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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.

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COHESION POLICY

The fourth Cohesion Forum, which will mark the launch of a EU-wide public consultation on the future of cohesion policy, will take place in Brussels on 27 and 28 September 2007 and will provide a first opportunity for over 800 stakeholders from across the EU to discuss the shape of cohesion policy beyond 2013.

The programme for the event is based largely on the findings and issues presented in *Growing Regions, growing Europe — Fourth report on economic and social cohesion*, which the European Commission adopted on 30 May 2007. In particular, it will focus on some of the questions put forward in the report, on how the Union's cohesion policy should adapt to new challenges and how its delivery could be improved in order to maximise its impact in the future. It will consider the experience of preparing for the 2007–13 programmes and will look at how regions can respond to emerging issues associated with industrial restructuring, demographic change and climate change. In this context, it will look at how cohesion policy can further develop an integrated and more flexible approach to growth and jobs, taking account of the diversity of EU territories and the challenges of social cohesion.

Recognising the need for efficient management of cohesion policy programmes, the forum will also examine the management systems and the optimum allocation of responsibility among Community, national and regional levels within a multi-level governance system.

Complementarity with other national and Community policies will also be an important area of consideration, as well as supporting new opportunities for cooperation between regions, both within and outside the EU..

Action: go to

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/4thcohesionforum/index_en.cfm?nmenu=1

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Food additives

Summary: The European Parliament has highlighted the need for the introduction of legislation on food additives, in order to safeguard both human health and the environment.

Action: Go to <http://www.euractiv.com/en/health/food-additives-come-strict-health-scrutiny/article-165391>

Metrication

Summary: The European Commission confirmed it has abandoned its policy to force the UK to use metric measurements. The highly unpopular move was initiated in 2000 and aimed to standardise a system of measuring across the EU. Britain had first mooted plans to convert to an all-metric system in 1965 but the EU proposal caused outrage among traditionalists with market traders gaining criminal convictions for selling produce in imperial measurements.

The European Commission now proposes that the UK be allowed to use imperial measurements indefinitely, with all future decisions being left to the British government. The concession granted by the Commission to the UK had been due to end in 2009.

After months of Commission consultations with British industry, trade and consumer groups, a European Commission spokeswoman concluded that Brussels was responding to "serious confusion" amongst British consumers and traders and wanted to "put a full stop on this issue. This means that measurements such as pints and miles are in no way under threat from Brussels and never will be".

Mercury

Summary: The European Parliament has adopted the Commission's proposal to phase out the use of mercury in measuring devices such as thermometers, blood pressure gauges and barometers over a 2 year period. It is expected that the Directive will enter into force in the near future.

Action: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1055&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Summary: The EU Commission published a new Communication 'Solidarity between the Generations' on 10 May 2007. The Communication's main objectives are the implementation of demographic renewal and the promotion of solidarity in the families and for the families. There are references to a new Communication on quality of services for elderly and elderly abuse (November 2007), and impact on infrastructure ('town planning') in 2008. Other initiatives in 2007-2008 include the second stage of consultation of social partners on reconciliation; tackling child poverty in OMC; social inclusion and social reality stocktaking.

Action: There is opportunity to participate with the Commission on this. Go to: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_situation/demography_en.htm

Migrant Workers

Summary: The 2nd Edition of *Handbook on Integration* from the EU Migration Policy Group is now available. National Contact Points are responsible for communication with relevant stakeholders

and for requesting examples of best practice for inclusion, although experience across the Member States has been that this has not been done thoroughly enough so far. The next edition of the handbook is likely to be available in 2010.

Action: Go to http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/2007/handbook_2007_en.pdf

ENVIRONMENT

Vehicles

Implementation of the end of life vehicles directive has been 'messed up' in the UK, according to MEP Chris Davies. Unscrupulous dealers in the UK are failing to remove potential contaminants such as oil, brake fluid, tyres and airbags before scrapping vehicles. In the UK, old cars must be taken to one of 1200 ATFs licensed by the environment agency. Car owners should be issued with a 'certificate of destruction' to prove that the vehicle has been de-polluted, scrapped lawfully and road tax is no longer due.

Estimates suggest that 55% of vehicles are scrapped illegally in the UK with many local illegal dismantlers undercutting the ATFs by collecting cars and disposing of them illegally.

