



Maximising the Benefit of ERDF in Coast to Capital

Introduction	2
Delivery and Management	4
Progress Against Targets	6
Wider Outcomes and Impact	7
Conclusion	17

Annexes:

- **Annex A – Online Beneficiary Feedback Survey Questions**

Introduction

The £31.1 million European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-2020 Programme allocation budget in the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area was facilitated through the “Maximising the benefit of ERDF in Coast to Capital” Technical Assistance (TA) Project from 1st October 2015 to 31st December 2019. The project was worth £133,151 ERDF and was led by Coast to Capital, with Surrey County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council supporting as delivery partners. The Government Department responsible for contract managing the project – and contract managing the ERDF 2014-2020 Programme for all of England – is the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG). They are referred to as being the Managing Authority (MA). ERDF forms part of the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF), which also includes the European Social Fund (ESF), and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

Overview of Methodology

The five main activity areas of the project comprised:

1. Promotion of the opportunities through ERDF: awareness-raising.

This included web-based and email communications, social media, newsletters and press releases as well as a programme of events with appropriate support materials to promote open Calls in the area. Target audiences were split into three tiers to ensure the relevant communications were sent to the right stakeholders:

- Tier 1: National strategic partners such as MHCLG maintaining regular communication on strategy development and implementation.
- Tier 2: Local strategic partners and stakeholders such as Local Area Partnerships, Local Authorities, Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) sector representatives, voluntary and community sector representatives and businesses who are engaged in strategy development and implementation but unlikely to bid for ESIF funds.
- Tier 3: Range of potential delivery organisations, including those based within the LEP area, but also those from wider afield who have knowledge and expertise to bring to ERDF delivery in Coast to Capital.

2. Building a strong pipeline of high quality projects to meet the ERDF-related aims of Coast to Capital's ESIF strategy

This included one-to-one meetings; group meetings; one-to-one advice and answering telephone and e-mail queries. The project team also provided strategic-fit related advice to applicants at outline and full application stage as well as signposting to the Managing Authority (MA), and provided input on strategic fit for the MA appraisers at ESIF Sub-Committee meetings.

The project team worked closely with the MA to ensure that the referral process was as smooth as possible. Technical assistance focussed on local priorities, economic information and labour

market intelligence as well as strategic fit. The project also provided information on developing good bids, different types of match funding, amongst other topics.

3. Delivery partner-broking and networking

The ESIF pages on the Coast to Capital website were used to promote funding opportunities, in addition to social media promotion on Twitter and LinkedIn. Call launch events included opportunities for networking in the agenda so that potential project partners could discuss project ideas and partnerships.

In the last year of the project, Coast to Capital began to use Trello, an online sharing platform, which attendees to call launch events could sign up for. This extended the opportunity for discussions around project ideas and partnerships beyond the Call launch events, as well as providing a platform for the project team to share useful documents such as Call specifications and guidance documents from the MA. The Trello group also offered the opportunity for members to comment and respond, providing the facility for peer group support if needed.

4. Strategic Partner engagement

The project engaged with strategic partners and stakeholders through one-to-one and small group meetings to encourage active participation in communication to identify changes in local circumstances, successful projects and lessons learned. These included regular ESIF Sub-committee meetings, meetings between the TA delivery partners, and Call launch events which were promoted widely to stakeholders, as well as the strong individual stakeholder relationships that were established and maintained by the ERDF Project Manager and Partners.

5. Monitoring of the TA project itself and continuous improvement

Progress of the TA project was monitored regularly against targets, with budget and output figures recorded in a tracker and used to inform the quarterly progress reports that were submitted as part of the claim documentation to the MA.

Monitoring of the ERDF Programme was largely handled and steered through the 22 Coast to Capital ESIF Committee Meetings that were held during the ERDF TA project's lifetime. Delivery of the ERDF and ESF TA Projects were managed through 14 TA Delivery Group meetings, attended by the TA management and delivery partners.

Each of the 13 quarterly claims submitted to MHCLG throughout the project demanded detail on progress against outputs and financial progress before payment could be made, as did any audits conducted by the MA during the Programme and TA Projects lifetimes. Regular progress reports and project dashboards were produced for the quarterly Coast to Capital Board meetings, and information on the project and the ERDF allocation in the LEP as a whole was included in the Coast to Capital Annual Report.

Delivery and Management

Project Team

Coast to Capital were the lead partner in two TA projects that ran simultaneously, supporting the ESF and ERDF allocations in the area. The delivery partners for both projects were Brighton and Hove City Council and Surrey County Council, and each project had a dedicated lead within Coast to Capital (The ERDF Project Manager and the Skills Manager for ERDF and ESF respectively). Figure 1 shows the structure of the ESIF TA projects team.

