

NORTH SEA COMMISSION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP ACTION PLAN 2005 - 2006

Introduction

The aim of North Sea Commission (NSC) Economic Development Group (EDG) is to create conditions for economic growth in the North Sea area.

The EDG has worked for a number of years to develop networks and professional contacts where exchange of ideas and best practice can take place.

The Group offers an ideal resource for encouraging joint working between areas located around the North Sea.

What we do:

- Exchange best practice in economic development around the North Sea
- Increase knowledge for economic development officers through a series of international meetings, seminars and Study Tours
- Influence international debate on economic development issues
- Lobby on issues affecting businesses around the North Sea
- Provide an international network for professional economic development officers working in councils located around the North Sea
- Provide business contacts and industry information between nine European countries
- Provide experienced public and private sector partners for transnational funding applications
- Provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas

The NSC EDG is Chaired by Ms Rinske Kruisinga (Council of the Province of Noord-Holland, The Netherlands). The group has two Vice-Chair positions - one is held by Mr Thore Westermoen (Vest-Agder Fylkeskommune, Norway) and the other position is currently vacant.

Action Plan - Background

In November 2004 the North Sea Commission Economic Development Group (NSC EDG) held a Strategic Planning Day. This exercise provided a structured day where group members could agree a practical vision for 2005. It also helped the group to identify key activities, actions, responsibilities, timescales, resources and outputs.

The Strategic Planning Day resulted in the identification of a number of key practical activities for the EDG. These included:

- Knowledge transfer between group members
- Strengthening the network of EDG members
- Influencing policies and international debate
- Increasing links with the other NSC Thematic Groups

During the Strategic Planning Day the group members also discussed new structures and methods of working. It was agreed that the group should consider identifying and creating a small number of themed 'specialist clusters' comprising group members with a shared area of interest.

The group members also agreed a series of actions that were required in order to achieve the EDG's key areas of activity. One of the first actions was to undertake a 'Knowledge Audit'. The aim of the Audit was to identify areas of interest and expertise amongst the NSC EDG members. This would identify key topics for consideration during 2005-2006, and establish the potential for creating 'specialist clusters' of group members to work together on these topics.

The Knowledge Audit was undertaken during December 2004 and January 2005. The results of the Audit identified a number of areas of joint interest including:

- Energy and renewable energy
- SME innovation and development
- Baltic Sea co-operation
- Academic and business knowledge transfer
- Economic benefits of culture, heritage and events
- European funding after 2006
- Food production, promotion and development
- Rural development
- Community economic development

A number of group members expressed an interest in leading a specialist cluster that would focus on a specific topic.

The Work Plan is a result of the Strategic Planning Day, and subsequent Knowledge Audit exercise, have been used to develop the North Sea Commission Economic Development Group (NSC EDG) Action Plan for 2005-2006.

Joint NSC projects

Possible joint projects with the other NSC Thematic Groups during 2005-2006 include:

- Exploring the impact and potential of the Lisbon Strategy focus on growth and jobs
- Culinary Heritage and Regional foods – building on the joint regional food event held in May 2004
- Energy Efficient Housing – working jointly on the environmental and education requirements linked to energy efficient and renewable energy applications
- Ports and Shipping – participating in the new Ports and Water Borne Transport Partnership
- ICT – developing an NSC event on the application of new ICT around the North Sea
- Examining the economic impact of the arts and cultural events