Energy efficiency

Summary: The European Parliament has approved a regulation which will implement the new Energy Star ecolabel within the EU. It requires EU and national authorities to apply demanding energy efficiency criteria in the public procurement of office equipment.

Action: Further information is available at <http://www.eu-energystar.org/en/index.html>

Climate change

Summary: Climate change is among the main environmental priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the EU, which began on 1 July. The main focus of Prime Minister José Sócrates will be representing the EU at global climate talks in Bali in December, but he also hopes to broker initial political agreement among European governments on integrating aviation into the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and on reducing climate emissions from road fuels.

Climate Change Adaptation:

Summary: After long delays, on 29 June, the European Commission published its long awaited Green Paper on Climate Change adaptation. The consultation opened on this on 3 July and will run until 30 November. One of the key findings is that "Adaptation is local and mitigation is global". Local Authorities are recognised to be in the frontline to stimulate behavioural change. Some degree of climate change is going to happen regardless of the limitation policies that are now being pursued. It goes on to suggest that approximately 20 – 30 % of plant and animal species assessed so far are likely to be at increased risk of extinction if increases in global average temperature exceed 1.5 – 2.5°C. A White Paper on Climate Change adaptation with detailed EU proposal is expected for 2008.

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations

As a result of new legal obligations on the electrical industry which came into force on 1 July more waste products will be recycled and not consigned to the scrap heap. Last year 2 million

tonnes of electrical waste was generated in the UK alone, enough to fill the new Wembley Stadium six times over.

The introduction of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations means that manufacturers, importers and retailers of domestic appliances, office equipment and other goods will be required to ensure the proper disposal of old products. Business and household consumers buying any electrical product will be offered free take-back of old products, either in store, through collection or at a local amenity site. Putting the responsibility on the electrical industry will mean the eventual recycling of products being considered at design stage, will incentivise the industry to provide consumers with more options for returning old products, will encourage the reuse of products and will help create a valuable market in recycled materials. The Government has worked closely with industry to set up the various components of a flexible and viable national electrical waste system. This includes:

- * A Distributor Takeback Scheme (operated by Valpak) to provide retailers with a cost-effective alternative to in-store takeback.

- * A network of designated collection facilities (DCFs) with 1,450 collection points nationwide. 1050 are public collection points and a further 400 are private. The approval of 37 producer compliance schemes to administer the collection, treatment and certification of waste on behalf of producers.

- * The appointment of enforcement bodies. The Environment Agencies will ensure producer compliance, while the Vehicle Certification Agency will police retailer compliance.

- * Approval of 142 approved authorised treatment facilities (AATFs)

The new system offers flexibility for both producers and retailers to find the best means to meet their obligations. Producers can either join one of the 37 compliance schemes, or they can set up their own. Retailers may join the Distributor Takeback Scheme or they can make their own arrangement via in-store take-back.

The Regulations complement and make use of the existing civic-amenity capacity to handle electronic waste. This is already one of the most robust in Europe, successfully processing fridges, televisions and large kitchen appliances for a number of years.

The UK Government will continue to support awareness-raising amongst existing and new producers, to encourage them to participate fully in the UK WEEE system. There will also be an independent WEEE Advisory Body to assess the effectiveness of the Regulations and keep them under review. The Regulations will be enforced proportionately by the environment agencies. The priority is to get unregistered producers into compliance schemes so that they can make an appropriate contribution to the system. However, enforcement action will be taken against any business that seeks an advantage by flouting the rules.

The EU Commission is currently reviewing the WEEE and a reviewed WEEE is expected to be tabled by the Commission early next year.

Action: For more information on the WEEE Regulations visit:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/innovation/sustainability/weee/page30269.html>

EU Environmental legislation

Following an earlier agreement between the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament will be able to scrutinise for the first time the implementation of key EU Environmental legislation. Eventually they can also block implementing decisions taken by the Commission. One of the existing pieces of legislation concerned is the Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). Therefore on 11 July MEPs voted to modify the WEEE Directive to include in it the provisions that will allow them to scrutinise how the Commission implements the WEEE directive. There are another six environment pieces of legislation to be modified to introduce this new "regulatory procedure with scrutiny". The current Portuguese Presidency of the EU recently told MEPs that the Council is happy to introduce this procedure in four of them without further delays, whereas others will require more detailed discussions with the European Parliament.