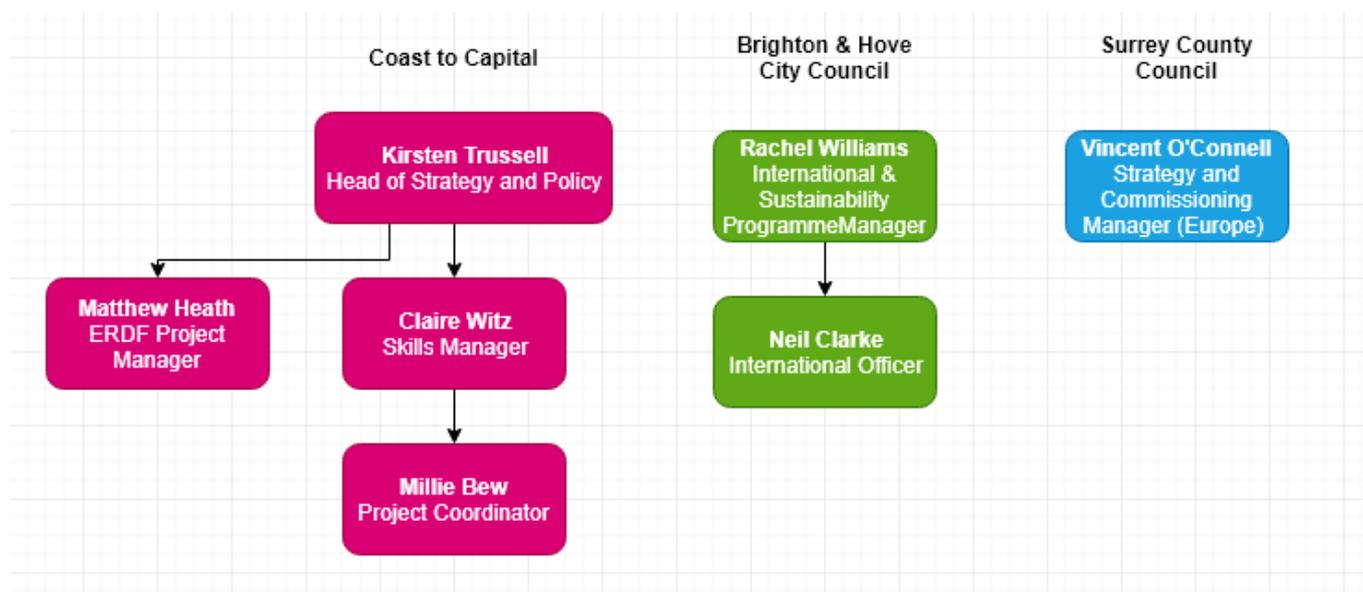


Fig 1. Team structure for ESIF (ESF and ERDF) technical assistance projects

The Project Coordinator worked across both TA projects, and for the ERDF TA project provided a support function carrying out administrative duties including claims work, communications and organisation of dissemination events.

The ERDF Project Manager was central to the project delivery, and worked full time on writing call specifications fitting to the strategic needs of the area, promoting these calls through various channels, establishing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders that could be potential applicants or project partners, and monitoring and reporting on the ERDF allocation and its impact across the LEP.

Project Delivery

The project was delivered from the Coast to Capital offices, initially based in Horsham, and then relocated to Three Bridges in July 2019. Although the office location changed part way through the project, both locations (Horsham and Crawley) are central within the LEP, and both offices were within a short walk from mainline train stations, so there was no change in accessibility to the offices for potential applicants and the availability of face to face support was not impacted.

Project delivery covered the whole of the Coast to Capital LEP area. The LEP boundary review in 2019 saw Croydon and Lewes District leave Coast to Capital, and these areas were taken over by London LEP and South East LEP respectively. This had minimal impact on this particular project as the technical assistance delivery fell largely within the transition period window, and Coast to Capital continue to have strategic relationships with London LEP and South East LEP regarding Croydon and Lewes (Fig 2).

Project delivery commenced in October 2015, with an original completion date of 30th September 2018. A Project Change Request (PCR) was submitted in June 2018 to extend the project delivery to September 2019, which was approved by the MA in August 2018.

Dissemination Events

The office location in Horsham was within a small College building, therefore Coast to Capital were able to make use of vacant classrooms for events, which were large and already in an ideal set up for presentations.

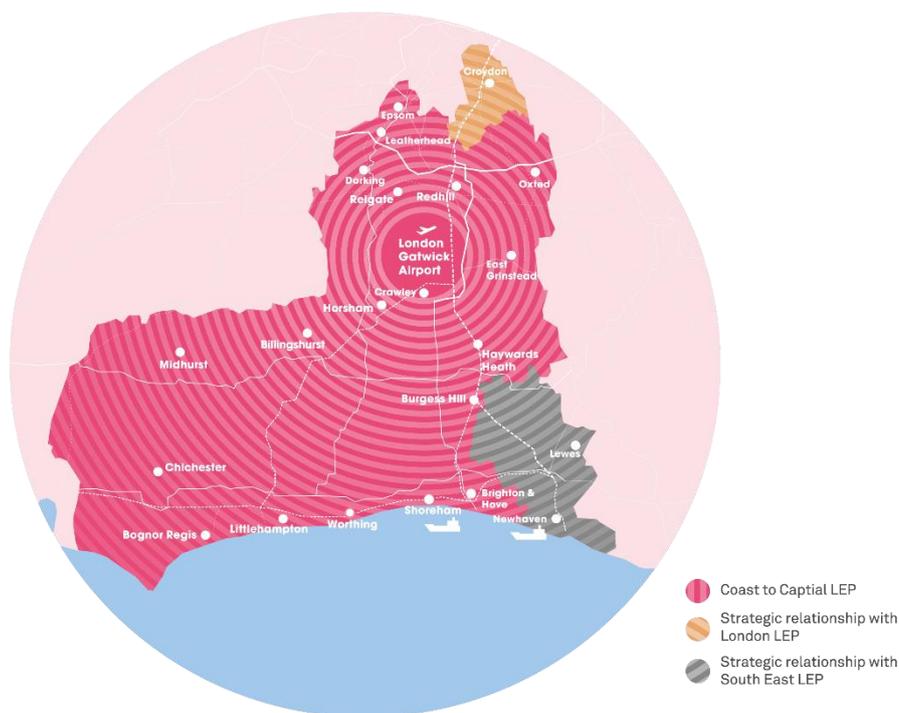


Fig 2. Coast to Capital, showing strategic relationships with neighbouring LEPs following the LEP boundary review

The new location in Three Bridges brought many positive changes to the organisation, however, there were no facilities for larger events. Events held after the relocation meant sourcing external venues, and although venue hire was secured free of charge through good relationships with local stakeholders, there was a charge for refreshments. Furthermore these events took longer to organise, from the initial time scoping out and contacting potential local venues, including site visits, to liaison regarding logistics, setup and facilities.

