



**Minutes of the Growth Programme Board
11:00 19th March 2024
2 Marsham Street and Microsoft Teams**

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Programme Updates* *Agenda items marked * were*
3. ERDF/ESF Communications *accompanied by Board papers*
Update*
4. Future GPB Business/AOB
5. Thank Yous and Reflections
6. Close

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

1. **Jenny Dibden** welcomed Board Members and substitutes. She thanked colleagues for attending, including those who had travelled to London to attend the meeting in person. Jenny also highlighted that this would be the last GPB meeting, 10 years after the first one was held for these 2014-2020 programmes.
2. Jenny advised that apologies received would be recorded in the minutes. She also advised that the meeting would be recorded and transcribed. A lunch break of around 25 minutes had been incorporated into the agenda.
3. **Jenny** asked the board for any conflicts of interest - none were declared; adding that there was nothing on the agenda that would require members to recuse themselves.
4. **Jenny** invited board members to indicate any items they wished to include under Items for Information. No items were received. Members in the room were requested to raise their hands should they wish to make a point with those colleagues on Teams asked to put questions in the chat or put their Teams' hand up.

5. **Jenny** then respectfully requested that discussion remained focussed on the European programmes during the meeting. She then introduced the Programme updates item and handed over to David Malpass (DLUHC).

Item 2: Programme updates

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

6. **David Malpass** introduced the ERDF update. He ran through some performance headlines, including the overall programme commitment level achieved was £3.227 billion. There were 1,082 projects contracted overall, with 50% of projects extended beyond the initial 3-year period and 50% of projects running into the final programming year. He reported that as of 29 February, only 8 claims (out of a programme total of over 14,000) remained to be paid out.
7. He then ran through the slides, providing more details around delivery of outputs and a brief update on the evaluation of the programme. A comprehensive peer review process, required prior to any publication of evaluation reports, was ongoing.
8. David completed his part of the update by highlighting that the closure team, headed by David Read, was now active and ran through of some of the tasks still to be completed. These included the final ECPA, final A127 audits and the submission of the final closure pack.
9. DLUHC ERDF team members then ran through some programme highlights within specific areas/themes. **John Fuller** took partners through programme commitments and outputs achieved within the Research and Innovation area, also highlighting/sharing a couple of project case studies.
10. **David Read** then talked through commitments, achievements and some case studies around SME support and Financial Instruments. **Dave Krohn** talked through Low Carbon Support provided through the programme and **Sharon Shattock** brought the ERDF presentations to a conclusion with a look at some numbers and case studies relating to Capital Infrastructure projects supported through the programme. Slides supporting these items/containing further details were shared with members following the meeting and will also be available with meeting papers on GOV.UK.
11. **Jenny** thanked David and the other presenters and invited members to come forward with questions. **Joanne Knight** asked if each of the presenters had a favourite project they could highlight given that it was a moment to be proud of (recognising that this could be like asking a parent to pick out their favourite child). **David Read** agreed with the favourite child analogy but did highlight his pride in

financial Instruments in particular, especially as they were set to continue. He also touched on the relationships you build with projects when you know the stories that sit behind them, from appraisal through delivery – every project had its own merits.

