

Research report

European Social Fund Evaluation of sustainable development and green jobs

by Peter Dickinson and Richard Lloyd



DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

Department for Work and Pensions

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Peter Dickinson and Richard Lloyd

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vi
The Authors.....	vii
Abbreviations.....	viii
Summary.....	1
1 Introduction.....	6
1.1 Background.....	6
1.2 Study aims and key questions.....	7
1.3 Methodology.....	8
1.4 Structure of the report.....	8
2 European Social Fund and sustainable development and green jobs.....	9
2.1 European Social Fund cross-cutting themes.....	9
2.2 The sustainability cross-cutting theme.....	10
2.2.1 <i>Sustainable development under ESF</i>	10
2.2.2 <i>Horizontal and vertical themes</i>	10
2.2.3 <i>The ESF sustainable development strategy</i>	11
2.2.4 <i>Progress with implementation</i>	12
2.3 Supporting sustainable development.....	13
3 Implementation of European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs.....	14
3.1 Government Office perspectives.....	15
3.1.1 <i>Promoting the sustainable development cross-cutting theme</i>	15
3.1.2 <i>Promoting green skills and green jobs</i>	17
3.1.3 <i>Looking forward</i>	17
3.2 Co-Financing Organisation perspectives.....	18
3.2.1 <i>The sustainable development cross-cutting theme</i>	18
3.2.2 <i>Vertical mainstreaming</i>	21
3.2.3 <i>Looking forward</i>	22

4	Delivering European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs – the horizontal dimension	23
4.1	The telephone survey and project characteristics	23
4.2	Developing sustainable development policies and plans.....	26
4.3	Meeting ESF requirements.....	27
4.4	Monitoring policies and plans	29
4.5	Impacts	29
5	Delivering ESF sustainable development and green jobs – the vertical dimension.....	31
5.1	The project case studies.....	32
5.2	Overview of vertical activity	34
5.2.1	<i>Project aims, objectives and activities</i>	34
5.2.2	<i>Project target groups</i>	38
5.2.3	Project development.....	38
5.2.4	<i>Project partnerships</i>	39
5.3	Delivery models.....	40
5.3.1	<i>Employer and learner engagement</i>	40
5.3.2	<i>Assessing needs</i>	41
5.3.3	<i>Service delivery</i>	42
5.3.4	<i>Completion and progression</i>	44
5.4	Project performance	45
5.4.1	<i>Performance against target</i>	45
5.4.2	<i>Project impacts</i>	45
5.4.3	<i>Evidencing demand</i>	49
5.4.4	<i>Delivery challenges</i>	50
5.5	Effective practice and success factors.....	51
6	Conclusions and recommendations.....	53
6.1	Conclusions	53
6.1.1	<i>Progress towards the achievement of the sustainable development mainstreaming plan</i>	53
6.1.2	<i>Defining and understanding green skills within ESF, and how ESF is contributing to providing green skills</i>	54

6.1.3	<i>Effectiveness of provider sustainable development policies, and the incorporation of sustainable development into procurement approaches</i>	55
6.1.4	<i>Good practice in encouraging sustainable development</i>	56
6.1.5	<i>The influence of sustainable development policy and delivery on mainstream provision</i>	56
6.2	Recommendations	57
6.2.1	<i>Horizontal</i>	57
6.2.2	<i>Vertical</i>	57
Appendix A	Case study summaries	60
Appendix B	Study methodology	80

List of tables

Table 4.1	Telephone survey project sample	25
Table 5.1	Case study projects	33
Table 5.2	Case study project activity.....	35
Table A.1	Project Delivery Strands.....	72

List of figures

Figure 4.1	How the cross-cutting theme was introduced.....	27
Figure 4.2	Main drivers for policy development	28
Figure 4.3	Impacts of ESF requirements.....	30
Figure A.1	Overview of GreenWays to Work.....	64
Figure B.1	Summary of study methodology	80

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The Authors

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Each member of the study team also contributed to the production of the final report, namely **Steph Charalambous**, **Michael Lawrie**, **Heather Rose** and **Naomi Williamson**.

Abbreviations

BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CIEH	The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
CFO	Co-Financing Organisation
CMO	Contract Management Officer
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
E2E	Entry to Employment
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESF1 and ESF8 forms	Forms used to monitor ESF project performance
FdSC Carbon Management	Foundation Degree in Carbon Management
GO	Government Office
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
ITM	Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming
ITT	Invitation to Tender
MA	Managing Authority
MCS	Micro Generation Certification Scheme
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OCN	Open College Network
QCF	Qualification and Credit Framework
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDP	Regional Development Plans
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
SME	Small to medium sized enterprise
TA	Technical Assistance
WAMITAB	Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board

Summary

Introduction

GHK Consulting Ltd was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to evaluate the sustainable development cross-cutting theme, and the promotion of green jobs, within the European Social Fund (ESF). The study focused on the environmental aspects of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme.

The study aimed to provide recommendations for the remainder of the current programme, and to inform the new programme post-2013, exploring progress towards the achievement of the England Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan. The study investigated the extent to which ESF projects were:

- complying with European Commission requirements regarding minimising any negative impact of their delivery on the environment – ‘horizontal mainstreaming’; and
- supporting the development of ‘green’ skills and jobs as a core focus of their activities – through ‘vertical mainstreaming’.

The study methodology featured three stages of activity:

- Stage 1 – Inception and Scoping: comprising a series of tasks including the review of relevant documents and interviews with the Managing Authority and national stakeholders.
- Stage 2 – Fieldwork: featuring a programme of qualitative fieldwork, including:
 - consultations with Government Office (GO) staff in each region involved in/responsible for promoting sustainable development under ESF, and with 20 Co-Financing Organisations (CFOs);
 - a telephone survey of 50 ESF projects, including those with experience of both ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ aspects of sustainable development; and
 - case studies of 11 ESF projects where the sustainable development theme was interpreted vertically, including consultations with project staff, partners and participants.
- Stage 3 – Analysis and Reporting: the analysis of the information collected throughout the study and production of draft and final project reports.

Sustainable development and green jobs under European Social Fund

The ESF is a key component of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, aiming to reduce differences in prosperity across the European Union (EU) by increasing employment and providing targeted support to build a more highly skilled and more competitive workforce.

While the primary focus of ESF is to raise prosperity by increasing the labour supply and promoting skills, the current ESF programme also features two cross-cutting themes – gender equality and equal opportunities, and sustainable development. The sustainable development theme focuses on ensuring that ‘...the implementation of the programme will take account of environmental concerns and respect the principles of sustainable development’. Both previous and the current ESF programmes have required projects to consider both the sustainability of their activities and of the environment in which they are delivered, to meet regulatory requirements and to fulfil the commitment to sustainable development in the operational programme document.

The current programme places greater emphasis on sustainable development, through a renewed Sustainable Development Strategy¹, the creation of an ESF Sustainable Development Sub-Committee to report on progress, enhanced efforts to communicate the importance of compliance with ESF environmental protection requirements ('horizontal mainstreaming'), and the provision of support through the development of a sustainable development toolkit and workshops for GO and CFO staff. The Strategy also promotes activity to support the development of skills for sustainable development, improve 'sustainability literacy' and green jobs through project activity ('vertical mainstreaming').

Key findings

The findings of the study are summarised below:

Government Office and CFO perspectives

Staff in all eight GOs, the London Development Agency, the 20 CFOs and with responsibility for the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) programme were interviewed, to explore their experiences of providing support for horizontal and promoting vertical mainstreaming.

The study found that:

- Understanding of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme was variable, from limited to detailed understandings, and with many requiring additional clarity around defining what sustainable development means.
- Monitoring of the horizontal aspect tended to be light touch, notably around implementing sustainability plans, which was often undertaken as part of the generic review process. CFO staff commonly reported wanting more support on how to monitor the theme effectively, and examples of good practice to help them benchmark practice.
- The majority of GO and CFO staff considered that the guidance materials produced by the Managing Authority (MA) were helpful, and developments such as the sustainable development toolkit and workshops for GO and CFO staff were widely welcomed. However, many considered that additional and on-going support would be useful, and that the GO/CFO workshops should be extended to providers.
- Comparatively few vertical projects were identified through the interviews and database searches, with fewer than 30 being funded under Competitiveness and Convergence (and an additional six ITM projects). Approximately, one in three of the CFOs interviewed had discrete sustainable development and/or green jobs dimensions, or had invited calls for such projects when commissioning.

Project experiences – horizontal mainstreaming

Projects' experiences of compliance with the horizontal theme were explored through a survey of 50 projects receiving funds under the Competitiveness, Convergence and ITM strands of the current ESF programme. The sample provided a cross-section of funded projects by region, priority, CFO, provider type and project size, and was split evenly between those delivering environmental/vertical services and others whose experience had been solely around compliance (horizontal).

¹ England and Gibraltar European Social Fund (ESF) Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan 2007-2013 (Updated January 2009).