Event registrations were facilitated by Eventbrite, and events were promoted via Coast to Capital's website and social media channels (Twitter and LinkedIn). Open calls were also promoted via the website, social media and e-mail.

Progress against Targets

The project has overachieved on four out of five contracted outputs (Fig 3).

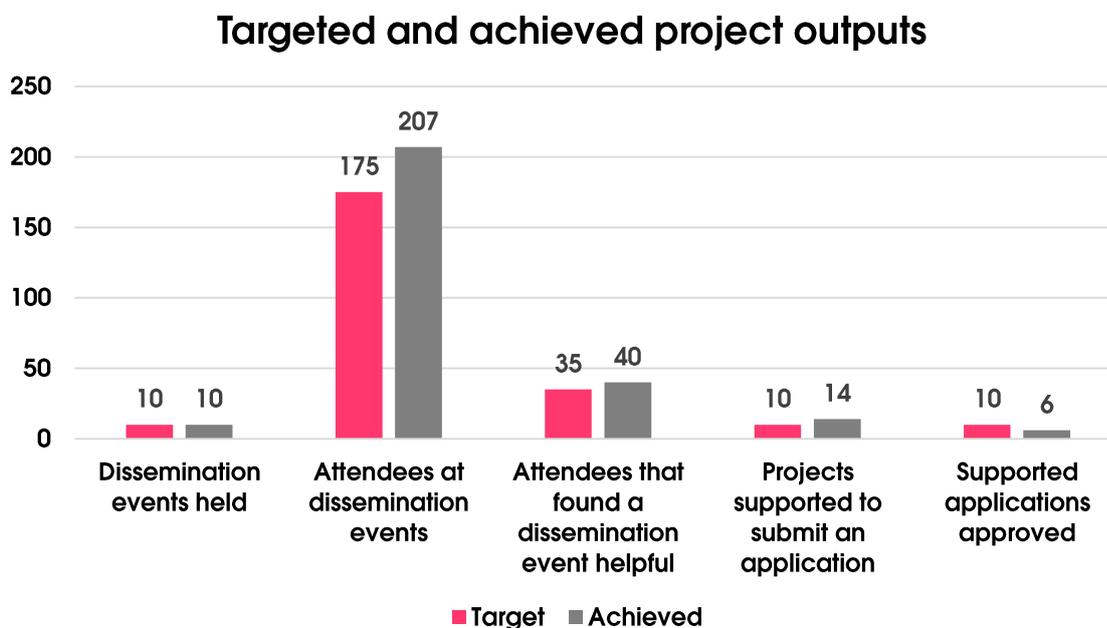


Fig 3. Progress on outputs against contracted targets for the Maximising the Benefit of ERDF in Coast to Capital project

Due to a one year delay in Coast to Capital receiving a signed Grand Funding Agreement (GFA) from MHCLG, some expenditure and outputs had to be shifted to later dates. This meant that some of the outputs had to be reduced as there was a smaller window of time to deliver them in.

All outputs targets were either achieved or exceeded, with the exception of 'Supported applications approved'. Unfortunately project staff were only able to provide Technical Assistance to applicants to the point of full application, and had no influence over the approval as the MA had the final decision. Project staff endeavoured to ensure the support given to applicants enabled them to produce a high quality application that would be approved by the MA however some of the more technical issues, for example with match funding, were often beyond the control of the applicant and therefore the project.

Wider Outcomes and Impact

The wider objectives of the project were to:

1. Promote the opportunities available through the programme at local level to all the relevant audiences

Open calls were promoted throughout the duration of the project through a variety of channels, including targeted e-mails, social media posts and 10 dissemination events.

Each event comprised of a presentation delivered by Coast to Capital project team members and representatives from MHCLG, where available. Information included a general overview of the ERDF programme, priorities in Coast to Capital, detailed information on the Call specifications, and guidance on match funding and the application process.

Event presentation slides were published on the Coast to Capital website and communicated via e-mail and social media for potential applicants that were not able to attend the event. The calls themselves were also directly promoted on social media channels (Twitter and LinkedIn) once published by MHCLG.

2. Ensure a pipeline of sufficient high quality projects to meet the aims of the ESIF Strategy for ERDF

The Coast to Capital area had an ERDF allocation of £31.1 million, and applications were supported through the Technical Assistance project across three ERDF Priority Axes:

- Priority Axis 1: Promoting research and innovation
- Priority Axis 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SME's
- Priority Axis 4: Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors.

Our component for sustainable and inclusive growth	Priority Axes	Thematic Objectives
Component 1: Our people skills and employment	ESF PA 2: Skills for Growth	Thematic Objective 10: Investing in Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning Thematic
Component 2: Innovative, growth-orientated, international businesses	ERDF PA 1: Promoting Research and Innovation	Thematic Objective 1: Promoting Research, Technological Development and Innovation
	ERDF PA 3: Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs	Thematic Objective 3: Enhancing the Competitiveness of Small and Medium Enterprises
	ERDF PA 4: Supporting the shift towards a low carbon economy in all sectors	Thematic Objective 4: Supporting the Shift to a Low Carbon Economy in All Sectors
Component 3: Inclusive and cohesive society	ESF PA 1: Inclusive Labour Markets	Thematic Objective 8: Promoting Sustainable Employment and Supporting Social Mobility
		Thematic Objective 9: Promoting Social Inclusion and Combatting Poverty

Fig 4. Coast to Capital ESIF Priority Axes and underpinning components for growth (Coast to Capital ESIF Strategy, Apr 2016)

These Priority Axes were identified as most closely aligned with the priorities in Coast to Capital's ESIF Strategy (Figure 4). The Coast to Capital ERDF Project Manager worked with delivery partners to develop detailed Call specifications outlining what type of projects would fit strategically in the Coast to Capital area, to ensure potential applicants were receiving the right initial guidance needed to develop a high quality application that was relevant to the area. Throughout the lifetime of the ERDF TA project, 28 Call Specifications were drafted by the ERDF TA team at Coast to Capital and published by MHCLG. Figure 5 shows the full listing, in chronological order.

