

FEBRUARY 2007 – EDITION 1

ANGUS COUNCIL

EUROPEAN E-ZINE

This e-newsletter is intended to give local businesses and Angus Council staff information about European Union actions that may have direct relevance to their current and future work. Entries are brief, but hopefully sufficient to allow you to decide whether an item is of relevance. Links to more detailed information and suggested action points are given.

produced by the External Funding Team, Economic Development Division, Infrastructure Services Department

CULTURE

Summary: It is proposed that 2008 will be the **Year of Intercultural Dialogue** with a €10m budget. There will be further discussions on the proposal at government level in November.

Actions: further details are available at www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications

DEREGULATION

Summary The Competitiveness Council has agreed to simplify legislation in the area of packaged goods. The agreement, if confirmed by the European Parliament, will mean free sizes for pre-packed products except for wines and spirits, for which the current existing fixed sizes have been streamlined. This would mean the replacement of 25 different national rules and two EU directives on nominal quantities by one single EU directive. This is another step to deliver on the Commission's work programme to simplify EU legislation under the Better Regulation initiative.

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, said: "This proposal is a small but necessary step to change the image of the EU as an over-regulating busy-body. It sends a clear and positive signal that the European Union is serious about cutting red tape."

Actions: Full information is available from [Europa Rapid Press Release](#)

EMPLOYMENT

Summary: The European Commission has launched a broad public debate on the need to review current labour law systems so that they are in step with the modern world of work. With 4 out of 10 EU workers now on non-standard contracts or self-employed, reality is rapidly outpacing regulation in the European workplace. The discussion paper (Green Paper on 'Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century') will ask Member States, employers and workers' representatives how labour law at EU and national level can help the job market become more flexible while improving security for workers (the 'flexicurity' approach).

Action: The closing date for this Consultation is 31st March 2007.

ENVIRONMENT

Summary: In 2007 the Commission will issue a Green paper on Post 2012 Climate Change to help identify areas where action is needed at Community level to support adaptation to the effects of climate change.

[Priority substances under the Water Framework Directive](#)

Summary: In July 2006, the Commission adopted a proposed Directive setting environmental quality standards for the priority substances which Member States must achieve by 2015, to ensure "good chemical surface water status"

The Water Framework Directive sets out a "Strategy against pollution of water" and [outlines the steps to be taken](#). The first step of the strategy was the establishment of a [list of priority](#) substances. The list identifies 33 substances or group of substances, which have been shown to be of major concern for European Waters. Within this list, 11 substances have been identified as priority hazardous substances which are of particular concern for the inland, transitional, coastal and territorial waters. These substances will be subject to cessation or phasing out of discharges, emissions and losses within an appropriate timetable that shall not exceed 20 years. A further 14 substances were identified as being subject to review for identification as possible "priority hazardous substances".

Implications: water pollution by any of the named substances will become illegal and local authorities are likely to be playing a major part in ensuring that they are phased out in time.

Action: if relevant to your work, take note of the new directive – check out the identified substances, whether they are used by the Council or any contractors etc. Inform relevant contacts of the content of the Directive.

WASTE ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT DIRECTIVE (WEEE)

Summary: Directives [2002/95/EC](#) on *the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment* and [2002/96/EC](#) on *waste electrical and electronic equipment* are designed to tackle the fast increasing waste stream of electrical and electronic equipment

In order to prevent the generation of hazardous waste, Directive 2002/95/EC requires the substitution of various heavy metals (lead, mercury, cadmium, and hexavalent chromium) and brominated flame retardants (polybrominated biphenyls (PBB) or polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE)) in new electrical and electronic equipment put on the market from 1 July 2006.

Implications: Producers will be responsible for taking back and recycling electrical and electronic equipment. Consumers will be able to return their equipment free of charge.

Action: If this is of relevance, read the Directives. Check out consumers rights in order to advise them where required.

Response: The European Commission wants contributions to a range of questions on schemes under the waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) Directive.

BATTERIES DIRECTIVE

Summary: New EU rules on the collection and recycling of old batteries will come in to effect in 2008. Local councils will not bear the cost of collection and recycling of household batteries. A target of collecting 25% of all used batteries by 2012 and 45% by 2016 has been set - at present this is 4% in the UK.