The study found that:

- Virtually all the projects had sustainable development policies in place, although one in five did not have sustainable development plans. These policies and plans most commonly pre-dated the current programme, and were driven by requirements other than ESF. Nevertheless, compliance had provided positive impacts for projects including an increased awareness of the importance of minimising their environmental impacts, had raised the profile of sustainability issues within their organisations, and led to similar approaches being applied to non-ESF services.
- Projects' tended to have a practical (e.g. recycling, transport) rather than a holistic view (e.g. embedding sustainable development practices) of sustainable development. While most were satisfied with the way in which sustainable development was introduced to them, one in five described being unclear what it meant. Projects' experiences of monitoring ranged from dedicated reviews and support to being an element in their broader review process.
- The increased profile of sustainable development in the current ESF programme had impacted on projects' awareness, priorities and practical actions. While half the projects were delivering vertical activities, half of those that were not thought that market opportunities existed but had not pursued them. More broadly, demand was reported for vertical projects in rural areas, the construction sector and in sustainable development organisational processes.

Project experiences – vertical mainstreaming

Projects' experiences of delivery under the 'vertical theme were explored in the project survey and in more detail through case studies with 11 'vertical' projects. The study found:

- Most of the vertical projects focused on addressing worklessness, increasing skills and exploiting market opportunities – and as such were typical of other ESF projects. Increasing environmental awareness and activities were the main wholly 'green' project types. The main drivers of project activity were a mix of environmental (organisational objectives) and practical (meeting identified need and filling gaps) factors.
- Client groups were also typical of ESF – including a combination of SME participants and their employees, unemployed individuals and those facing multiple disadvantages. The beneficiary 'journey' was also typical: featuring common steps including engagement; assessment; delivery and support; completion and progression.
- As with project activity, participant demand was also driven by practical (meeting legislation, reducing costs), attraction (outdoors manual work, exploiting market opportunities) and an interest in promoting sustainable development in its own right.
- The projects were at different points in their lifecycles, although the majority had met or were likely to meet their output targets. Impacts reported by the projects included:
 - for employers/employees – improved competitiveness; skills; career opportunities; environmental awareness, and business diversification;
 - for unemployed people – jobs; vocational, basic and employability skills; increased confidence and motivation; a sense of achievement; reduced social isolation, and increased environmental awareness; and
 - other impacts – meeting LAA targets; supporting regional priorities; new provision; networking, and improved environmental awareness.

- The main challenges identified were mostly generic, and included:
 - the economic climate;
 - the changing political agenda, rurality;
 - a lack of appropriate qualifications;
 - working with hard to help clients;
 - securing time away from work to train and tutor shortages.
- Key success factors were similarly generic, including: partnership working, experienced staff, and developing flexible and tailored provision. More specific sustainable development factors included: delivering outside rather than in classrooms; developing attractive, credible and evidence based interventions; and support from sector specialists.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The study concluded that in terms of progress with the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan:

- The profile of the sustainable development theme had been raised considerably in the current programme, following the increased emphasis from the MA and leading to enhanced commitment at all levels. However, understanding of what the theme meant in detail varied.
- Efforts to increase the knowledge and capability of MA and CFO staff to provide support have been successful, with the toolkit and training being seen as useful and valuable. However, ongoing changes in the ESF infrastructure risk losing these skills and experience – raising questions of resources for subsequent activity around the horizontal theme.
- While sustainable development has become a highly visible cross-cutting theme, a series of issues were identified:
 - the process followed by many CFOs to monitor the implementation of sustainable development plans was often light touch and piecemeal;
 - CFOs faced the challenges in monitoring, in the absence of quantified measures or good practice examples to measure provider progress against; and
 - despite efforts to promote vertical projects, comparatively few appear to have been funded, which are clustered in a few regions.

Other conclusions included:

- That there is an apparent lack of accredited qualifications in some sustainable development topic areas – which led several projects to develop new provision.
- That demand appears to exist for the services offered by the vertical projects – with the performance of the projects consulted to date suggesting that demand for their services exists. However, the small number of projects under the vertical theme means that it is not possible to draw conclusions about the level of future demand for services nationally.
- While for the most part providers reported having policies and plans in place prior to the current ESF programme, the impact of ESF on the development of policies and plans appeared to be limited. However, in some cases ESF requirements had served to maintain provider momentum and commitment to sustainable development, as well as stimulating their development where these did not exist previously.

Recommendations

The recommendations of the study focused on the remainder of the current programme period and into the next programme from 2013 on, included:

For the **horizontal** theme:

- Continue to support commissioners and providers in understanding the requirements for environmental sustainability under ESF, and in developing policies and plans.
- In the context of change in the national and regional ESF infrastructure, future support should include the use of the sustainable development toolkit, and a repeat of the training for GO and CFO staff, provided in the current programme. Extending the audience for the training to providers via local events should also be considered.
- Review the current approach to the monitoring of providers' sustainable development plans – again in the context of available resources given changes in the ESF infrastructure.
- Seek to develop provider networks focusing on sustainable development – on a virtual or physical basis and funded through Technical Assistance (TA).
- Provide good practice examples of sustainable development policies and plans – to allow CFOs and providers to benchmark policies and plans against the best.

For the **vertical** theme:

- Seek to increase the number of vertical projects in the current and next programmes by:
 - considering a discrete strand of activity in the next programme dedicated to sustainable development;
 - promoting sustainable development projects alongside other ESF projects in future guidance materials;
 - using guidance materials to emphasise the expectation that vertical projects will be actively promoted in the next programme round; and
 - working with CFOs to promote vertical projects so that they are included in future commissioning rounds.
- Ensure that new guidance materials provide a working definition of what constitutes green skills and jobs, and examples of current vertical projects to illustrate potential activities and what can be achieved for participants.
- Build upon the work undertaken by the vertical projects to develop new qualifications in sustainable development, and seek to influence the development of accredited qualifications at different levels.
- Provide access to specialist support and advice to help develop CFO strategies and prospectuses, where this is not available within the individual CFO.
- Explore the opportunity to utilise 'the environment' to support progress in other areas, for example exploring the role of the theme for engaging hard to reach clients, and promote effective approaches in new guidance materials.

1 Introduction

GHK Consulting Ltd was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to evaluate sustainable development and green jobs within the European Social Fund (ESF). The study aimed to explore progress towards the achievement of the England Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan², and the extent to which projects were:

- complying with European Union requirements regarding minimising any negative impact of their delivery on the environment – ‘horizontal mainstreaming’; and
- supporting the development of ‘green’ skills and jobs as a core focus of their activities – through ‘vertical’ mainstreaming.

The overall aim of the study was to provide recommendations for consideration in the remainder of the current programme period (alongside those from other elements of the mid-term review), and to inform the new ESF programme period from 2013 onwards.

1.1 Background

The ESF is a key component of the European Union’s (EU’s) Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. The aim of the programme is to reduce differences in prosperity across the EU, and so funding is weighted towards those areas of greatest need.

The programme has three broad objectives to:

- increase employment by providing training and support to unemployed and disadvantaged groups;
- provide targeted support to build a better and more competitive workforce; and
- reduce inequality and build a fairer society.

The current ESF programme was launched in 2007, investing some €3.1 billion of European funding between 2007 and 2013. The programme provides greater flexibility than previous rounds, comprising two main ‘objectives’ with broad priorities within each:

- The **Regional Competitiveness and Employment** objective – covering all areas of the country (apart from those eligible for Convergence funding), allocated according to economic need, unemployment/economic inactivity levels, and skill levels; and
- The **Convergence** objective – superseding the former Objective 1 programme, targeted at areas where productivity is below 75 per cent of the EU average, and applying to Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in England.

In addition, a series of projects have also been funded with the aim of developing new approaches across a series of common ESF activity areas. The Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand included a ‘skills for climate change’ strand in its activities, and projects supported strand were included in the study.

² England and Gibraltar European Social Fund (ESF) Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan 2007-2013 (Updated January 2009).

In addition to the specific priorities under the **England and Gibraltar ESF programme**, projects must also address two **cross-cutting themes**, namely gender equality and equal opportunities, and **sustainable development**. In terms of the sustainable development cross cutting theme, current and previous programme rounds have required projects to consider the sustainability of both the activities they provide **and** the environment in which they deliver them, to meet the regulatory requirements of the programme and to fulfil the commitment made to sustainable development in the operational programme document. Consequently, although the term ‘sustainable’ may apply to the continued impact of project activities on those participating in them, this study focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability.