Call Ref	Call Title	Priority Axis	Call Value (ERDF)	Call Opened	Call Closed
OC04R15P 0109	Engage CDIT SMEs in collaborative research with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	PA1 - Innovation	£500,000	Mar-15	May-15
OC04R15P 0135	Growth Hub	PA3 – Business Support	£3,900,000	Jul-15	Sep-15
OC04R15P 0136	Support for Wood Fuel Enterprises	PA4 – Low Carbon	£1,300,000	Jul-15	Sep-15
OC04R15P 0249	Innovation Vouchers	PA1 - Innovation	£2,500,000	Dec-15	Jan-16
OC04R16P 0355	Support the LCEG Sector through Smart Specialisation	PA4 – Low Carbon	£750,000	Apr-16	Jun-16
OC04R16P 0356	Support SMEs in the wider economy to take up Low Carbon solutions	PA4 – Low Carbon	£1,000,000	Apr-16	Jun-16
OC04R16P 0414	R&D Brokerage Service	PA1 - Innovation	£1,000,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0415	Low Carbon: Retrofitting – Whole Place Solutions	PA4 – Low Carbon	£1,200,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0425	Internationalisation	PA3 – Business Support	£750,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0426	Business Support Programme Lot 1 – Productivity	PA3 – Business Support	£2,000,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0427	Business Support Programme Lot 2 - Access to Finance & Investment Readiness	PA3 – Business Support	£1,000,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0428	Business Support Programme Lot 3 - Monetisation of Innovation	PA3 – Business Support	£2,000,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0429	Business Support Programme Lot 4 - Peer Support & Mentoring	PA3 – Business Support	£500,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R16P0430	Business Support Programme Lot 5 - Start-up Programme	PA3 – Business Support	£500,000	Dec-16	Mar-17
OC04R17P 0541	Business Support for the Digital, Life Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing Sectors	PA3 – Business Support	£5,000,000	Jun-17	Sep-17
OC04R17P 0585	Promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low carbon technologies	PA4 – Low Carbon	£750,000	Jun-17	Sep-17
OC04R17P 0648	Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	PA1 - Innovation	£4,000,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC04R17P 0649	Business Support for the Digital, Life Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing Sectors (Re-Issue)	PA3 – Business Support	£5,000,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC04R17P 0650	Internationalisation (Re-Issue)	PA3 – Business Support	£750,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC04R17P 0651	Supporting the Shift towards a Low Carbon Economy in All Sectors	PA4 – Low Carbon	£4,000,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC50R17P 0687	Knowledge to Market Accelerator (Multi-LEP)	PA1 - Innovation	£100,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC50R17P 0688	Quantum Computing Supply Chain (Multi-LEP)	PA1 - Innovation	£500,000	Dec-17	Feb-18
OC50R18P 0714	Knowledge to Market Accelerator (Multi-LEP) (Re-Issue)	PA1 - Innovation	£100,000	Mar-18	Apr-18
OC50R18P 0777	International Trade - National Call (DIT)	PA3 – Business Support	£750,000	Mar-18	Apr-18
OC04R18P 0812	Promoting Research and Innovation - Innovation Centre	PA1 - Innovation	£5,520,726	Oct-18	Nov-18
OC04R19P 0950	Supporting the Shift towards a Low Carbon Economy in All Sectors	PA4 – Low Carbon	£4,012,982	Jun-19	Sep-19
OC04R19P 1005	Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs - Incubators	PA3 – Business Support	£3,907,108	Jun-19	Sep-19
OC04R19P 1040	Promoting Research and Innovation	PA1 - Innovation	£641,383	Jun-19	Sep-19

Fig 5. ERDF Calls published in Coast to Capital during the ERDF Technical Assistance project

In April 2019 Coast to Capital LEP swapped £4.5m of its ERDF PA3 allocation with £4.5m of the Greater Cambridge & Greater Peterborough LEP’s ERDF PA1 allocation, in order to fund more than one of the Innovation Centre applications that were received, as it was proving difficult to allocate PA3 funding, whilst GCGP LEP had been struggling to allocate PA1 funding, but had more quality PA3 applications than they could fund. MHCLG helped us throughout the process and were in full support of the change. It proved to be relatively straightforward and quick to execute, as it is a national programme.

Figure 6 shows the value of applications supported under each priority axis, and the value of the applications within each priority that is contracted or in the pipeline as of March 2020.

