

Policy Board Meeting 23 September 2016

Present:	Amye Robinson	Aberdeen City Council
	Martin Brebner	Aberdeenshire Council
	Cllr Lynne Devine (Chair)	Angus Council
	Shelley Hague	Angus Council
	Ian Lorimer	Angus Council
	Diane Milne	Dundee City Council
	Joanne Scobie	ESEC Secretariat
	Cllr Martin Oliver	Falkirk Council
	Andrew Wilson	Falkirk Council
	Sharon Douglas	Fife Council
	Serge Merone	Perth and Kinross Council
	Pearl Tate	Audit Scotland
Apologies:	Stuart Bews	Aberdeen City Council
	Cllr Barney Crockett	Aberdeen City Council
	Yasa Ratnayeke	Aberdeen City Council
	Cllr Geva Blackett	Aberdeenshire Council
	Rory Young	Dundee City Council
	Cllr John Kellas	Perth and Kinross Council

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Cllr Lynne Devine welcomed the group.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies were listed as above.

3. Approval of draft minutes of Policy Board 1st July 2016

- 3.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate reflection of discussion.
- 3.2 Shelley Hague referred to agenda Item 9, on the options for the future hosting of ESEC. As agreed at the meeting, Angus Council applied to its committee for an extension to host the consortium until the UK leaves the EU (expected 2019), which was agreed.

4. Approval of annual accounts and audit report 2015/16

- 4.1 Pearl Tate of Audit Scotland gave an overview of the findings of the 2015/16 audit report.
- 4.2 The resources amount to £82,300 which is a healthy position but given that two members have given their notice, this will need to be monitored. At the present

- it is considered that reserves are adequate without having to increase subscriptions.
- 4.3 The report concluded the governance structure of the consortium is sound and adequate.
 - 4.4 The report referenced the outcome of the EU referendum result and noted that it would have a significant impact on the work and objectives of the consortium.
 - 4.5 Regarding transparency, the report points out that the consortium does not publish agendas and minutes from meetings on the website. Since this recommendation, it was noted the secretariat has added meeting reports to the website.
 - 4.6 In order to deliver best value, the report recommends that the consortium agree measureables to ensure that the service provision can be demonstrated as being effective and efficient.
 - 4.6 The report recommends that the board meets four times a year. This has been noted, and there will be four policy board meetings in 2016.
 - 4.7 The report notes that the board has not considered its financial budget in 2016 and so it was agreed to add this as an agenda item for every second policy board meeting (every six months).
 - 4.8 Pearl Tate notified the group that this would be her last meeting as ESEC's auditor and thanked the secretariat for their cooperation during her tenure.
 - 4.9 The accounts were then approved, agreed and signed.

5. ESEC event in the Scottish Parliament

- 5.1 At the previous ESEC Policy Board meeting of 1 July, former ESEC chair Mairi Evans offered to host an event in the Scottish Parliament, to help raise the profile and influence of the consortium.
- 5.2 Following the result of the referendum in June 2016, it was suggested by the secretariat to use the event to highlight members' priorities within the Brexit debate, such as around the quality and diversity of EU funding in the ESEC region.
- 5.3 Shelley Hague referred to the speech Mairi Evans gave in the Scottish Parliament two days before, during which she highlighted the impact of Brexit on local authorities.
- 5.4 It was suggested that each member showcase a particular programme or project at the event, and to ensure that many sectors are represented in order to highlight the diversity of EU funding in the area.
- 5.5 Around the table, some suggestions were rural development (Angus), the hydrogen economy (Aberdeen City), fisheries (Aberdeenshire), creative industries (Dundee City), and employability (Falkirk). Members were asked to consult internally on which areas they would like to showcase at the event and then inform the secretariat.
- 5.6 The secretariat suggested either 21 or 22 February 2017 for the event, which would all Members of the European Parliament to attend. It was noted that

- these dates could be difficult for some members as there might be budget meetings that week, although it was added that there would likely be conflicts with whichever date was selected. Members were requested to check their agendas and report back to the secretariat on any issues with the proposed date.
- 5.7 It was suggested and agreed that policymakers could be informed of the issues around Brexit ahead of the event. The secretariat has drafted a position paper which it is hoped will be used for this purpose.
- 5.8 It was suggested to create a video to support the event, which would provide a very informative and visual demonstration of the projects. The secretariat agreed to get quotes from local suppliers.