1.2 Study aims and key questions

The main aim of the evaluation, as set out in the original invitation to tender, was to ‘*provide information on the evidence gap of how ESF is mainstreaming sustainable development and green jobs*’, with a focus on the ‘environmental’ element of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme. The study also sought to address a series of more specific questions, which required it to explore:

- progress towards the achievement of the aims and objectives of the ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan – and particularly:
 - Objective 1: the expression of a high level of commitment to sustainable development, with partners taking steps to reduce environmental impacts;
 - Objective 2: the development of capacity in key Managing Authority (MA) and co-financing organisation (CFO)³ staff to ensure sustainability is mainstreamed and considered in programme delivery; and
 - Objective 3: making sustainable development a highly visible cross-cutting theme, sustained throughout the life of the programme.
- the extent to which green skills have been defined and understood within the programme, and how, and the way in which, ESF is addressing the skills needs for a low carbon economy in terms of training people in ‘green’ skills;
- the effectiveness of provider sustainable development policies, and whether sustainable development is being incorporated horizontally into procurement approaches to influence ESF and other activities;
- potential recommendations for good practice in encouraging sustainable development at different levels of ESF; and
- how sustainable development policy and delivery is influencing mainstream employment and skills provision.

Finally, the study was intended to produce robust conclusions on progress, successes and areas of continued challenge in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan, with a view to informing the remainder of the current and subsequent ESF programming.

³ CFOs are public agencies responsible for the distribution of ESF funding, and for bringing together ESF and domestic funding for employment and skills so that ESF complements domestic programmes. The CFOs contract with the organisations or ‘providers’ that deliver ESF projects on the ground.

1.3 Methodology

The study methodology was designed to address the aims of the evaluation and the key questions posed, and to investigate both ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ dimensions of the sustainable development theme. The study methodology is described in Appendix B, but in summary followed a predominantly qualitative approach comprising of three stages:

- **Stage 1: Inception and Scoping** – which featured a series of preparatory tasks including a review of relevant documentation, a series of telephone and face to face interviews with key national and sectoral stakeholders.
- **Stage 2: Fieldwork** – which comprised:
 - telephone or face to face interviews with Government Office (GO) staff in each region, involved in or responsible for promoting sustainable development under ESF:
 - ~ telephone or face to face interviews with individuals responsible for ESF/sustainable development in 20 CFOs (including DWP, Skills Funding Agency and other organisations);
 - ~ a telephone survey of 50 ESF projects – focusing on their experience of horizontal and vertical aspects of the sustainable development theme as appropriate; and
 - ~ case studies with 11 ESF projects where the sustainable development theme has been interpreted vertically – featuring interviews with project leads, key partners and where possible participating individuals and employers.
- **Stage 3: Analysis and Reporting** – including the analysis of the findings from the different elements of the study, and the production of draft final and final study reports.

1.4 Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the context within which the study is set, and introduces the national Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan and its key elements;
- Chapter 3 reviews the implementation of the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan from the GO and CFO perspective;
- Chapter 4 describes projects’ experiences of the horizontal dimension of sustainable development under ESF, based mainly on the survey of projects;
- Chapter 5 explores projects’ experience of the vertical dimension of the sustainable development plan, based primarily on the project case studies; and
- Chapter 6 provides our conclusions and recommendations.

The report also contains two Appendices:

- Appendix A – which provides summaries of the 11 project case studies; and
- Appendix B – which describes the study methodology.

2 European Social Fund and sustainable development and green jobs

This chapter provides a review of the background to the study and the context within which it is set, and introduces the sustainable development cross-cutting theme and the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan.

As the previous chapter described, the European Social Fund (ESF) is a key component of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, aiming to reduce differences in prosperity across the European Union (EU) by increasing employment through the provision of training and support to unemployed and disadvantaged groups, and by providing targeted support to build a better, more highly skilled and more competitive workforce.

2.1 European Social Fund cross-cutting themes

While the primary focus of ESF is to raise prosperity by increasing the labour supply and promoting skills, the current ESF programme also features two cross-cutting themes – gender equality and equal opportunities and sustainable development. The gender equality and equal opportunities theme ensures that the programme and all its activities ‘...comply with the relevant EU and UK legislation on non-discrimination and equal opportunities...with all programme partners being expected to maintain their public duty to promote equal opportunities according to the prevailing legislation⁴’.

The sustainable development theme focuses on ensuring that ‘...the implementation of the programme will take account of environmental concerns and respect the principles of sustainable development⁵’. Introduced in the 2000-2006 ESF Objective 3 programme, the current programme has seen an increased emphasis on sustainable development, with a focus on the three issues of:

- providing opportunities for everyone to fulfil their potential;
- environmental protection and enhancement through the delivery of projects; and
- providing the skills that businesses both demand and need, both now and in the future.

Building on the lessons from the previous ESF programme, where the environmental aspect of sustainable development was not always addressed, the current programme has seen an increased emphasis on this aspect of the cross-cutting theme.

⁴ England and Gibraltar ESF Convergence, Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013, DWP.

⁵ Ibid.

2.2 The sustainability cross-cutting theme

2.2.1 Sustainable development under ESF

The current and previous ESF programme rounds have required projects to consider the sustainability of both the activities they provide and of the environment in which they deliver them, to meet the regulatory requirements of the programme and to fulfil the commitment made to sustainable development in the operational programme document. While sustaining the positive benefits of funded projects is a key theme across all project activity, it is the environmental aspects of sustainability that have been explored in this study.

Within this context, and as stated on the ESF in England website, sustainable development can be defined as *'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'* (Brundtland Commission Report, *'Our Common Future'*, 1987)⁶. While recognising that sustainable development encompasses economic, social and environmental objectives, the current programme places greater emphasis on the environmental aspect, through a renewed Sustainable Development Strategy⁷, the creation of an ESF Sustainable Development Sub-Committee to review implementation and report on progress, and enhanced efforts to communicate the importance of projects complying with ESF environmental protection requirements and providing support to help them to do so.

In addition to ensuring that ESF training and employment activities are delivered in ways which minimise any negative impacts on the environment, the ESF Sustainable Development Strategy also seeks to promote activity within the programme to support the development of skills for sustainable development, improve 'sustainability literacy' and promote the development of green jobs through project activity. These two themes are referred to as the horizontal and vertical themes respectively.

2.2.2 Horizontal and vertical themes

The horizontal theme focuses on ensuring that projects supported by ESF consider the environmental impacts of the activities and services they deliver, and seek to reduce these as far as practicable. In line with Council Regulation 1083/2006, the UK National Strategic Reference Framework and as noted in the Sustainable Development Strategy, ESF providers (and their respective Co-Financing Organisations (CFOs)) are required to take steps to ensure that their activities are delivered *'in a way which minimises any negative impacts on the environment...as well as maximises positive impacts'*.

This 'horizontal' environmental theme is incorporated into ESF regional frameworks, CFO plans and individual application documents, and requires that within 26 weeks of contracting ESF providers will have:

- sustainable development policies in place – which will be followed in the delivery of their services; and
- developed sustainable development plans – again which will be implemented across their project activity.

These requirements apply to project lead partners only, and not to their subcontractors, although the expectation exists that the requirement will also be reflected in project sub-contracting arrangements. It is expected that compliance with ESF requirements will also influence lead provider behaviour, and that any new practices introduced will be followed in providers' work more widely.

⁶ http://www.esf.gov.uk/info_for_cfo_and_projects/sustainable_development_in_the_new_esf_programme.asp

⁷ England and Gibraltar European Social Fund (ESF) Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan 2007-2013 (Updated January 2009).

The horizontal theme is complemented by the **vertical** theme, which recognises the need for ‘*the UK to improve its knowledge and skills base in order to achieve a major shift in resource efficiency and the delivery of new products and services with lower environmental impacts*’⁸. The vertical theme is operationalised through the identification and funding of environment-specific projects, which aim to meet local and regional needs in terms of protecting or enhancing the environment, and supporting green jobs and skills to develop the environment as a business sector. Within this, Priority 2 of Competitiveness (and Priority 5 of Convergence) allows for a wide range of activities to be funded, including training in sustainable development, environmental management skills and in green technologies, including topics such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and recycling. In addition Priority 1 (Convergence Priority 4), which focuses on supporting unemployed, economically inactive, and disadvantaged individuals, can also support projects where sustainable development or environmental protection activities are a focus.

In addition to Competitiveness and Convergence, ESF also supports activities in the sustainable development field through the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) programme. This programme comprises a suite of projects, operating with transnational partners, which seek to identify innovative and effective practice across a six themes, ranging from Engaging Employers to Demographic Change, and including Skills for Climate Change. The Skills for Climate Change theme seeks to deliver innovative ways of addressing the skills gap to tackle climate change and promote sustainable development, and features six projects across England with partners from eight Member States.

2.2.3 The ESF Sustainable Development Strategy

The ESF Sustainable Development Strategy is encapsulated in the England and Gibraltar ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan⁹. Produced initially in 2008, and updated in January 2009, the Mainstreaming Plan sets the context for the mainstreaming of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme, to ensure it is firmly integrated into the planning, implementation and monitoring of ESF programming. The Plan provides a set of aims and objectives and an action plan to show how the objectives will be progressed.