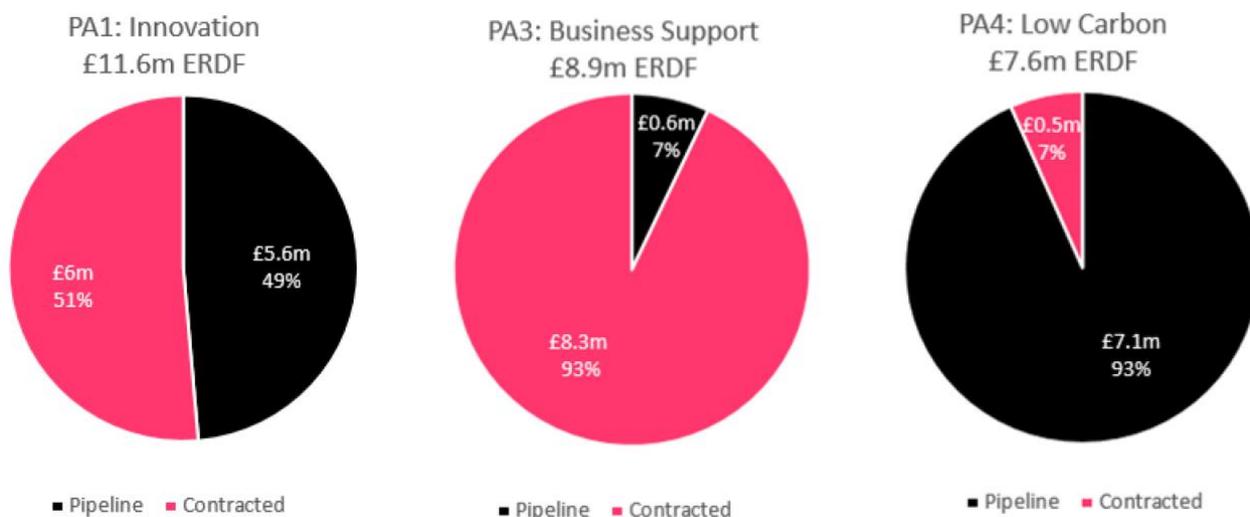


Fig 6. ERDF Allocation in Coast to Capital showing contracted and pipeline values by ERDF Priority Axis to March 2020

To March 2020 there were nine fully contracted projects worth £14.7 million ERDF (Figure 7). There were a further seven in the pipeline with MHCLG worth £13.3 million ERDF (Figure 8). £3.1 million ERDF of the Coast to Capital budgeted allocation for 2014 – 2020 remained unallocated and will be re-absorbed by MHCLG into the central reserve fund in 2020.

Upon completion of the TA project in December 2019, 100% of the ERDF allocation for Coast to Capital was allocated, either fully contracted or at various stages in the pipeline with MHCLG, however between then and March 2020 one application worth £3.1 million ERDF was withdrawn by the applicant due to a match funding issue.

Project	Lead Partner	Description
Export ASEAN ERDF Priority Axis 3 £1.1 million ERDF	Newable	The project aims to increase support to SMEs, new exporters and those already exporting, specifically those in the Life science/healthcare sector, to grow their business internationally, especially in the ASEAN markets.
South East International Business Growth (SEIBG) ERDF Priority Axis 3 £0.6 million ERDF	Newable	This project aims to enhance the competitiveness of SMEs and improve business support for all stages of SME development & growth. Target Geographical Areas: This is a Cross-LEP project covering the Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3, Solent, and Oxfordshire LEP Areas (Sussex, Surrey, Croydon, Hampshire, and Oxfordshire).
Utilise Plus ERDF Priority Axis 4 £0.5 million ERDF	Sustainable Business Partnership	Financial and non-financial support are available on this project, including Energy Audits, Energy Efficiency Workshops and Case Study Visits and grant funding through an innovative Best Practice Discount Scheme.
Business Research Academic Innovation Network (BRAIN) ERDF Priority Axis 1 £0.6 million ERDF	Sussex Innovation Centre	The Sussex Innovation Centre (SINC) is developing the Business Research Academic Innovation Network (BRAIN) along the economic growth corridor from London to Brighton to create new connections between start-up and early stage technology / new product businesses, as well as providing financial and business support for innovation SMEs.
Digital Research & Innovation Value Accelerator (DRIVA) ERDF Priority Axis 1 £0.5 million ERDF	University of Brighton	DRIVA is supporting 114 digital SMEs to engage in knowledge transfer and innovation, develop links with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and demonstrate the benefits of working with those knowledge base partners. The project seeks to overcome barriers to collaborative R&D for Creative, Digital and Information Technology (CDIT) sector SMEs in the Coast to Capital LEP area.
Business Hothouse Programme ERDF Priority Axis 3 £5.5 million ERDF	University of Chichester	This project brings together a local partnership to deliver a suite of business support options to 500 SMEs at varying stages across the Coast to Capital area.
Brighton Research Innovation Technology Exchange (BRITE) ERDF Priority Axis 1 £5 million ERDF	Plus X	The BRITE project delivers 1,461sqm of high quality, managed innovation space within a BREEAM Excellent building at the heart of the £150m Preston Barracks mixed-use regeneration scheme. The innovation space is available to SMEs on flexible terms and provide shared access to state-of the art RD&I equipment and facilities, supplemented by access to advanced technologies at nearby UoB locations. 100 SMEs will benefit.
South East Export Grant Scheme ERDF Priority Axis 3 £0.8 million ERDF	DIT	This £18.7 million project is using £9.5 million of ERDF funding to support 1,794 businesses across the Southern areas of the country and to create 538 jobs. It has been set up to help SMEs export. The Coast to Capital element is to use £0.8 million to support 142 SMEs to export.
South East Gateway to Trade (SEGT) ERDF Priority Axis 3 £0.4 million ERDF	DIT	SEGT is a 20 month project to support SMEs to mitigate any new barriers or challenges they experience in trading internationally. 198 businesses with exporting ambitions will receive intensive assistance through 1-2-1 advice and a programme of activities to develop their export strategy and help them to grow their business internationally.