Action: Councils will be encouraged to offer collection services to meet targets.

IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF EC ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

There is a need to bring together all the different approaches to improve the implementation of environmental legislation in member States. This will be progressed in 2007.

ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY DIRECTIVE

Summary: The UK government has issued a consultation on options for implementing an EU Directive which strengthens the 'polluter pays' principle for environmental damage.

Implications: Under the environmental liability Directive, companies that threaten or cause environmental damage will be held responsible.

The proposed Environmental Liability Directive is aimed at the prevention and remedying of environmental damage - specifically, damage to habitats and species protected by EC law, damage to water resources, and land contamination which presents a threat to human health.

Action: This consultation package may be of interest to:

- All businesses and other occupational activities that can cause environmental damage;
- Landowners, local governments and the legal profession; and
- Others with an interest in environmental protection legislation.

To access the consultation visit <http://communicate.navyblue.com/forward/Sm-4-49-983-3-1454-1273>
The deadline for comments is 16 February 2007.

ENERGY

Summary: Energy features heavily in the 2007 work programme for the European Commission. In 2007 they will present a far reaching energy package including the first Strategic Energy Review for Europe. There will also be a renewables road map, an internal market report on energy liberalisation, a review of the Emissions Trading Scheme, a proposal on carbon capture and storage and energy technology plan. They will also bring forward a Green paper on options for EU climate change and prospects for international cooperation post 2012.

Strategic Energy Review for Europe – The aim is to establish the key elements of an energy policy for Europe encompassing sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply. It will provide a long term strategy for the EU and individual member States in order to ensure consistency.

HEALTH – MENTAL HEALTH GREEN PAPER

Summary: The EU green paper on mental health has had an amendment added which acknowledges that local councils have an integral role to play in a future EU mental health strategy. The EU mental health Green Paper recognises that local government can support patients within their local communities and bring together different approaches to mental health service delivery.

Implications; this gives councils more say in mental health issues, fits with community planning health strategies

Action: – Read the [LGIB submission](#) on the mental health green paper for the key role that local councils have in the field of promoting education about mental health issues, promoting good health, supporting mental health sufferers through services and physical environment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Summary: The European Parliament has approved new measures to regulate the use of fireworks. These rules standardise the sale and safety of fireworks across the EU.

- Category 1 (safest) fireworks would not be available to consumers below 12 years old
- Category 2 fireworks: 16 years
- Category 3: 18 years.
- Category 4 fireworks -- which present a high hazard -- would only be available to persons "with specialist knowledge".

Action: For more info visit: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/063-735-333-11-48-911-20061129IPR00713-29-11-2006-2006-false/default_en.htm

Summary: Chemical manufactures and importers will have to register their substances with the EU over the next eleven years when the Regulation on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH) comes into force as of 1 June 2007. It will not be fully up and running however until 2018.

The law will mean checks on some 30,000 substances used in everyday items and will help ensure there are better records of chemicals that might be dangerous to public health and the environment. This Regulation will replace more than 40 separate existing pieces of legislation.

Action: For further info go to http://ec.europa.eu/reach/index_en.htm

LEGISLATION

Summary: A new guide to EU legislation affecting local authority services has been published by the LGIB. 'At your service' gives an overview of the EU's internal market, public procurement and state aid rules.

Action: Visit http://www.lgib.gov.uk/publications/2006/At_your_service.html to download it, or use this direct pdf link



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MARITIME POLICY

Summary: The Green Paper Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union was adopted by the Commission in June 2006 and is out for consultation until June 2007. The Communication from the Commission will summarise the results of this consultation, draw political conclusions and present follow up actions.

PROCUREMENT

Summary: The European Commission has published guidance on how public bodies should advertise lower value contracts and those that do not fall within the scope of the main EU public procurement. The Communication does not create new legal obligations but only interprets the existing case-law of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). The Communication suggests best practices which may be applied in order to comply with the internal market requirements confirmed by the ECJ case-law.

Action: Visit [Commission website](#) to view "Commission interpretative communication on the Community law applicable to contract awards not or not fully subject to the provisions of the Public Procurement Directives "

GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Summary: The Commission will issue a Communication in 2007 on the implementation of national strategies based on EU wide target setting and regular benchmarking and monitoring.