Waste Framework Directive

The revision of the crucial Waste Framework Directive is likely to be a bumpy ride for the remainder of the year and early 2008. The EU Parliament is asking for stricter requirements beyond the Commission proposal such as a waste hierarchy, very strict limits for municipal incinerators, separate waste collection schemes by 2015 and 50% of municipal waste to be recycled by 2020. Unsurprisingly, the Member States sitting at the Council want fewer EU targets, lower incineration thresholds and is concerned with limiting waste shipments across the EU Member States.

One crucial aspect for Scottish Local Authorities is that the technical definition of Energy recovery to be applicable to municipal incinerators was compatible with the facilities already in place in Scotland.

Shipment of Waste

The European Commission revised regulation on the shipment of hazardous and non-hazardous waste came into force on the 12 July. The aim of the new rules is to prevent the illegal dumping of hazardous EU waste in developing countries. Member States are required to carry out spontaneous inspection and to report any wrongdoing as well as carrying out physical checks. The safe shipment of waste is one of the Commission's highest environmental priorities as it is a "means to prevent large amounts of electronic and electric waste and end-of-life vehicles being shipped to and dumped in developing countries".

Renewable Energies

The European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee has voted in favour of an own initiative report, presented by Danish MEP Britta Thomsen which is a good indication that the Parliament will largely support the European Commission's forthcoming directive on renewables (expected in September 2007). The report backs the Commission's proposal of providing a legislative framework to facilitate a 20% share for renewable energies by 2020, whereby member states provide national action plans (NAPs) with specific sectoral targets depending on the particular conditions of their territory. The Parliament's report also calls on the Commission to provide actual legislation on renewables for heating and cooling instead of giving Member States the opportunity for more flexibility on determining targets.

EQUALITY

500 cities, regions and municipalities have now signed the Council of European Municipalities and Regions' charter for equality of women and men in local life. This Charter aims to promote the balanced participation of women and men in the decision making process. The CEMR charter is the continuation of the 'town for equality' project which aimed to collect best practice cases of gender equality in European local governments as well as at setting up a methodology to help local representatives achieve true gender equality in their municipalities.

So far, there have been no UK signatories. Statistics from the Equal Opportunities Commission show that in the UK, only 21% of Local Authority Chief Executives are women. Amongst councillors there is some variation, in Scotland and Wales only 22% of councillors are women, whereas that figure reaches 32% in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Action: For more information, please visit the [CEMR website](#).

FLEXICURITY

Summary: The European Commission unveiled its Communication, "Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security", on 27 June 2007. It proposes the establishment of common principles of flexicurity to promote better jobs by combining flexibility and security for workers and companies.

With increasing European and international integration as well as new technologies in communications and an ageing European society, Flexicurity has been viewed as a policy strategy that will deal with the challenges and changes that globalisation brings by enhancing the flexibility of labour markets and all that this encompasses while at the same time improving employment and social and income security for workers. The concept of Flexicurity, coming from the Danish social model, has emerged as a potential policy solution in the context of the renewed EU Lisbon Agenda for Growth and Jobs. In order to achieve the Lisbon objectives of more and better jobs, new forms of flexibility and security are needed, for individuals and companies as well as for Member States and the Union, while at the same time managing change and social risks and modernising the different European social models.

However, the Commission makes it quite clear that it doesn't aim for a One Size Fits All approach. Rather, it sets out a number of typical pathways to help Member States draw up their own national strategies for flexicurity and learn from each other's experiences and best practices. For example it is seen that, Flexicurity Pathway 3: tackling skills and opportunity gaps amongst the workforce, can be seen as a model to be tailored to the UK where the key challenge to face is large skills and opportunity gaps amongst the population as well as the promotion of upward mobility. As would be expected, EU employers associations tend to welcome the flexibility aspect of this proposal whereas social stakeholders are concerned about possible reductions on social protection.

In principle, the UK Government supports the Commission's new flexicurity proposals as it agrees with more labour flexibility which they see as not necessarily being a threat to social protection standards. There will be a Conference on Flexicurity in September and the Council of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers will adopt a set of common principles by the end of 2007.