6. Update from Francesca Giannini, Scotland Europa

- 6.1 Francesca Giannini was recently appointed as Scotland Europa's Head of Scotland office and was invited to the Policy Board to be introduced to the wider team and discuss their services in the context of Brexit.
- 6.2 Scotland Europa current situation is that it will continue to deliver services for members and Scottish Enterprise but they need to start preparing for what happens next. They are keen to support the Scottish government's position to stay engaged with the EU.
- 6.3 The timeframe will be over three stages - 1) Immediate term, will continue to maximise the opportunities that are available. 2) Transition period – whatever happens over the two year period which needs a strategy to support members. 3) Post-Brexit – whatever constitutional settlement is agreed.
- 6.4 Scotland has always been a member of choice. Scottish partners have always been sought because of expertise and there is an interest from EU partners to continue working together.
- 6.5 The referendum has already started altering relationships. Scotland Europa will seek to reassure members, and to maintain visibility. If we are seen to be stepping back we might lose some ground when needed in the future.
- 6.5 The Treasury has underwritten competitive funding, so need to invest more here to maximise opportunities.
- 6.6 Scotland Europa plays a catalyst role in supporting engagement. Need to start changing the story we tell to partners in EU. Focus more on learning and sharing our expertise in those areas where being a Member State is not necessary.
- 6.7 Need to maintain a joined up Scotland approach. Scotland Europa will continue to monitor and provide intelligence
- 6.8 There are networks in Europe where EU status is not required such as the Vanguard Initiative, which is a group of EU regions committed to leading by example in inter-regional collaboration for new industrial growth in the EU. Vanguard is looking on how to extend the membership to non-EU countries.
- 6.9 The group thanked Francesca for her presentation and shared with her some of their own experiences following the referendum

- 6.10 It is feared that Scotland is becoming an unattractive partner. A college in the region has reported that in the past month they have being rejected for around 6 projects.
- 6.11 Until there are further guarantees, many of ESEC members will not be looking for new EU projects as there is too much uncertainty. The focus will be on delivering their ongoing projects.
- 6.12 It was pointed out that Norway is a very active 3rd country, and is involved in Horizon 2020 and Interreg. It was suggested that Scotland could have a similar role post-Brexit by paying into the central pot, and it was agreed that the importance of continued involvement with transnational programmes should be communicated to the government.

7. Brexit update and lobbying strategy

- 7.1 The unexpected referendum result of 23 June 2016 has required an adjustment in the consortium's objectives and outreach. It is necessary to develop a lobbying strategy which will minimise the negative impacts of Brexit, and to ensure that the priorities of local government are taken into account during the negotiations.
- 7.2 The Secretariat has drafted a briefing paper outlining the implications of Brexit on our members based on the evidence submitted to the Scottish Parliament. The document has been made more concise in order to highlight key points and make it more readable for policymakers.
- 7.3 It is suggested that the final briefing paper be sent to policymakers in our region, including MSPs, MPs and MEPs, with a request for a meeting.
- 7.4 The Secretariat will draft a database of policymakers, and will send this round to members for input. It is suggested that meetings take place according to authority, with a councillor, officer and ESEC officer to meet with the local MSP/MP.
- 7.5 It was noted that while the Treasury statement of 13 August provided assurances for programmes like Horizon 2020, the deadline to have projects approved before the Autumn Statement will not help with structural funds or the LEADER programme. It was therefore stressed as important that the briefing paper request assurances from the government to guarantee all EU funding until the original commitment of 2020.
- 7.6 It was pointed out that Scotland receives a significant amount of money via the national and transnational programmes and when approaching policymakers, this should be highlighted with the message that Scotland and its councils cannot afford to lose this money.
- 7.6 It was suggested that the briefing paper also be sent to officials in the UK government, including the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Mundell.
- 7.7 The Secretariat agreed to update the paper based on discussions and send it to members along with the stakeholder database.

8. Any Other Competent Business

- 8.1 Following the recommendation from Audit Scotland, the board discussed including milestones and measurables into the work plan. The secretariat agreed to draft an initial plan.
- 8.2 The group also took on board the recommendation for more regular discussions around the consortium budget and financial statements, and agreed to add this to the agenda every six months.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 Joanne Scobie informed the group that she would be on annual leave for three weeks in November which would mean that the Officer Group and Policy Board would need to be just two weeks apart as an exceptional circumstance ,as opposed to a four week gap.
- 9.2 It was agreed to hold the Officer Group meeting on Friday 25 November and to hold the Policy Board on 9 December.
- 9.3 Joanne thanked the group for their cooperation with these dates.