SERVICES DIRECTIVE

Summary: The EU Parliament has now approved the Services Directive, a law designed to remove barriers that prevent businesses operating in other EU states. This will apply to most services, from garages and supermarkets to management consultants. The Directive also covers some public services such as leisure and cultural services and waste processing. This will not apply however to education, health and social services however and these will remain subject to national rules. If the original plans had gone through services such as care homes and health could have been open to competition from foreign firms without the necessary safeguards in place.

Implications: This will allow more businesses from abroad to set up in the UK or UK businesses to operate abroad. Local authorities will be able to enforce trading standards that protect customers and are understood by local people. EU Member States now have three years to implement the Directive.

Action: If this is of relevance, read the Directives and check out the implications for your business.

SOCIAL POLICY

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Summary: A guide to help local and regional authorities cope with the impact of demographic change and an increasingly ageing society has been developed by the Committee of the Regions (COR), Age Concern England and AGE, the European Older People's Platform. The 'age proofing toolkit' looks at the implications of population trends on regional economies, development, infrastructure and governance.

Action: Visit [COR website](http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/index.htm) <http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/index.htm>

MIGRANT WORKERS

Summary: The EU is stepping up its efforts to introduce a green card for migrant workers which will be at the forefront of attempts to promote lawful routes into Europe's labour market. Under one scenario, a so-called EU blue card would grant a highly-qualified worker the possibility of seeking a job in any EU country, although the exact details have still to be nailed down.

STATE AIDS

Summary: Financial support of up to €200,000 from local authorities to businesses granted over any three year period, will not be considered state aid and will be exempt from EU requirements of prior notification to the European Commission, according to new rules. The so called 'de minimis' Regulation, which came into force on 1 January, is part of the Commission's efforts to simplify state aid rules and to concentrate on enforcing its rules for the most severe cases. In contrast to the previous Regulation, this new measure covers the road transport sector and agricultural products. However, road transport still has a €100,000 threshold as many companies in this sector are very small.

Implications: Local authorities can now issue state aid funding of **up to €200,000** before informing the EU, under the proposals

Action: Visit

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1765&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> for further details.

Summary: New guidance on using state aid for risk capital investment in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) has been issued by the European Commission. The changes will make it easier for SMEs to access finance in the early stages of their development. The reforms intend to provide Member states with a clear, comprehensive and predictable set of rules which will allow them to support initiatives contributing to the Union's cohesion and competitiveness. The objective of less and better targeted aid will be pursued in all state aid fields. Changes will consequently be made to facilitate the targeting of aid towards areas contributing to growth and employment, notably R&D and innovation and risk capital. At the same time, rules will also be adapted to ensure high-quality public services, modern transport and energy infrastructures, and social and regional cohesion.

In addition, the reform will tackle the practice and procedures of state aid, to make it more efficient, more transparent, and to improve its enforcement by Member States. The Commission intends to simplify, consolidate and extend as much as possible the use of block exemptions and adapt its assessment to the impact that aid has on competition and trade.

Implications: If you have been involved in state aids before, you will have to review the new rules.

Action: Visit [Commission website](#)

Summary: The European Commission has also issued new rules on granting state aid in the agricultural sector. The rules will make it easier to provide help to farmers in need from public funds.

Action: Visit: <http://communicate.navyblue.com/forward/Sm-4-49-983-6-1454-1300> for full details and access to the rules

And finally:

The EU and the World

Faced with major challenges and responsibilities, the European Commission recognises the need for a strong European Union, in order to protect its interests, and to promote prosperity, democracy and human rights around the world.

The Commission has recently launched a new web portal, "The EU and the World," accessible through the Europa server.

This site provides a range of information accessible to businesses and citizens alike,

- The latest official press releases, speeches and key documents of the European Commission in the field of External Policies
- Details of forthcoming events in this area
- Links to detailed information on the external policies administered and implemented by the Commission
- Easy access to its organisation
- Direct links to key information services on these policies.

The web portal "The EU and the World" can be found at the following address,
http://ec.europa.eu/world/index_en.htm