The aim of the plan is ‘*to mainstream sustainable development so that the programme commitments and regulatory requirements are met and to encourage ESF providers to reduce any negative environmental impacts and promote positive environmental impacts through their delivery arrangements*’¹⁰. This aim will be achieved through five objectives, in summary:

- Objective 1 – That a high level of commitment to the promotion of sustainable development is expressed throughout the current ESF programme, and that partners understand the importance of this cross-cutting theme.
- Objective 2 – The knowledge and capacity of key staff in CFOs and Managing Authority (MA) will be developed to ensure the sustainable development theme is mainstreamed and that the environment is taken into account in programme delivery.
- Objective 3 – By December 2009, sustainable development will have become a highly visible cross-cutting theme, sustained through the remaining years of the programme.

⁸ England and Gibraltar ESF Convergence, Competitiveness and Employment Programme 2007-2013, DWP.

⁹ England and Gibraltar European Social Fund (ESF) Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan 2007-2013 (Updated January 2009).

¹⁰ Ibid.

- Objective 4 – The production of a national ESF sustainable development progress report for the national Programme Monitoring Committee, to demonstrate progress made.
- Objective 5 – By December 2010, a sustainable development evaluation project will be undertaken to assess progress in mainstreaming sustainable development and considering the short and long-term impact of the mainstreaming work.

The plan also provides a series of activities and the outputs and outcomes expected to result from them. Short-term outcomes include the enhanced skills and knowledge of staff in relation to sustainable development, improved communications, raised awareness around the topic of sustainable development and better informed decision making, with longer term outcomes including attitudinal change towards the environmental aspect of sustainability, the benchmarking of providers, the demonstration of commitment to the regulatory requirements and the momentum of the sustainable development theme being maintained.

The plan also recognises the experience of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme under the previous 2000-2006 ESF programme period. As previous research has shown¹¹, and initial consultations with programme stakeholders suggested, the cross-cutting themes are considered as one of the more vulnerable aspects of the ESF programme. Approaches to supporting sustainable development varied considerably in terms of the:

- levels of support provided by Government Office (GOs) to CFOs;
- integration of cross-cutting themes into CFO commissioning and monitoring processes; and
- incorporation of cross-cutting themes into regional documentation.

One key factor in mainstreaming sustainable development is to ensure that providers, and other members of the ESF infrastructure, are sufficiently aware and informed about the theme to respond to it. In many cases, the sustainable development theme was seen as focusing on the social and economic aspects, rather than the environmental. This is recognised in the Mainstreaming Plan, which states that *‘The new approach also acknowledges the contribution that ESF partners already make towards key elements of sustainable development such as promoting social inclusion and supporting a sustainable economy by promoting jobs and skills. The focus of this mainstreaming plan is, therefore, on promoting the environmental element of sustainable development’*.

2.2.4 Progress with implementation

Alongside the development of the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan, an ESF Sustainable Development Sub-committee was formed to oversee the delivery of the plan and receive progress reports. Regional ESF committees also review progress with sustainable development mainstreaming on an annual basis, which are aggregated to inform annual national progress reports, which are presented to the national Programme Monitoring Committee and feature in the Annual Implementation Report for the programme.

The most recent progress report¹² described achievements against the five objectives of the Mainstreaming Plan, which suggested that good progress was being made across each area, with several new interventions being reported to have been effective in ensuring commitment, enhancing capacity within GOs and CFOs and raising awareness of the importance of the theme. The report also identified a series of implications resulting from the Comprehensive Spending Review of 2010,

¹¹ For example, GHK’s recent research into in-work training under ESF, GHK Consulting Ltd (2010). *Support for In-Work Training Research*. Report No. 666, DWP.

¹² ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Progress Report 2010, ESF Division/DWP, November 2010.

including reviewing the membership and usage of the ESF sustainable development network forum, the decision to close the regional network of GOs, and considering cost effective ways in which training and support for sustainable development can be provided in the second half of the current programme.

2.3 Supporting sustainable development

Individuals at all levels within the ESF infrastructure have responsibilities for supporting the mainstreaming of sustainable development under ESF. The MA is responsible for setting and communicating expectations for both the horizontal and vertical aspects of sustainable development mainstreaming through guidance materials and awareness raising activities. GO staff are responsible for promoting sustainable development to CFOs in their regions, acting as a conduit for guidance from the MA, providing additional support as appropriate, and monitoring progress. CFOs are responsible, through their strategic planning and commissioning processes, for promoting the vertical theme and ensuring that providers comply with the horizontal theme, as well as providing support to ensure providers without sustainable development policies and plans are able to develop them.

In parallel with the increased emphasis placed on the environmental aspects of sustainable development within the current programme through the Mainstreaming Plan, additional efforts have been made available for GO and CFO staff, and to potential ESF providers. These included:

- national and regional programme guidance – with clearer and more explicit references being made to both the horizontal and vertical sustainable development themes and their importance;
- the provision of training to GO and CFO staff – provided by Ecotec Consulting through a series of events in all nine regions, with a focus on the horizontal theme; and
- the development of a ‘sustainable development toolkit’ – by Ecotec Consulting, building on an earlier model developed during the previous programme period to provide as useful resource to support compliance with the horizontal theme.

GO and CFO experiences of their particular roles are reviewed in the following chapter.

3 Implementation of European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs

Main points:

- Interviews were undertaken with staff in all nine Government Offices (GOs), 19 of the 29 Co-financial Organisations (CFOs), and responsible for the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) strand.
- Understanding of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme by GO and CFO staff ranged from a limited understanding to a broad definition which included sustainable jobs and communities.
- Monitoring of progress by both GOs and CFOs was light touch and tended to be through generic reviews.
- Most GO and CFO staff were satisfied with Managing Authority (MA) communications about the cross-cutting theme, although more and ongoing support would be useful.
- CFO staff would like more support in how to monitor the cross-cutting theme and examples of good practice in order to benchmark providers.
- Discrete projects focusing on green sectors, skills and jobs were directly promoted through one-third of CFOs.

This chapter reports on the interviews undertaken with GO European Social Fund (ESF) leads and with a sample of CFO staff:

- **The GO interviews** – were undertaken with 11 GO staff in each of the nine English regions, primarily by telephone but in some cases on a face-to-face basis. The interviews covered a range of topics including: how the sustainable development cross-cutting theme had been promoted, comparisons with previous programmes and the other cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities, how projects were addressing green jobs, skills and sectors, guidance and support, impacts and suggested future developments. In the South West the GO interviews covered both Competitiveness and Convergence activities in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
- **The CFO interviews** – some 29 organisations have been awarded CFO status for the 2007-2013 ESF programme, including national organisations such as Department for Work and Pension (DWP)/Jobcentre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), with local authorities and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) being CFOs in four and three regions respectively. The management of the ITM strand is undertaken by Birmingham City Council. Telephone interviews were undertaken with 31 staff from a sample of 20 CFOs, selected on a purposive basis to include the main organisations types and comprising:
 - Jobcentre Plus – six cases;
 - The Skills Funding Agency – eight cases;

- local authorities – two cases;
- RDAs – two cases;
- The NOMS; and
- The ITM Unit.

The interviews covered a similar range of topic areas as the GO interviews, and also explored approaches to project monitoring and review.

3.1 Government Office perspectives

As far as the 2007-2013 programme is concerned, the GOs are responsible for managing and authorising payments for ESF. This involves:

- preparing Regional Development Plans (RDPs) (RDPs are usually developed in consultation with Regional Skills Partnerships);
- writing regional guidance;
- handling requests for applications;
- receiving and processing applications;
- selecting projects;
- handling appeals; and
- processing claims.

These responsibilities also cover the two cross-cutting themes.

3.1.1 Promoting the sustainable development cross-cutting theme

There was a mixed understanding of the main aims and objectives of sustainable development in the current ESF programme. Two respondents admitted that they had a limited understanding that sustainable development is: *'...something to strive for but not as important as the core goals...It's at the margins'*.

Two interviewees gave a broader definition of the aims of sustainable development, in terms of the social and economic sustainability (i.e. jobs, communities and projects), as well as environmental sustainability.

As far as the environmental definition of sustainable development was concerned most respondents spoke about energy efficiency, recycling, and utilisation of resources and transport. Two respondents spoke about imbuing a sustainable development ethos within ESF providers and provision, and beyond into other provision: *'Developing sustainable development plans for providers to ensure they are or working towards minimising the impact on the environment, also their subcontractors'*.

When asked for support about 'green jobs' most GO respondents spoke about supporting jobs and skills within green sectors: renewables; low carbon; recycling, and; 'environmental'. This was mostly because these sectors are expected to expand in the future (though not necessarily at the present time). Only one respondent spoke of green skills and jobs within traditional sectors, such as, construction.

Some respondents pointed out that there was no definition of 'green jobs' within ESF documentation. In addition, one respondent said that skills in green sectors are likely to be at Level 3 in the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and above, as opposed to Levels 2 and below which most current ESF provision is focused on.

Most respondents felt that the information provided by the MA was good, although two were not aware of any. But most GO staff suggested improvements. This mostly focused on the training, having it earlier and not just focusing on CFOs. Respondents also highlighted the need for ongoing guidance and support.

Few GOs provided any additional support and guidance over and above that provided by the MA. This was partly because the national information and guidance was seen as sufficient, but also because of time constraints. GOs did mention additional advice support in some regions – the North West, South East, South West and West Midlands – this was often provided through other organisations.