The EU financial instruments for Cohesion – and in particular the European Social Fund for the 2007-2013 programming period – can contribute significantly to the budgetary aspects of flexicurity, for example through training at company level, lifelong learning programmes, or the promotion of entrepreneurship.

Action: Further information on this is available from the External Funding team.

GOVERNANCE

Following the political agreement of EU leaders on 21-22 June at the European Summit for a new EU Reform Treaty, this semester's Portuguese Presidency of the EU launched the Inter Governmental Conference (IGC), i.e. the diplomatic negotiations on the new text, on Monday 23 July. The text of the draft Treaty keeps the safeguards for Local Authorities that were included in the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty, namely, the recognition of the principle of Territorial Cohesion (that legitimises the existence of EU Structural Funds) and the Principle of Subsidiarity whereby the EU should respect the powers of local authorities and enables National Parliament and the Committee of the Regions to challenge EU proposals that infringe that principle. Also, a new "*Protocol on Services of General Interest*" recognises the need for the EU to respect local

authorities' provision of social services. Detailed technical negotiations among Member States officials will follow now until 18-19 October. EU leaders will sign the new text in December and then it will have to be ratified by all Member States before the June 2009 European elections.

Implications for Local Authorities

Although the outcomes of the June 21-22 European Council will have to be confirmed at the Inter-governmental Conference (ICG) this Autumn – and the devil is in the detail of the wording that will come out of the negotiation- in the main it seems that the "*local acquis*", i.e. the concessions for an enhanced role of LAs that was gained during the negotiations of the ill-fated Constitutional Treaty will be largely kept:

- **Subsidiarity Principle to remain:** The *Reform Treaty* expected to retain it as one of the EU guiding principles. That means that decisions should be taken at the level as close to the citizen as possible.
- **The principle of Territorial Cohesion to be kept:** This principle legitimises the existence of EU Structural Funds in the future.
- **More scrutiny powers national parliaments:** The Protocols on the Subsidiarity Principle and the Role of National Parliaments as agreed in the draft Constitutional Treaty will be kept and enhanced.
- **Commission shall consult widely before tabling legislation.** It also shall take into account the regional and local dimension of the draft legislation and justify the need of EU action.
- **Early Warning procedure for National Parliaments:** A national parliament or one of its chambers will have 8 weeks (it was six in the draft Constitutional Treaty) to tell the European Commission that a draft proposal does not comply with the principle of Subsidiarity.
 - If a draft EU legislative act is contested by a simple majority of the votes allocated to national parliaments (1 point per chamber), the Commission will have to re-examine the draft act, which it may decide to maintain, amend or withdraw.
 - If then the Commission sticks to its proposal, then 55% of the Member States at the Council of the EU or a majority of MEPs can still bring the proposal down on grounds that it violates the subsidiarity principle.
- **Role of the Scottish Parliament:** The draft Constitutional Treaty stated that devolved Parliaments that pass primary legislation, like the Scottish Parliament, can be consulted by the Member State Parliament [Westminster] the scrutiny of subsidiarity. It remains to be seen if this clause will be kept at the IGC and if Westminster will establish a consultation mechanism with the Scottish Parliament.
- **Committee of the Regions** is expected to be allowed for the first time to bring a cause to the European Court of Justice for the purpose of protecting their prerogatives, and the principle of subsidiarity in particular. (former Art. I-365.3)
- **The role of Local Authorities in providing Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) has been recognised:** A new "Protocol on services of general interest" will be added. This protocol will assure that the EU will respect the role of national, regional and local authorities in providing SGEI taking into account the different systems in place across the EU and assuring a high level of quality and universal access. This principle should help Local Authorities to defend its role in providing SGEI in future Commission proposals

MARITIME POLICY

Summary: On July 10 the European Parliament voted its Report to the consultation on the European Commission Green Paper on a future EU Maritime Policy.