Fig 7. Contracted ERDF projects in the Coast to Capital area to March 2020

Priority Axis	Total £s 2014-2020 (ERDF)	Project	Project Status	Project Value £ (ERDF)	% Allocated	Allocation Remaining	% Remaining
	(At 0.90)		(As of 05/03/2020)				
PA1 - Promoting Research & innovation	£12,100,241	DRIVA	Live	£500,000			
		BRAIN	Live	£458,858			
		BRITE	Live	£5,000,024			
		Innovation Centre in Crawley	Full application Stage	£5,000,000			
		Research & Innovation Project	Full application Stage	£641,383			
	£12,100,241		Total PA1 Projects Value	£11,600,265	96%	£499,976	4%
PA3 - Enhancing the Competitiveness of SMEs	£11,840,709	Export ASEAN	Live	£1,075,601			
		South East International Business Growth (SEIBG)	Live	£608,000			
		Hothouse Business Support Programme	Live	£5,488,500			
		South East Export Grant Scheme	Live	£750,000			
		South East Gateway to Trade	Live	£350,000			
		DIT National Call - Extension	Full application Stage	£625,000			
	£11,840,709		Total PA3 Projects Value	£8,897,101	75%	£2,943,608	25%
PA4 - Supporting the shift towards a low carbon	£7,159,253	UTILISE Plus	Live	£500,000			
		Low carbon project	Full application Stage	£2,646,273			
		Cross LEP Low Carbon Project	Full application Stage	£2,930,262			
		Solar Power Project	Full application Stage	£1,021,058			
		Small grants and energy audits - project extension	Full application Stage	£471,934			
	£7,159,253		Total PA4 Projects Value	£7,569,527	106%	-£410,274	-6%
	£31,100,203		Total ERDF Projects Value	£28,066,893	90%	£3,033,310	10%

Fig 8. Contracted and pipeline ERDF projects in Coast to Capital in March 2020

3. Provide good quality, relevant information and advice to ensure that the calls and project development processes that meet the aims of the ESIF Strategy for ERDF and the LEP Area Strategy

Throughout the project, Call specifications were written in line with the national ERDF Operational Programme, and Coast to Capital LEP’s ESIF strategy and Strategic Economic Plan: “Gatwick 360”



ERDF Priority Axis 1: Innovation and how it linked with Gatwick 360 Priority 5: Pioneer innovation in core strengths

Despite the LEP area strengths in digital, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing before this ERDF programme there was little in the way of funding awards for research centres aligned for new technologies in the area. There had also been

limited current engagement by local Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with Higher Education Institutions and local private sector centres of expertise, even though there were several within the LEP area and there appeared to be a market failure in terms of the required levels of technology intensive innovation and Research & Development (R&D) being achieved.

Gatwick 360 Priority 5 aimed to help Coast to Capital based Research & Innovation (R&I) sector SMEs with:

- Accessing the equipment needed to meet their potential
- Securing investment capital
- Building partnerships with big businesses
- Accessing essential technology and maker space

The ERDF programme had an aim to create or develop innovation space for innovation sector SMEs and this issue was addressed directly through the successful tender of the £10 million (£5 million ERDF) Brighton Research Innovation Technology Exchange (BRITE) project, led by Plus X. This was the creation of a brand new innovation space in Brighton.

A further £10 million (£5 million ERDF) innovation space in Crawley is also currently in the pipeline for the Coast to Capital area. The DRIVA and BRAIN projects both assisted innovation businesses through consultation, and a further project in the pipeline will enable further linkages and opportunities for SMEs through working with local Universities.

ERDF Priority Axis 3: Business Support and how it linked with Gatwick 360 Priority 2: Develop business infrastructure and support

There were significant variations in business performance, internationalisation and levels of entrepreneurship across the LEP area and priority sectors included industries where the business base was small and fragile.

The project aimed to develop longer term sector, cluster and supply chain development programmes which had proved to have a significant impact on regional and sub-regional economic growth elsewhere.

More widely, Coast to Capital knew that the coverage of business support services in the area was variable and, whilst in some areas such as export there were a wide variety of services, there was a lack of coherence and SMEs often found it difficult to access the right help.

A major thrust for the project and wider LEP activities was improving the connectivity and accessibility of business support services.

The initiatives taken forward and how they linked together can be broken down as such:

Gatwick 360 Priority 2: Develop business infrastructure and support aimed to:

Increase support to scale-up and growth potential businesses.

Develop a co-ordinated approach to business export support.

ERDF Priority Axis 3 Call aimed to attract projects that would:

Improve business support for all stages of SME development and growth.

Develop growth capacity and ambition for SMEs and strengthen their supply chains.

Provide intensive support for high growth SMEs.

Encourage internationalisation in SMEs.

A perfect example of an ERDF business support project the TA project has helped to fund in the Coast to Capital area is the Business Hot House Programme, led by the University of Chichester.

This 3-year £11 million (£5.5 million ERDF) project comprises of five key activity strands:

1. Productivity and Growth
2. Access to Finance and Investment Readiness
3. Monetisation of Innovation
4. Leadership and Management, Peer support and mentoring
5. Business Start Up Programme

Hot House brings together a delivery partnership of 10 sector specialists across the Coast to Capital LEP area to deliver business support to over 500 SMEs from start-ups to scale-ups, offering both grants and non-financial support.

In terms of internationalisation, this has been facilitated through the Export ASEAN and SEIBG projects, helping SMEs in the Coast to Capital area to export their goods.

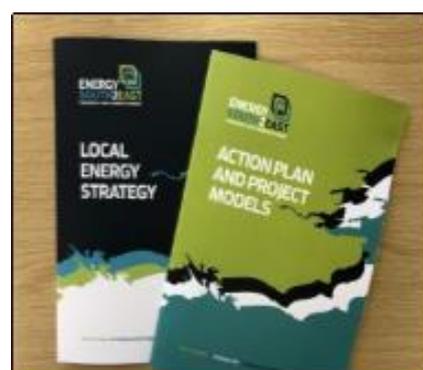
ERDF Priority Axis 4: Low Carbon and how it linked to Gatwick 360 Priority 3: Invest in sustainable growth

The project aimed to provide support for SMEs across the local economy to innovate, develop and deploy low carbon solutions, promote the transfer of low carbon technologies between sectors, support SMEs to engage in knowledge transfer with HEIs and Further Education Institutions (FEIs) to commercialise low carbon solutions, and to support the development and take up of low carbon and renewable energy in homes and businesses in the Coast to Capital LEP area.