Most GO staff felt that the current approaches were an improvement on the previous programme. Two respondents felt it was worse because Technical Assistance (TA) had been used under the previous programme to fund advisers and support in their regions. However, most agreed that there was a higher profile, more support, more rigour and less variation in the cross-cutting theme of sustainable development in the current programme.

We were interested to find out whether the approaches towards the sustainable development cross-cutting theme were similar to or different from those taken with equal opportunities. Most respondents felt that the approaches were similar. However, equal opportunities was seen as better understood and embedded within the current programme and sustainable development being seen as less integral.

Over three-quarters of respondents felt that the sustainable development theme had been embraced and understood within their region with many identifying the national emphasis, guidance and support placed on it:

'...as far as we can comment down to provider level, it [sustainable development] is well understood and engaged with. There is still a need/demand for support out there, although some partners have in the past been unsure how to mobilise/what to do next. This has improved by more specific national plans and guidance – with the sustainability being embedded and 'going beyond the tick box' mentality.'

However, there were concerns over how this could be sustained in future with the expected regional policy vacuum caused by the disappearance of the GOs, RDAs, and other regional economic and skills collaborative structures.

There were examples of linkages between ESF and ERDF programmes in some regions. For example, where RDAs were CFOs their involvement with both programmes naturally generated linkages. There was limited evidence also of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding capital developments and ESF funding training. In the West Midlands and the South West there was a joint ESF/ERDF committee overseeing both programmes.

Monitoring of CFOs' compliance with the sustainable development cross-cutting theme was 'light touch' and tended to be undertaken at quarterly or half yearly meetings. All but one GO had a detailed understanding of how CFOs monitored projects' progress and compliance. So there was little understanding of the activities, impacts and good practice on the ground apart from those projects which were up for awards.

The main challenges to mainstreaming sustainable development under ESF were:

- **More guidance and support.** This was necessary at all levels from the management of ESF down to provision in order to improve understanding. GO staff were positive about the Ecotec training but this was a one off event and it was considered that on-going guidance and support was needed. As we have seen there is a difference between developing a sustainable development policy and plan and implementing and embedding sustainable development within provision.
- **Definitions.** There needs to be greater clarity and assurance in what sustainable development means. Some respondents felt that greater progress will not be made until there are targets associated with this cross-cutting theme as there are with equal opportunities.

3.1.2 Promoting green skills and green jobs

There appears to be little direct GO involvement in promoting or targeting ESF towards green skills and green jobs. Firstly, this is because it is not a discrete or defined theme within the ESF programme. It is, therefore, seen as a desirable outcome but not one that is actively pursued. Secondly, despite the guidance issued through the Action Note mechanism for 2011 to 2013 which stressed the importance of training for new jobs, especially in the green sector, as the national economy recovers, activity in this area was driven primarily by negotiated regional priorities.

What constituted green skills and green jobs was, therefore, left open to reflect the regional priorities of the main partners as defined in Regional Economic Strategies and Assessments, Regional Skills Plans, Regional Employment Frameworks and other strategies and policies (e.g. New industries, New Jobs).

Throughout 2010 regional ESF frameworks were refreshed to take them up to 2013. This has not led to many changes as far as promoting projects focusing on green skills and green jobs. In a limited number of regions there was a 'clearer steer' in the CFO plans and trying to develop stronger links with ERDF but the impact of these were unclear.

3.1.3 Looking forward

Respondents were asked how sustainable development could be better promoted and supported in the second half of the current programme and beyond 2013. There were four main responses:

- **Measuring sustainable development.** Respondents felt that there was a need for a greater understanding of how to measure sustainable development so that projects can be more effectively monitored against the cross-cutting theme. Some respondents felt that sustainable development will not be taken seriously until there are targets associated with it, but others argued that this would prove methodologically difficult and cumbersome.
- **More and earlier training and support.** Respondents were positive about the Ecotec sustainable development training, but felt that it could have been provided earlier during the project development and commissioning stages. Often the training was undertaken after contracts had been agreed. The training also needed to be ongoing rather than a 'one-off' so that people can be refreshed ahead of important stages (e.g. mid-point reviews) and kept abreast of wider developments.
- **More and clearer guidance.** This ranged from definitions of green jobs, labour market information about which green jobs and sectors are expanding, through to good practice examples from other providers either implementing the cross-cutting them or developing green projects.

- **Specialist support.** Respondents felt that there was a need to provide greater support to certain types of providers, especially smaller providers, Third sector, and those new to ESF, who were seen as having limited capacity to develop and implement sustainable development policies and plans. The funding of sustainable development champions by CFOs through TA monies was seen as an effective resource.

3.2 Co-Financing Organisation perspectives

The role of CFOs is to distribute ESF funds and ensure they complement domestic programmes. CFOs organise the commissioning and contracting of projects, and once selected contract manage those organisations delivering on the ground. CFOs also develop regional commissioning frameworks which are usually developed in association with other partners and regional strategies, and provide the parameters and priorities for the ESF programme in their region. As the name suggests they are also the conduit for match funding.

3.2.1 The sustainable development cross-cutting theme

Promotion and communication

As with GO respondents, staff in the CFO's understandings of sustainable development covered a range of interpretations. Most respondents said that the main aim of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme was about efficient usage of resources, recycling and energy conservation. About one-third of respondents included social and economic sustainability within the definition. One in five respondents said that they were unsure or had a limited understanding of the aims of this cross-cutting theme.

Respondents had a more opaque view on support for 'green jobs' in the current ESF programme. Five respondents (mainly staff in Jobcentre Plus) had a limited understanding, while responses provided by the remainder of individuals interviewed were varied. These ranged from promoting sustainable jobs and projects, through providing 'green' qualifications, to specific jobs and sectors (e.g. environmental technologies and renewable energy).

The main means by which the environmental aspect of the national mainstreaming plan was communicated was through national guidance and/or the Ecotec training commissioned by the MA. There were two main concerns with these as the main communication mechanisms. Firstly, guidance documents can be lengthy and some respondents would prefer a summary. Also the Ecotec training was delivered in 2008 the year after the programme was started. Five respondents felt that the environmental aspect had not been formally communicated to them. A further three respondents knew about sustainable development from the previous programme: '*It is there in the background*'.

Virtually all communication and support to CFOs around the sustainable development cross-cutting theme came from the ESF Division through TA. There was little additional regional support and guidance except in London and the South West. In London, sustainable development was emphasised in the specification, building on it as a regional priority. In the South West, an additional guidance note was prepared by the South West Regional Development Agency to guide all EU funded projects. This 'Integrating Environmental Sustainability into EU Programmes and Projects' guidance covered ESF, ERDF and Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) programmes, described the expectations on providers, and set out six priority environmental strands/considerations.¹³

¹³ Conserving environmental assets; environmental management skills for business; environmental sector business and opportunity development; resource efficiency for competitiveness; retaining skills, business and investment; and environmental branding, niche marketing and carbon literacy.

The Sustainable Development Toolkit was introduced to CFOs mostly through the Ecotec Training. While staff in three CFOs found the toolkit useful, others raised a number of issues:

- There was supposed to be a version for Jobcentre Plus CFOs but this only emerged after a series of delays.
- It would be useful if the Toolkit had had benchmarks or good practice against which sustainable development policies and plans could be compared.
- It was not an appropriate tool for: contract managers (it didn't help with monitoring because there were no benchmarks), and; learning and skills projects (because it wasn't flexible enough to cover the range of projects).

Staff in four CFOs said that the Toolkit had not been introduced to them, and two said they were aware of it but that it was 'little used'.

By contrast all of the CFO staff interviewed were aware of the sustainable development training workshops delivered by Ecotec and commissioned by ESFD using TA monies. The workshops were generally well received. The only reservation was that some respondents thought they should have happened earlier in the programme.

Staff in seven CFOs said that they had received additional support either at a regional or national level. Regional support tended to come in the form of additional regional workshops and/or guidance. Additional national support tended to come in the form of the dissemination of generic national green skills and jobs policies and information.

Staff in most CFOs used the tendering and/or contracting process to communicate the sustainable development cross-cutting theme to providers. At the tendering stage a range of information was provided (mostly based on national documents but some regional guidance as well), often delivered through provider briefing events. Most of the CFOs had included questions about sustainable development policies in their tendering questionnaires. Communications at a tendering stage tended to be via contract manager meetings.

Three regions provided dedicated sustainable development support. Two CFOs (NOMS and West Midlands Leader Board) appointed staff for this purpose while another (SEEDA) offered support through an existing team.

Staff in most of the CFOs were satisfied with the national support available, but respondents in six CFOs said that they were not. The main areas for improvement were:

- Ongoing support. Most support came from national documents and the Ecotec training, but this was at the start of the programme and there has been little since even though the economic context, agenda, strategies and Government have changed. Also, staff (and therefore, skills) move on and therefore, there is no continuity.
- More guidance and support. Suggestions included more: examples of good practice; cross-CFO communications, and; tailoring to specific priorities.

