EDC-16-00 (p6)

Date:	1 November 2000
Venue:	Committee Room 2, National Assembly for Wales
Title:	Objective 3 Progress Report

Purpose

1. To update the Committee on the latest position on the Objective 3 programme in East Wales.

Recommendation

2. To note the progress being made.

Background

3. Implementation of the East Wales Objective 3 Operational Programme is now underway. The Monitoring Committee has agreed the Programme Complement and it was submitted to the European Commission on 16 October 2000. Over 150 applications, submitted directly to the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) for projects beginning in 2000, have been received and appraised under the first round. To date, over one third of these have met the high quality threshold set by the Monitoring Committee and European Social Fund grants totalling £7.8m were approved on 17 October. The Welsh European Funding Office is providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants and many of these will be invited to resubmit improved applications for further consideration.

4. The approved projects offer over sixteen thousand training places to combat unemployment, promote equal opportunities, lifelong learning and business competitiveness.

3. These include:

- A pan East Wales integrated employment project run by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, assisting deaf and hard of hearing people to compete effectively in the labour market. The project provides one to one needs analysis, guidance, action planning, work experience and employer focused work, as well as job-search, IT and basic skills training to assist clients to secure and retain work.
- A Knowledge Exploitation Fund Project will receive £390,000 to support the

development of an entrepreneurial culture in Higher and Further Education in East Wales. It will do this by employing entrepreneurship champions who will carry out audits, develop an entrepreneurship strategy for each institution, and provide enterprise scholarships helping over nine hundred unemployed people receive enterprise training.

- A project which extends and enhances the Work Based Learning for Adults programme in East Wales will receive over £880,000. This will allow the programme to assist an extra seven hundred unemployed people aged over 25 to secure and sustain employment through individually tailored packages of guidance, structured work experience, training and approved qualifications.

5. The Monitoring Committee has also agreed a framework for implementing the programme through one regional and eight local action plans from 2001 onwards. Partnerships are currently inviting project ideas for inclusion in their Action Plans. Action plans will be submitted to WEFO for appraisal by the end of November 2000 and the partnerships will have been notified of the outcomes of the assessment by early January. Project applications will then be submitted to WEFO in line with the strategy agreed for the Action Plan.

Compliance

6. Activities under Objective 3 are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The powers to administer ESF rest with DfEE. Action is in hand to give similar powers to the Assembly. In the meantime WEFO on behalf of the Assembly is acting for DfEE as provided for by s.41 of the Government of Wales Act 1998.

Action for subject committee

7. To note the progress in the programme.

Contact Point

8. David Howarth, WEFO Machynlleth.