Gatwick 360 Priority 3: Invest in sustainable growth aimed to implement the recommendations from the “Energy South2East” strategy

The Energy South2East strategy is a Tri-LEP venture between Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3, and SELEP, launched in March 2019, focussed on three key themes:

- Renewable energy
- Energy Efficiency
- Biomass



A series of stakeholder expert workshops run by Siemens were hosted at Coast to Capital to identify appropriate project models to deliver the aims of the “Energy South2East” Tri-LEP Energy Strategy and how they could link in with Coast to Capital’s existing strategies and funding sources (e.g. ERDF). The following project/programme was identified as follows:

ERDF Priority Axis 4	ERDF Investment Priority 4b	ERDF Specific Objective 4.2	(Coast to Capital ESIF Strategy) Coast to Capital Intervention Area	(Gatwick 360) Priority 3: Invest in sustainable growth	(Energy South2East Tri-LEP Energy Strategy) Project Model #10 “SME Support Programme”
Supporting the Shift Towards A Low Carbon Economy In All Sectors	Promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises	Increase energy efficiency in particular in SMEs, including through the implementation of low carbon technologies	Provide support for SMEs to innovate, develop and deploy low carbon solutions.		Expand the successful Kent and East Sussex LOCASE programme to the whole of South East England to develop the supply chain ready for clean growth and low carbon opportunities, by targeting grant funding into small businesses

Coming out of this process, and currently in the pipeline, is the £32 million (£16 million ERDF – of which circa £3 million is from Coast to Capital) 4-LEP, multi 21-partner ERDF PA4 project: “Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) 3”, which brings together three key requirements for the growth of a low carbon economy - “Stimulating Demand”, “Supporting Supply” and “Transferring Knowledge”. It will support 717 SMEs to improve their energy efficiency and support 713 SMEs to innovate and increase the adoption of low carbon technologies.

LoCASE will also provide whole place public sector innovative demonstrator projects that support behaviour change. These projects will include benefits such as increased energy efficiency, the use of renewable technologies and smart energy management in public buildings and infrastructure.

It joins the Utilise Plus project, which has now been extended and offers small grants to SMEs in West Sussex and Brighton & Hove to carry out carbon saving measures.

4. Support potential applicants and applications so that the MA receives high quality, relevant applications on which to base its decisions

A feedback survey was sent to a sample of applicants that received support through the project, with six responses collected between February and March 2020. The survey questions can be found in Annex A.

Of the six applicants that responded, four rated the overall support received through the TA project as ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’.

Figure 9 shows a breakdown of responses when beneficiaries were asked to rate the support they received across three categories; responsiveness, communication and accuracy of information, with all aspects being rated 4 or 5 out of 5.

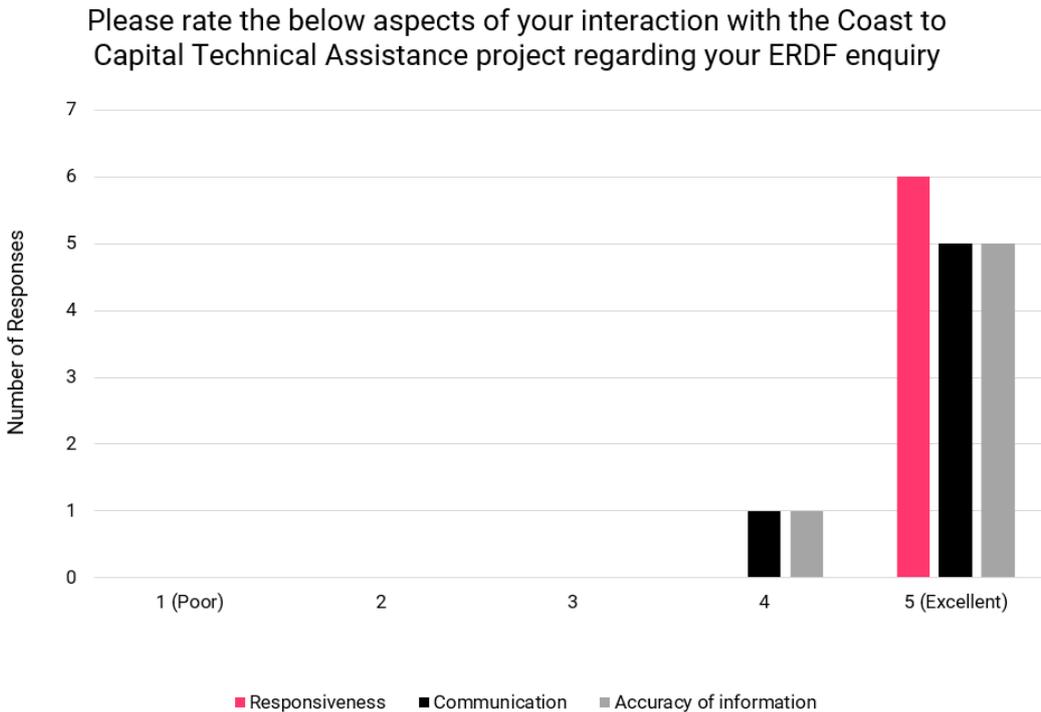


Fig 9. Feedback from project beneficiaries

Survey participants reported the types of assistance provided through the project included support to liaise with MHCLG, feedback on proposals, and advice on topics such as ERDF outputs and funding guidelines. Assistance was provided face to face, via telephone and by e-mail, with frequency varying from monthly to multiple times a week.

Participants reported that the project was able to support them in all areas they required, either directly or by referring or signposting to an alternative information source.

Anonymous feedback on the ERDF TA project from beneficiaries:

“My experience was very positive. The team were incredibly knowledgeable, responsive and supportive.”

“Without Matt’s help, we might have lost the funding at the beginning of the project. He was fantastic and really helpful. Hopefully there will be similar support if our extension application is successful as it is useful to have an intermediary between MHCLG and us to advocate for us when things got a bit tricky.”