12. **Alison Gordon** asked how the team were planning to ensure the evaluation of the programme along with the robust processes and achievements were shared? Tom Wood responded that the team were working through a rigorous clearance process required before the third and final evaluation piece could be published on GOV.UK. Part of that process would involve the development of a dissemination plan, both internally and externally. **David Krohn** added that in his new role within DLUHC the department was working to mature its delivery capability (from the processing of business cases to the closure of projects) and the learning from ERDF would be incredibly valuable.
13. **Pernille Kousgaard** made the point that control of funding was being picked up locally (rather than within central Government) enforcing the need for shared learning and the development of a common funding framework.
14. **James Newman** asked how the team were planning to promote the success of the ERDF programme to Ministers so that the benefits of including private sector representation were acknowledged James also asked how long, output monitoring would be expected? On the first question Jenny Dibden responded that the evidence held would be fed into future spending reviews. On the second query, David Read highlighted that Final Implementation Report (FIR) must be submitted by February 2025. During 2024 there remained a few projects where outputs would still need to be captured. In relation to FIs (Financial Instrument), there remained four years for money in ESCROWS to be invested so the closure team would be monitoring progress on that, as well as the floor space delivered through the Urban Development Fund.
15. **Huw Edwards** added that while successes should be celebrated there was also a need to learn from the things that did not go so well. Examples raised included flood schemes and rural broadband, **Tom Wood** stated that learning about what worked is a key output from the evaluation, with some further work ongoing. **David Read**, commented that on PA5 ERDF had helped to ensure that some of those projects had been able to progress. Some had not been able to complete within the timescale of the programme because they were such long-term projects, and the environment agency were looking for partners to help manage those projects to a satisfactory conclusion.

European Social Fund (ESF)

16. **Clare Bonson** introduced the ESF programme update, which she stated would be a walkthrough of the story of the European Social Fund programmes' highs and lows, looking at the people behind it and its achievements and perhaps most importantly the impact it has had. Clare then ran through some headline figures – 2.3 million inactive/unemployed helped in total.
17. **Pete Long**, reflecting that it had been a far different programme to that delivered in 2007-13, took members through a set of slides highlighting some key programme highlights (these slides were shared with members by email and were set to be published alongside the meeting minutes and papers on GOV.UK).
18. **Mark Burns** continued the presentation, with a forward look into 2024 and beyond and a headline that they will have spent at least 99% of funds available would be spent by the end of the programme, with the programme exceeding all its targets for disadvantaged groups. He then ran through some of the activities/actions still to be completed, including final claims checks/payments, a final payment application, the submission of the 2023/24 accounts, the production of the FIR ready for submission in early 2025 and the completion of programme closure. He then ran through some project examples, closing with some figures showing that the programme had exceeded all of its targets for disadvantaged groups.
19. **Clare** thanked everyone around the table and within the GPB more broadly for the vital part they had played in the success of the programme – support, constructive challenge and holding the MA to account and acting as the voice of the grant recipients and participants. She asked that these thanks were passed onto sub-committee representatives and recipients themselves. This was followed by the showing of some short grant recipient films (Clare highlighted that there are plenty more available on YouTube).
20. **Nick Campbell** then introduced **Thea D'ambra and Katelin Archer (ESF analysis team)** who took members through the ESF programme evaluation, in particular at the quantitative impact analysis side and looking at outcomes in particular around unemployed, inactive and employed participants. They also talked through some of the cost benefit analysis. It is planned to publish the analysis on the DWP research series page on GOV.UK later this year. Questions and observations relating to the ESF programme were then requested.
21. **Pernille Kousgaard** observed that ESF had recently been through a difficult phase which they had come through with flying colours. **Helen Millne** agreed with Pernille and went on to commend the team on their flexibility which had allowed

hers and many other projects to be granted change requests which allowed them to be successfully concluded.

22. **Peter Matthijs** reflected on some of the challenges and successes of the programme and, seconding those comments, **Gregorio De Castro** added that everyone around the table had been remarkable in delivering the programme. He then asked where colleagues saw the biggest challenges being (within employment, education, skills and social inclusion) going forward with ESF funding no longer available. **James Newman** responded stating that career development was vital as was the need to support people in making the right education decisions. **Clare Bonson** highlighted that she had read a study stating that almost 99% of children now entering the school system will be employed in jobs which either do not exist now or will be radically different. Building flexibility into younger people/the working population and ensuring coordination across the country was vital. Clare added that the team were working hard to draw together the lessons learned, to support future policy makers.
23. **Huw Edwards** (who declared a vested interest in that his wife had worked on both BBO and YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) programmes) continued the conversation by stating that there were certain groups of people who remained difficult to bring into the workforce. **Pernille Kousgaard** agreed, highlighting an issue with excluded groups and an issue with people not upskilling while they are in work. A national programme with uniform standards was important but there needed to be local flexibilities. **Helen Millne** added that there was a need for a cohesive view in relation to upskilling and lifelong learning.
24. **James Newman** then asked if there were any comparisons being made (or which could be made) with the current / just completed programmes and their predecessors or other similar national programmes. Nick Campbell stated that while some comparisons, even between similar sized programmes do have their difficulties, the DWP analysis of ESF does build in comparisons of this type.