Key issues for Local Government in the Parliamentary Report:

MEPs have voted for measures that coincide with the views held by Scottish Local Authorities, in particular:

- Recognition of the crucial role that Local Authorities play in maritime affairs. Participation of local stakeholders in future policy developments is therefore essential for an effective Maritime Policy.
- Need for a coordinated approach of the policies and actions between EU authorities, national governments, and regional and local authorities; maritime issues are best deal in a context of Multi-Level Governance.
- Integrated approach to maritime policy: MEPs support that, for the first time, maritime policy areas such as shipyards, shipping, ship-safety, tourism, fisheries, ports, marine environment, research, industry, spatial planning and others are tackled in a mutual independent way in this Green Paper
- Networks and partnerships between local authorities of different member states and with private and voluntary sector stakeholders, specially regarding the improvement of quality of life in coastal areas.
- Comprehensive System of Spatial Planning: MEPs welcome this proposal from the Commission but recognises that spatial planning needs to be also flexible both at national and local level. Spatial Planning is one of the key actions to make sure that the challenges sustainability of fisheries, port expansion, aquaculture, Natura 2000 sites and the fight against climate change are met in a coordinated way.
- Local economies need to be supported to promote sustainable maritime tourism, coastal heritage, as well as fish farming and remote fishing communities.

Next steps:

Following the results of the public consultation and the recommendations of the Parliamentary and CoR reports, the Maritime Affairs Commissioner Joe Borg will present a series of future proposals on EU maritime issues on **10 October**.

- **Maritime Green Paper:** *European Parliament recognises crucial role for Local Authorities*

On July 10 the European Parliament voted its Report to the consultation on the European Commission Green Paper on a future EU Maritime Policy. Scottish MEPs have been particularly active in the parliamentary debates. The COSLA Brussels Office briefed them on a number of occasions about the main concerns regarding role of Scottish Local Authorities in this future EU policy framework. MEPs have demanded that the role of Local Authorities in any future EU Maritime Policy proposals should be recognised, as they are crucial in issues such as planning, sustainability of ports and coastal communities, etc. Moreover, MEPS call for a holistic approach to maritime affairs in which Local, National and European governance level work in a coordinated way. The Commission will table fresh proposals on 10 October.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Following a summer of natural disasters across Europe, the EU is considering a standing force to combat major emergencies.

Britain has endured a series of floods. There have been heat waves in southern and Eastern Europe and Greece was fighting forest fires which killed more than 60 people. Nine countries responded to the Greek authorities' plea for help, with European countries deployed personnel and equipment within 48 hours.

The current disaster relief system, European Union Solidarity Fund, which Britain has applied for this summer to help with the clean up operation in the aftermath of the floods, is slow and bureaucratic with financial aid coming approximately a year after the application. The European Commission is now looking at setting up a permanent civil protection force to respond to natural disasters, and possibly also terrorist attacks and industrial accidents.

RURAL POLICY

The European Commission is due to adopt in November, its Communication which has been drafted in preparation of the 'health check' of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) scheduled in 2008. The Communication suggests the examination of reinforcement of direct aid decoupling; simplification of the Single Payment Scheme; increase in obligatory modulation; preparation for the suppression of milk quotas beyond 2015; and search for crisis management instruments which should replace public intervention.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

The European Parliament's Industry Committee has backed a first reading report on the proposal to create a European Institute for Technology (EIT). However, MEPs have called for 'innovation' to be included in the name of the institute and have proposed that two or three "Knowledge and Innovation Communities" (KICs) run pilot projects to test the Institute's feasibility over a period of two or three years. Although KICs will have "substantial overall autonomy to define their internal organisation and working methods", MEPs will have the power to lay down some basic rules for their composition: Every KIC should consist of at least three partner organisations, situated in at least two different participating states and including at least one higher education institution and one private company. The institute's overall budget of an estimated €2.4 billion for the first six years is to be funded from a combination of private and public sources.

STATISTICS

(21 August 2007) Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, has launched a new "Tables, Graphs and Maps" (TGM) interface on its website. Based on 1,300 predefined and continuously updated tables, users are able to create customisable graphics and maps for use in publications and presentations. The current test version presents economic, social and sustainable development indicators which can be adapted depending on the countries, date and data classes covered. For the regions, tables and maps can be created in the "long-term indicators" section on data such as population density, gross domestic product and unemployment rates. All tables, graphs and maps are available in English, French and German. First time users can take a demo tour and are requested to give feedback on the new service.

Action: For more information go to <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/DEMO>