For those who had been involved in the previous ESF programme (2000-2006), there was currently a greater emphasis on sustainable development. This manifested itself in more guidance and support, more formal monitoring and a more structured approach. Staff in some CFOs felt that there has been a trajectory from the previous programme towards this greater emphasis. However, staff in five CFOs felt that under the previous programme there was greater flexibility in the commissioning of providers (there were a greater number of providers), influencing providers (now the only contact some CFOs have is with prime contractors), and in the use of TA (for example, London used TA to develop a Green Mark quality standard).

Compared to the other cross-cutting theme of equal opportunities, most CFO staff felt that there were similar approaches. However, there was a greater understanding and awareness of equal opportunities which had developed over the years. In part this is also due to the presence of equal opportunities targets which prompt more rigorous monitoring.

Monitoring progress

At the tendering stage, most CFO staff felt that the monitoring of applications was largely a tick box exercise as to whether providers had a sustainable development policy or not. More rigorous monitoring is usually left until the contracting stage. This approach is because of: limited staff time to review sustainable development policies at the tendering stage, and; staff knowledge of sustainable development issues, e.g. what constitutes an effective sustainable development policy and what does not?

Monitoring the implementation of providers' sustainable development policies and plans usually takes place at quarterly, biannual or annual provider reviews with the Contract Management Officer (CMO). These occur with varying degrees of rigour:

- Staff in Jobcentre Plus CFOs said that they either used the sustainable development toolkit or the ESF8 form during the reviews to monitor progress in the implementation of sustainable development plans. These reviews take place with prime contractors, who are then responsible for monitoring their subcontractors, which is part of the prime contractor model.
- Staff in most Skills Funding Agency CFOs said that the existence of sustainable development plans was reviewed but progress against their implementation was not: *'We have to say that they have them because that is what we require when they tender. However, there is no rigorous checking up or following up of this. Some of the self assessment forms may be checked though.'* Staff in just two CFOs appeared to apply any rigour – South West and West Midlands. In the West Midlands, which funded a cross-cutting theme champion through TA, the quality and implementation of plans and policies were actively monitored against good practice benchmarks. However, this ceased when the funding ran out.
- The monitoring activities of other CFOs varied, with staff in some CFOs being uncertain as to whether sustainable development is monitored during quarterly reviews, while others undertook active monitoring, for example by providing good practice examples.

The Skills Funding Agency and other CFOs do not operate the Jobcentre Plus prime contractor model, so there are more providers and fewer subcontractors. Where subcontractors exist, their compliance is deemed the responsibility of the lead contractor.

Developing provider sustainable development policies and plans

Staff in all but six of the CFOs said that each of their providers had environmental policies and implementation plans in place. Two of the six said that the majority did, and some said that they did not know.

Of those respondents who were in post during the commissioning process, half said that the vast majority of providers had policies and plans in place before the commissioning process. In the remainder, staff reported that between zero per cent – 70 per cent had policies and plans in place originally.

Staff in around one-third of CFOs said that some of their providers had to develop new or enhance their existing policies and plans in order to comply. However, most staff did not know the proportion.

In most CFOs staff reported that at least some of their providers found meeting the ESF requirements a challenge. The main challenges included:

- For large national providers, developing ESF specific policies and plans within the confines of the provider's national policies and plans, as nationally agreed procedures were difficult to change or develop.
- For smaller organisations, having the resources to develop compliant policies and plans, especially from scratch.
- Where aspects of implementation was beyond the control of the organisation, for example, where they were tenants and landlords were responsible for heating and waste disposal.

Suggested improvements

There were three main areas where respondents thought the current approaches could be improved:

- Providing examples that could be used as good practice or further information that could be used to baseline or benchmark sustainable development policies and the implementation of plans. CFO staff have varying degrees of expertise regarding sustainable development and would find it helpful to have access to comparators when assessing providers.
- Following on from the previous point, some CFO respondents said they would like more advice and guidance and how to monitor sustainable development policies and plans.
- Providing sustainable development targets, as there are with equal opportunities, would help CFOs have something against which to monitor providers, and would also create a greater impetus for providers to implement their plans. However, respondents were uncertain as to what sustainable development targets would look like.

Impacts

Staff in most of the CFOs thought that the sustainable development cross-cutting theme had impacted on providers in terms of:

- Increased awareness. Both at a provider level: *'...because the sustainable development theme is explicitly stated in the ITTs, it has prompted providers to think about how they can demonstrate that they're doing this'* and beyond to influence their partners and subcontractors. This is because compliance with the cross-cutting theme prompts activities, and this is communicated across the provider's staff, as well as to its partners.
- Increased sustainable development activities. The cross-cutting theme has improved providers' sustainable development policies and plans but has also led to changes in practices, for example, increased recycling, energy efficiency and car sharing.

Most CFO staff did not report any impacts on their own organisations. The main reason being was that they Government departments or agencies which had their own broad and well developed sustainable development policies and plans.

3.2.2 Vertical mainstreaming

Staff in six CFOs described their organisation as having a discrete sustainable development and/or green skills/jobs dimension, or had invited calls for such projects when commissioning. These were one Jobcentre Plus, NOMS, an RDA and three Skills Funding Agency CFOs. One Jobcentre Plus CFO said they did not commission such projects but prime contractors were at liberty to do so, and one Skills Funding Agency CFO said they would be doing so in the next commissioning round.

Those six CFOs who did commission sustainable development or green jobs projects used a range of definitions. For some, the definition linked in with existing regional priorities (for example, targeting environmental technology sectors), previous provision (under Objective 1), and the Brundtland report definition¹⁴. Linking in with identified regional priorities was the main driver when commissioning projects, as well as linking in with ERDF, and identifying green skills/jobs as areas of future expansion.

In practice, the projects that were commissioned tended to be either support for new/emerging technologies (the RDA), and the ‘greening’ of existing occupations (the remaining CFOs).

3.2.3 Looking forward

Respondents were asked what changes could help ensure the achievement of the Sustainable development Mainstreaming Plan in the remainder of the programme. Staff in three CFOs considered that it was too late because they had already commissioned most of their provision.

The main area for improvement was in providing examples of sustainable development policies, plans and provision so CFOs are able to baseline and benchmark providers. As we have seen, two CFOs employed sustainable development champions who had the expertise to appraise and support provider’s policies, plans and progress. This led to more effective understanding on the part of both the CFO and providers.

It was appreciated that the Ecotec training was a ‘one-off’ and more sessions were required, because the agenda and strategic and operational context is developing, as well as for more practical reasons, such as staff turnover.

Better guidance about how to monitor and measure sustainable development would also be helpful. This links in with the previous point about benchmarks, but also improving the awareness and understanding of CFO staff about sustainable development and its implementation.

Looking towards the next programming period post-2013, respondents would like to see more and ongoing support and guidance as mentioned above. They also mentioned that it needs to be provided earlier, before the commissioning process begins so applicants can be supported at an earlier stage.

A number of concerns raised about the impending regional vacuum with the abolition of GOs and RDAs, as well as other regional structures (such as, Regional Skills Partnerships) which helped to define the nature of ESF commissioning in the regions.

¹⁴ Which defines sustainable development as ‘*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*’, Brundtland Commission Report ‘*Our Common Future*’, 1987.

4 Delivering European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs – the horizontal dimension

Main points:

- Telephone interviews were undertaken with 50 European Social Fund (ESF) funded projects covering a cross-section of regions, Co-Financing Organisation (CFOs), priorities, types of providers, size of project and ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ dimensions.
- Virtually all projects had a sustainable development policy but several did not have a sustainable development action plan. Most policies and plans pre-dated the current programme and were driven by non-ESF requirements.
- Projects tended to have a practical (e.g. recycling, transport) view of sustainable development rather than a holistic view (e.g. embedding sustainable development practices).
- Most projects were satisfied with the way in which sustainable development was introduced to them, but one in five was unclear what it meant.
- Monitoring ranged from dedicated reviews and support for sustainable development policies and plans, to it being one element in a broader review process.
- The promotion of sustainable development in the current ESF programme had impacted on project’s awareness, priorities and practical action.
- Half of projects not delivering the vertical theme thought that market opportunities did exist, but half of these projects had not pursued them. Demand existed in rural areas, the construction sector and in sustainable development organisational processes.

This chapter explores projects’ experience of the horizontal dimension of sustainable development under ESF, and how they ensured that project activities complied with ESF regulations to ensure negative environmental effects were minimised.

It is based on the telephone survey of 50 ESF projects, which explored their approaches to the development of sustainable development policies and action plans as part of the commissioning process, the monitoring approach followed and the impacts resulting from compliance.

4.1 The telephone survey and project characteristics

Telephone interviews were undertaken with the lead person (usually the Project Manager) in 50 ESF funded projects across England. At the outset, it was agreed that we would split the sample equally between horizontal and vertical projects. However, as it turned out, discrete sustainable development commissioned projects were few in number, so the proportions were changed accordingly. The sample also included six Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) projects delivering under the Skills for Climate Change strand.