The meeting then broke for lunch, which was taken from 13:05 to 13:30.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

25. **Emma Friend** presented the EAFRD item, stating that the team were focused on closing the EAFRD programme. In summary, across three rounds of RDPE £155 million had been awarded to 968 projects. Spend to date was £152 million growth programme funding and £52 million of broadband funding. 5,130 jobs have been created (exceeding the December 2020 target of 1,055)

26. **Emma** closed her item by highlighting some of the projects funded through the programme, including Hagrid's Hut Themed Accommodation in Yorkshire and Baboo Gelato in Dorset, who make award winning ice cream. She then invited questions.
27. **Jan Thornton** asked whether the evaluation/lessons learned from the EAFRD programme were being shared with the those managing the Rural England Prosperity Fund. **Emma** responded that they are plugged in with them and have shared case studies and various insights but that they will ensure the programme evaluation is shared with them.

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

28. **Michael Johnson** took members through a final summary of the EMFF programme stating that the programme had closed on December 31st 2023 and they were now just managing out the final payments. 1578 projects had been funded through the programme which had spent £77 million EMFF and £12 million of national funding.
29. He ran through in detail the types of projects supported through the programme and how some of these areas of intervention had impacted the fishing industry. They are now moving into a phase of monitoring and evaluating projects to enable outputs to be confirmed.
30. Looking ahead, he stated that closure activities would continue through 2024 and a final statement of spend and complete accounts were on course to be submitted in July 2024. Post Project Monitoring will continue beyond 2024. Michael closed by reflecting that the programme had been a huge success.

Item 3: ERDF/ESF Communications Update

31. **Rob Martell** led this item, the paper for which had been jointly prepared by ERDF and ESF and shared with GPB colleagues ahead of the meeting.
32. **Rob** took members through the purpose of the presentation and the communications activities delivered by both managing authorities during 2023, including the annual information activities for each programme. These had included GOV.UK updates, programme booklets, MA and partner evaluation communications and targeted bulletins.
33. He then talked through the 2024 Annual Communications Plan, explaining it had been shared in writing late with GPB members in 2023 to provide the opportunity

for comment ahead of its adoption. It includes much of what was delivered in 2023 although there is an additional need for the suitable archiving of GOV.UK pages no longer required. Questions were then invited.

34. **Huw Edwards** asked how the impact of the communications work was being measured and went on to ask to what extent these communications are reaching the public. **Rob** highlighted as an example of impacts that against the stated aim of supporting projects in effective closure there had been huge reduction in the number of days on average it took projects to submit due claims. On reaching the public, Rob acknowledged that reaching the public was not always simple (or delivered in a vacuum) and often, the public are reached most effectively via local partners and projects.
35. **Pernille Kousgaard** observed that GOV.UK could be a difficult platform to navigate asking if anything could be done to display programme information more effectively. **Tom Wood** acknowledged this, and advised work was being done to map how final evaluations and summative assessments could best be displayed. **Rob** added that work would be done by the MAs over the course of 2024 to ensure programme achievements were communicated. **Helen Millne** highlighted that an element of press activity supporting this work could be effective.

