



The EU Knowledge Bank January 2012 Bulletin is your free practical information service aimed at informing member councils of forthcoming European investment opportunities, together with early warning on legislation, regulation and policy that will have an impact on operational services and the financial projections for local authorities.

Since the last issue, NILGA has been working on a number of critical issues and the importance of the issues is highlighted through a “traffic light” classification system in order to assist Councils to prioritise as the key decision body for communities to quickly identify areas of direct local interest. EU information points are classified as follows:

Green - Council opportunity – follow up recommended

Amber – consultation and key issues in progress – one to watch

Red – early warning of EU fines or punitive policy impact – campaign work required collectively as a sector

(A) EU Engagement Event - 8th February 2012, Glenavon Hotel , Cookstown.

In response to Councils and Clusters “logjam” concerns – related to the diverse and substantial concerns about criteria, processes, changing targets, micro auditing, delays in receipt of Letters of Offer, and more - NILGA has arranged an engagement event with available agencies and partnership representatives in order to address obstacles on a joint, shared agenda. This event follows a meeting which took place on 13th December 2011 with NILGA’s Chief Executive advisors in order to agree a way forward.

The event will also address the proposals to identify revised arrangements for the delivery of the Structural Funds 2014-2020 from Councils’ perspectives, initiating debate on the subject with contributions sought from Members and stakeholders, such as the LED Forum, the Cross-Border Groupings and the Department of Finance and Personnel, in view of the critical importance of the issue to the communities and businesses Councils support.

The agenda for this event is available on the NILGA’s website at:

www.nilga.org/getdoc/73c3b553-40f7-44ce-a541-da33b9503d06/EU-FUNDING---ENGAGEMENT-WORKSHOP---AGENDA.aspx

Early notice of this event was sent to all Member Councils on 4th January 2012. Members are encouraged to register /attend if places permit.

NILGA will produce an Event Report to be distributed to all stakeholders.

(B) NILGA victory on EU fines - EU Energy Directive

NILGA, in association with the UK CoR Delegation, has been able to protect Councils against increased costs of implementing the proposed *Energy Efficiency Directive*.

Following amendments made by our representatives on the draft opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Committee of the Regions rejected on 14th December 2011 the Commission's proposal that an additional 3% uplift in energy efficiency for larger (>250m²) local government buildings be legislated for by 2014.

As amended, the CoR opinion:

- reasserts the principle of subsidiarity, which many feel is breached by this Directive
- rejects the pre-determined quantified targets set for the public sector
- specifically, rejects the additional 3% target
- calls for alternative measures to count towards energy reduction targets
- proposes exempting historic public buildings from the Directive
- removes the requirement that local councils must verify suppliers' energy performance

Following the positive results achieved under the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Northern Ireland Members of the Committee of the Regions and of the Congress, namely Alderman Arnold Hatch, Cllr Jim Dillon and Cllr Stewart Dickson MLA, attended the UK delegation meeting of CoR and Congress in London on 11th January 2012. High on the agenda was the 2012 work programme, priority settings for this year, the new structural funds and EU fines.

NILGA will continue to facilitate full and effective participation of Northern Ireland Members in the work of the Committee of the Regions and of the Congress to ensure that the voice of the sector is taken into account.

(C) Potential Revised Management arrangements for Council led 2014 – 2020 EU Programmes

NILGA has continued to liaise with OFMDFM, DFP and DETI to discuss options on the role of local government in the management of the next round of EU funds 2014 – 2020. An opportunity exists to contribute to the discussion and present effective solutions on the design, management and delivery of EU Programmes post 2013.

Discussion on the current arrangements aimed at supporting the European efforts of NILGA on behalf of the sector has led to the extension of the current funding contract until 31st December 2013.

NILGA, supported by the LED Forum, other agencies and Member Councils will open the debate on the future role of Local Government in the management and delivery of EU Funds 2014 - 2020 on the 8th February 2012 in the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown.

(D) NILGA secures information sharing partnership with OECD

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world.

At zero cost to Councils, NILGA has been granted access to the OECD's On-Line Information System (OLIS), which includes all papers, reports, statistics and books. In addition Councils may have the opportunity to attend OECD policy meetings and conferences on subjects of interest to the sector.

(E) 2012 NILGA's Annual Conference and Exhibition – 23rd February 2012, Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick

“Councils in 2012—Positively Local” will be a high profile event aimed at developing a vision for a new local government. The event will give the opportunities to a multitude of stakeholders including Northern Ireland Ministers to address key issues such as:

1. RPA in Local Government
2. Local Government working with the Executive in the current economic climate
3. Procurement—social issues
4. Progress on the Programme for Government in light of the publication of its final version
5. Waste management
6. ROI and Scotland perspectives of local government reform in neighbouring areas
7. The European Charter for Local Self Government

Those wishing to attend should contact Nuala McCann at the NILGA office on 028 9079 8972 or n.mccann@nilga.org

The Northern Ireland Local Government Awards will take place on the evening of 23rd February and this year will see the addition of a category sponsored by NILGA : Award for the best EU funded project. The new category generated a substantial amount of interest from Councils and it highlighted an outstanding level of best practice and innovation in the local government sector.

Members are strongly encouraged to attend and support this key event, and to help assist in the creation of a shared vision for Local government that is both sustainable and customer facing.

(F) Development of UK Local Government EU investment platform

As highlighted in the last issue, NILGA has negotiated an agreement with the LGA, COSLA and WLGA to develop a closer working relationship on a UK national level in order to secure EU investment, and protect councils from punitive fines and polices. NILGA is finalising a formal offer by COSLA to share a resource in Brussels which will benefit Northern Ireland's Councils and ultimately ratepayers. It is planned that NILGA's officers will travel to Edinburgh in February in order to determine with COSLA improved communication with Northern Ireland Councils. Work is also ongoing with the ACCC and our Irish colleagues in developing similar joint investment partnerships.

NILGA has scheduled a joint NI / Scottish local government meeting to increase cooperation and communication with Brussels through a shared resource.

(G) CAP reform update

NILGA is currently considering the new proposals made on 12th October 2011 by the European Commission on the **Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020**. Representatives have attended a series of consultation workshops held by DARD, at which further clarification on the proposals was sought. The main issues were also considered by NILGA's Agricultural and Rural Development Working Group and their final feedback is expected through NILGA's Full Members Meeting (Lisburn City Council, from 0930) on 27th January in order to finalise a response on the proposals.

Chief Executives of all Member Councils have been asked to share any responses they may have produced with NILGA in order to submit an opinion which will reflect the views of the local government Sector.



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