24 Delivering European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs – the horizontal dimension

In addition, a number of projects were identified which for the purposes of this report were entitled ‘green tinge’. These were projects which, although not commissioned to focus on sustainable development/green skills development, were delivering in or to green skills, jobs or sectors. For example, several projects focused on the use of the environment as an attractor for participants who would not otherwise engage with more traditional approaches to learning or are considered ‘hard to reach’. These included projects to help rehabilitate offenders through placements at recycling centres, and others working with young people and others to support volunteering in settings such as community-based environmental projects and a wildlife trust.

In terms of sample development, each of the CFOs interviewed were asked to provide a selection of ‘horizontal’ projects from their region which represented the breadth of ESF provision in terms of their size and nature, as well as their progress in implementing the sustainable development cross-cutting theme. Because this evaluation is qualitative in nature, our sample does not claim to be representative or statistically significant. The final survey sample of horizontal projects was selected from the lists provided from the CFOs on a purposive basis, and encompassed a broad range of project characteristics in terms of location, scale, nature of activity and participant target group.

The CFOs were also asked to provide a list of projects which were developing discrete sustainable development interventions focusing on greens skills, jobs or sectors in their areas (‘vertical’ projects). As we have seen in Section 3.2.2, few regions were commissioning such projects so the original aim of achieving an equal split between vertical and horizontal was changed. In the end, the definition of vertical projects was changed to include five ‘green tinge’ projects, as described above, and the sample also featured all six of the ITM Skills for Climate Change projects and two which were following a ‘green tinge’ approach.

Table 4.1 provides an overview of the telephone survey sample, which shows that the sample featured projects from Competitiveness, Convergence and ITM strands of the current Operational Programme, as well as projects across the full range of CFOs. The majority of the ‘horizontal’ projects are those commissioned by Jobcentre Plus (10) and the Skills Funding Agency (8), while most vertical/green tinge projects were commissioned by ITM (8), Skills Funding Agency (8) and NOMS (4).

Most projects in the sample were from Priority 1, including half of the vertical/green tinge projects, although one in five Priority 2 projects was included. Within Cornwall, both Convergence Priority 4 and Priority 5 projects are represented.

Around half of the projects had been commissioned before December 2008 (48 per cent). The projects were at different stages of implementation, with 14 per cent having completed, two-thirds (65 per cent) being scheduled to finish in 2011, and 21 per cent completing in 2012.

ESF budgets ranged from £30k to £7 million, with an average value of £750k. For two-thirds of projects, ESF represented the total funding for the project. For those projects that attracted non-ESF monies as well, the typical additional value was about £50,000.

Table 4.1 Telephone survey project sample

Region	CFO	Type of project			Total
		Horizontal	Green Tinge	Vertical	
Cornwall	ITM	0	0	1	1
	Skills Funding Agency	1	1	2	4
East Midlands	Local Authority	0	0	1	1
	NOMS	0	0	1	1
East of England	Skills Funding Agency	1	0	1	2
	RDA	1	0	1	2
London	ITM	0	1	1	2
	Local Authority	3	0	0	3
	Skills Funding Agency	1	0	0	1
North East	DWP	2	0	0	2
	NOMS	1	0	0	1
North West	DWP	1	0	1	2
	ITM	0	0	2	2
South East	NOMS	0	0	1	1
	DWP	0	0	1	1
	ITM	0	0	1	1
	RDA	0	0	1	1
South West	Skills Funding Agency	1	0	0	1
	DWP	2	0	0	2
	NOMS	0	0	2	2
	Skills Funding Agency	2	1	2	5
West Midlands	DWP	3	0	0	3
	ITM	0	0	1	1
	NOMS	1	0	0	1
	Skills Funding Agency	2	1	0	3
Yorkshire and the Humber	DWP	2	1	0	3
	ITM	0	0	1	1
Total		24	5	21	50

Source: GHK.

The interviews focused on the horizontal theme, although the vertical theme was also explored in outline with the vertical and ‘green tinge’ projects (as reported in Chapter 5). The horizontal element of the interviews covered: sustainable development policies and plans; support in developing and implementing them; understanding of sustainable development; monitoring, and; impacts. The vertical theme questions included: the aims and rationale for the project; delivery; project outcomes; strategic links; challenges, and; good practice.

Four out of five Project managers had previous experience of delivering ESF projects, and where the Project manager did not have previous ESF experience then their organisation did.

4.2 Developing sustainable development policies and plans

All but three projects currently had a sustainable development policy which they followed in the delivery of their ESF project. Those that did not were currently in the process of developing their policies – and while two had been commissioned at the end of 2011, one had been commissioned in 2008.

A small number of providers said that they did not have a sustainable development action plan, and an even smaller number said that they were in the process of developing plans. The remainder appeared to be relying on their sustainable development policy as an action plan, or following some other plan that was either part of another contract with the same CFO, part of the project's wider organisation or a generic ESF project Action Plan. One project was not aware of the requirement to produce and implement a sustainable development action plan.

Four projects had neither a sustainable development policy nor action plan.

Most sustainable development policies and plans were developed as part of an organisation-wide requirement, although ESF was sometimes the facilitating factor for this and some had been developed prior to ESF. Consequently, sustainable development policies and plans tended to be broader than that required solely for ESF.

Several providers bid for funds in addition to ESF funding. Because of this, they found it sensible to develop sustainable development policies and action plans in preparation for this. For a number of providers, ESF was not the only public funds they bid for. They therefore reasoned that the need for sustainable development policies and action plans will increasingly become a gateway requirement for bidding for other public and quasi-public funds (for example, the Big Lottery) and so they may as well develop policies and plans sooner rather than later.

Around one-quarter of sustainable development policies were developed before 2007, a further quarter between 2007-09, and another quarter since 2009. One-quarter of respondents did not know when they were developed.

Only two providers said that they apply their sustainable development policies and plans just to their ESF provision.

Forty-one projects featured partners and subcontractors. Of these two-thirds required their partners and subcontractors to have sustainable development policies and plans in place, typically the same requirements the lead or prime contractor was required to have. For those who do not insist on this requirement, most said that this was because they assumed their partners and contractors had them, either because they were large organisations (for example, local authorities) or organisations with an environmental pedigree.

Most projects did not actively check the sustainable development policies and plans of their partners and subcontractors; rather, they required them to state that they had them.

Most providers said that there was a need for ongoing support to help them meet the requirements of the cross-cutting theme. Respondents suggested more support in: implementing action plans into delivery; support for smaller organisations as they do not have dedicated resources, and; links with other providers to discuss approaches, good practice and possible linkages. When asked, most respondents felt there was a need for a network of providers to share best practice.

4.3 Meeting ESF requirements

For most providers (around a half) their understanding of the requirements of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme involved addressing general environmental concerns, such as, carbon footprints, climate change and minimising the use of resources, and tended to take a holistic view which included embedding sustainable development within their organisation. People who interpreted the ESF requirement in this way were more likely to say that sustainable development also included economic and social aspects as well, e.g. sustainable jobs and communities.

Just over one-quarter of respondents defined the requirement in terms of specific actions, such as, recycling, car sharing and public transport, and reducing energy usage within their organisation.

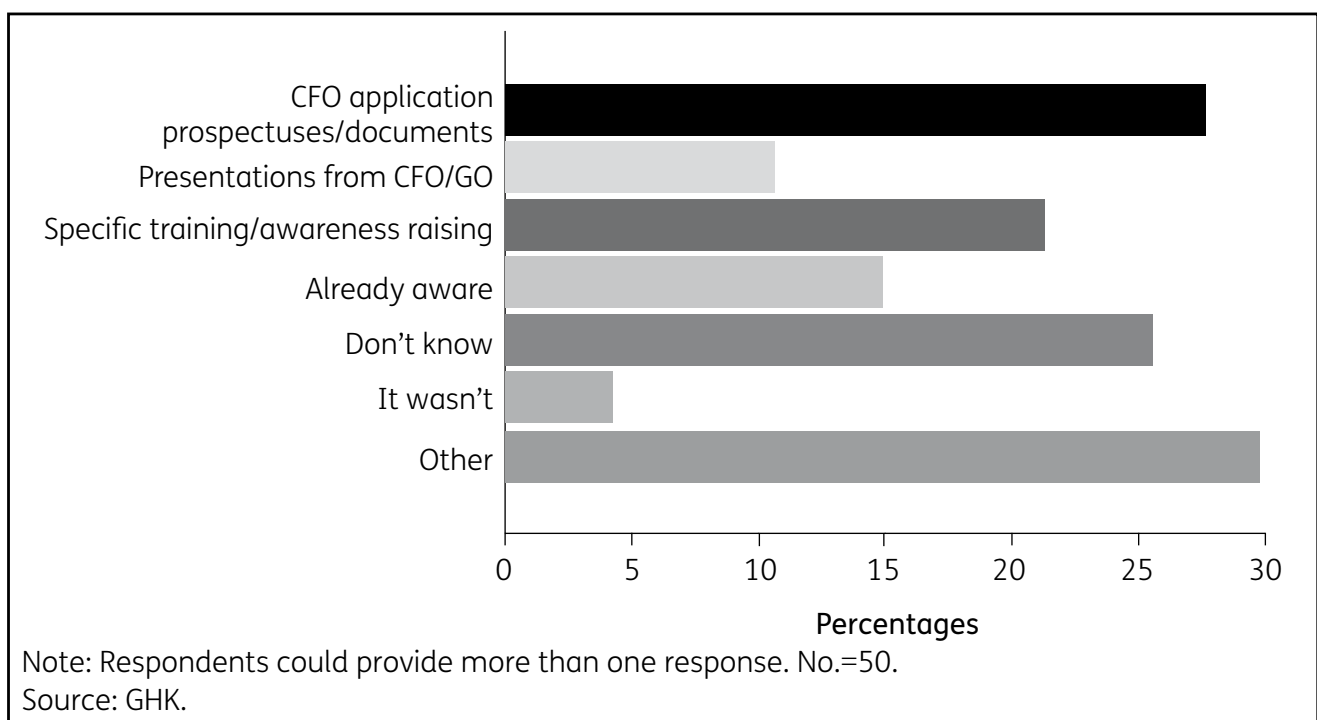
Around one in five projects said that they either did not know or were uncertain of what sustainable development meant within ESF. Surprisingly, these were mostly vertical themed projects, and all were within Priority 1.