Item 4: Future GPB Business/AOB

36. **Jenny Dibden** introduced this item, highlighting that while this was the last scheduled GPB meeting, there would remain the need for members to be available to review/clear the FIRs in late 2024/early 2025, with any other items or issues requiring clearance by written procedure.
37. **Jenny** highlighted that the closure team arrangements for each of the programmes had been covered in the programme updates provided earlier in the meeting and closed this item by asking if there were any AOBs – there were none.

Item 5: Thank Yous and Reflections

38. Colleagues from MAs, the EC and other GPB members offered their final thoughts and reflections on the European Structural Fund programmes in a positive final discussion.

Meeting closed: 15:00

Chair:

	Sector/Organisation Representing	Attending (Y/N)	Substitute For
Jenny Dibden Director, Community Investment and Funding Services	DLUHC	Y	

Board Members (full and advisory):

	Sector/Organisation Representing	Attending (Y/N)	Substitute For
David Malpass Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Y	
Helen Millne The Women's Organisation	Voluntary/Community Sector	Y	
Jo Dobson Coventry University	Higher Education	Y	John Lathom
James Newman Sheffield City Region	LEPs	Y	
Carol Botten Network for Europe	Voluntary/Community Sector	N	
Alison Gordon Greater Manchester Combined Authority	LEPs	Y	Simon Nokes
Natasha Waller LEP Network	LEPs	Y	
Dr Huw Edwards Thames Valley Berkshire	LEPs	Y	
Pernille Kousgaard Liverpool City Region	SUD	Y	
Cllr Philip Atkins Staffordshire County Council	Local Authorities	Y	
Cllr Peter Thornton Cumbria County Council	Local Authorities	Y	
Carmen Gonzalez-Hernandez European Commission	EC	Y	
Kris Magnus European Commission	EC	Y	

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Joanne Knight European Commission	EC	Y	
Peter Matthijs European Commission	EC	Y	
Gregorio De Castro European Commission	EC	Y	
Janet Thornton Rural and Farming Network	Rural	Y	
Richard Powell Chair Wild Anglia	Local Nature Partnerships	Y	
Emily Kent Cornwall Council	Cornwall & Isles of Scilly	Y	
Martin Rodgers International and Europe Engagement Team	Department for Energy, Security and New Zero	Y	
Richard Davies International and Europe Engagement Team	Department for Energy, Security and New Zero	Y	
Clare Bonson ESF Division	DWP	Y	
Pete Long ESF Division	DWP	Y	
Mark Burns ESF Division	DWP	Y	
Michael Johnson EMFF	MMO	Y	Adam Kennedy
Sarah Purvis European Programmes	GLA	Y	Alex Conway
Emma Friend EAFRD Division	DEFRA	Y	

Additional Attendees / Observers:

Name	Sector/Organisation	
Rob Martell Growth Programme Board Secretariat	DLUHC	Growth Programme Board Secretariat/Presenter
Sean Hughes Growth Programme Board Secretariat	DLUHC	Growth Programme Board Secretariat
Nicholas Campbell ESF Division	DWP	Presenter
Thea D'ambra ESF Analysis	DWP	Presenter
Katelin Archer ESF Analysis	DWP	Presenter
David Read Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Presenter
Sharon Shattock Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Presenter
David Krohn Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Presenter
John Fuller Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Presenter
Tom Wood Communities and European Programmes	DLUHC	Observer
Joanna Henderson ESF Division	DWP	Observer
Carolyn Hyde ESF Division	DWP	Observer
Peter O'Reilly ESF Division	DWP	Observer
Carolyn Hyde ESF Division	DWP	Observer
Rachel Sylvester ESF Division	DWP	Observer

Apologies:

	Sector/Organisation	Sending a Substitute?
Simon Nokes Greater Manchester Combined Authority	LEPs	Yes, Alison Gordon
John Lathom Coventry University	Higher Education	Yes, Jo Dobson
Alex Conway European Programmes	GLA	Yes, Sarah Purvis
Adam Kennedy EMFF Team	MMO	Yes, Michael Johnson
Cllr Albert Bore Birmingham City Council	Local Authorities	No