“The outcome was ongoing support with the project and raising its profile. I think that the project certainly had an influence on successfully receiving funding but to what extent, I cannot say”.

5. Help to maintain partner engagement and promote the development of partnerships and networks

Technical Assistance partners were invited to attend and support at call launch events, and regular meetings between the ESIF Technical Assistance project team were held to discuss the progress of both ESF and ERDF projects.

Each call launch event incorporated time at the end of the agenda for networking, to encourage attendees to meet potential project partners and discuss opportunities for collaborative applications.

Towards the end of the project the online resource sharing platform Trello was used, where members of a particular board can share documents and messages. Event attendees were invited to sign up to be included on the Trello board at the end of the event. The Coast to Capital project team uploaded useful documents such as the event presentation slides, call specification and any relevant action notes from the Managing Authority. Members of the board could use the platform to start discussions around partnership and collaborative applications that they may not have had during the networking session.

The ERDF Project Manager at Coast to Capital had a central role in facilitating partnerships and building a network of stakeholders, meeting potential applicants and facilitating conversations between organisations where there might be an opportunity for a collaborative application.

Conclusion

Several external factors presented serious challenges to the performance of this project and the Coast to Capital (and National) 2014-2020 ERDF programme in general, including:

- The continued economic fallout and aftershocks from the UK recession of 2008-2012 - which continued to be felt through to 2014 (and beyond).
- Three UK General Elections (in 2015, 2017, and 2019) – resulting in three new UK Prime Ministers and Cabinet re-shuffles – prompting new Heads of MHCLG.
- “Brexit” - which began in June 2016, when the UK Public voted to leave the EU – up until December 2019, when the UK actually left the EU.

The UK General Elections and Brexit both paused progress in terms of ERDF calls for tender windows (for new project applications for funding) being delayed by the Managing Authority (MHCLG) and a delay in existing ERDF project applications being assessed, appraised, and contracted by MHCLG.

The aftershocks of the UK Recession - along with persisting political, social, and economic fears around Brexit and the future of the UK’s political leadership - created an economic environment wherein neither public nor private match funding for ERDF projects was readily available.

Many key match funders in the Coast to Capital area, such as the Local Authorities (Councils) and Universities, were being more cautious than usual, due to uncertainty around their own funding ruling out their being able to make any new financial commitments elsewhere.

UK Government public sector spending cuts - leading to cuts in Local Authority jobs - limited even the opportunity for using public sector staff time as match for ERDF projects.

Around this time the Coast to Capital’s ERDF allocation budget grew by £4.1m from £27m to £31.1m, due to the falling value of the GBP against the Euro caused by the Brexit negotiations.

Luckily these shifts in the economic conditions were recognised by MHCLG and so the programme rules were reformed accordingly – with new eligibility guidance being issued relaxing the rules around projects using private beneficiary match against ERDF, prompting a surge in ERDF call tenders for SME grant schemes.

A National overhaul of the ERDF programme’s application assessment, appraisal, and contracting processes at MHCLG coupled with an injection of extra staffing resource (including the assignment of a new Relationship Manager to Coast to Capital) improved the pace at which ERDF projects were being allocated, contracted, and funded – leading to a jump from 10% of Coast to Capital’s ERDF budget being contracted projects in March 2019, to 28% in October 2019 (a rise of 18% in 6 months).

As the 2014-2020 ERDF Programme draws to a close, the end result of its delivery in Coast to Capital appears to be much more optimistic than we would have dared to have hoped for back in the delivery years of 2016-2018, with Coast to Capital looking set to contract 90% of the £31.1m ERDF allocation budget to 15 delivery projects in the area.

Annex A - Online Beneficiary Feedback Survey Questions

**Coast to
Capital**



Coast to Capital ERDF Technical Assistance Project Feedback Survey

⊕ PAGE TITLE

This questionnaire is about your experience with the Coast to Capital ERDF Technical Assistance project team, regarding the ERDF project you put forward in the Coast to Capital area. Your input will be used to support the Summative Assessment (project evaluation) for the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance Project, responses from this survey may be used in the report but will be kept anonymous.

* 1. Contact Name

* 2. Organisation

* 3. What is the name of the ERDF project(s) you have put forward in Coast to Capital LEP?

* 4. What are the objectives of the project?

* 5. How did you hear about the support available through the Coast to Capital ERDF Technical Assistance project?

* 6. At what stage of your project did you engage with a representative from the Coast to Capital ERDF Technical Assistance team?

* 7. Which organisation did the representative work for?

- Coast to Capital
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Surrey County Council

* 8. Please rate the below aspects of your interaction with the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance project regarding your ERDF enquiry (1 = poor; 5= excellent)

	1	2	3	4	5
Responsiveness	<input type="radio"/>				
Communication	<input type="radio"/>				
Accuracy of information	<input type="radio"/>				

* 9. Describe the support you received through the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance project?

* 10. How frequently did you receive face to face support with a Coast to Capital Technical Assistance representative, and what was the typical duration of the meeting?

* 11. How frequently did you receive telephone support with a Coast to Capital Technical Assistance representative, and what was the typical duration of the call?

* 12. How frequently did you receive E-mail support from a Coast to Capital Technical Assistance representative?

* 13. Is there any support that you feel you needed that the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance project was not able to provide you with? Please provide detail.

14. If so, was the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance Project able to refer or signpost you to the support or information you needed? Please provide detail of where/who you were referred or signposted to.

* 15. How would you describe your overall experience of engaging with the Coast to Capital ERDF Technical Assistance project?

* 16. What was the outcome of engaging with the Coast to Capital Technical Assistance Project, and to what extend did the project influence the outcome?

* 17. Please rate the support you received through the ERDF TA project (1 = poor, 5 = excellent)

Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
★	★	★	★	★