Figure 4.1 shows how the sustainable development cross-cutting theme was introduced to them. Just over one-quarter said that they became aware of it through the prospectuses and other documents which CFOs sent during the application process. Just over one in five said that they had attended a specific training/awareness raising session, this tended to be a training session put on by their parent organisation or the Ecotec Training (some CFOs invited their projects along to the training).

Just under 30 per cent of projects mentioned ‘other’. This covered: discussions with contract managers during the contracting period; other documents and guidelines provided after the project had been commissioned; contact with a sustainable development champion, and briefings from their parent organisation or network meetings.

One-quarter of respondents did not know because they were only involved in the project after it was commissioned.

Figure 4.1 How the cross-cutting theme was introduced



28 Delivering European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs – the horizontal dimension

Of those respondents who had been involved when the sustainable development cross-cutting theme was introduced to them, most said that they found it to have been clear and easily understandable, while one-third thought that it hadn't.

However, most respondents (two-thirds) felt that there was room for improvement:

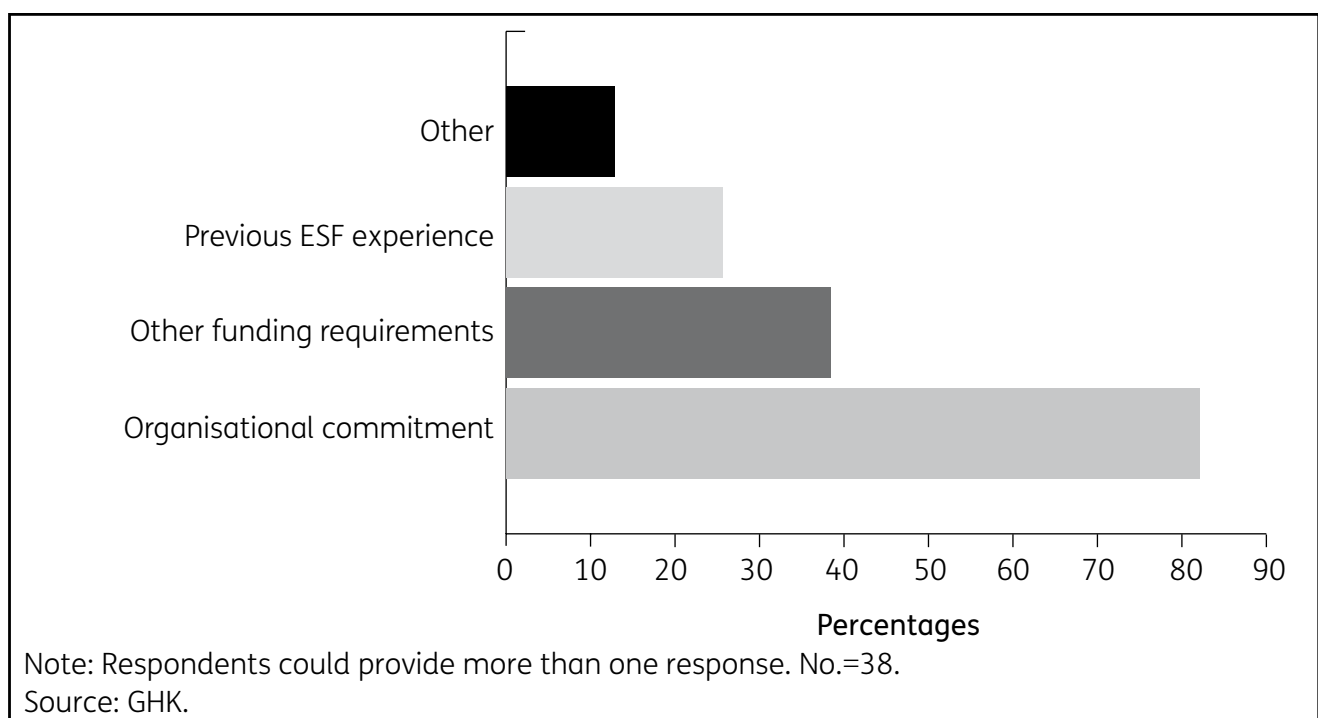
- Clearer guidance. This ranged from better information on what the cross-cutting theme meant in general to more specific and detailed information (e.g. around monitoring and evidencing).
- More support. This ranged from general support to discuss the cross-cutting (e.g. workshops) to more specific support on how to implement action plans once they had been developed.
- Earlier guidance. Some of the support and information projects received (such as, through the Ecotec training) came after their projects had been commissioned and set up. It is easier developing and implementing processes and systems when the project is being established.

For those 38 projects that had policies and plans in place prior to the current ESF programme, most projects (four out of five) said that the main driver for developing their sustainable development policies and plans was the commitment of their own organisation to environmental sustainability. However, this tended to be influenced by awareness that public sector procurement will increasingly include a sustainable development component.

Just over one-third said that the main driver was other funder's requirements, while one-quarter identified previous ESF project experience.

Almost nine out of ten providers whose policies and plans were in place prior to the current ESF programme said that they met the requirements of the current programme. Only six providers had to make any changes to their current policies and plans to make them compliant. All of those requiring changes were given support, either from their own organisation or the CFO.

Figure 4.2 Main drivers for policy development



For those projects which did not have policies and plans in place prior to the current programme, eight had developed them specifically for their current ESF project while the remaining four had produced them across their organisations as a whole. The main challenges these providers faced were: accessing support; applying plans and making year-on-year improvements; communicating across different sites and with subcontractors; lack of organisation resources (staff time), and lack of control on energy usage as a tenant, and not the sole occupier of a building.

Most of those who did face challenges did access support, most of which came from the CFO in the form of discussions with CMOs specifically around sustainable development policies and plans, performance reviews and the cross-cutting theme champion.

All of the projects who did not have policies and plans in place prior to the current programme now had policies and plans which met current ESF requirements.

4.4 Monitoring policies and plans

At the commissioning stage few providers remembered having their sustainable development policies and plans formally reviewed. Nine providers said that they sent a copy to their CFOs, and in five of these cases there was a further dialogue about them. Three providers said that this was discussed at the initial contract meeting. Nine providers said their policies and plans were reviewed through other processes mainly their regular reviews, ESF1 and ESF8 documents, or through the auditing process.

As far as regular monitoring is concerned, two-thirds of projects said that the implementation of their action plan was reviewed by the CFO, one-quarter said that it wasn't, and the remainder did not know.

For most projects, monitoring the implementation of sustainable development action plans was light touch, with some providers not recalling any ongoing monitoring.

Around 40 per cent of projects said their action plans were regularly reviewed and this tended to be through their review meetings with the CMO. These reviews varied in their rigour with some respondents saying it was a standing item on the agenda, and having to provide evidence. But for others it could be subsumed within the broader discussion about the progress of their project. Many projects expected to have more in-depth monitoring processes.

Monitoring processes tended to be most ethereal for ITM projects with most being unable to recall having action plans reviewed.

4.5 Impacts

Respondents were asked whether meeting the requirements of environmental sustainability under ESF it had produced any impacts. Respondents were presented with a series of statements with which they were asked to agree or disagree with and the responses are provided in Figure 4.3.

Over half of respondents said that meeting ESF requirements had:

- made them more aware of the importance of minimising the negative impact of service development on the environment (59 per cent);
- increased the profile of environmental sustainability issues within their organisation (55 per cent); and
- led them to introduce similar approaches into other/non-ESF services they provided (55 per cent).

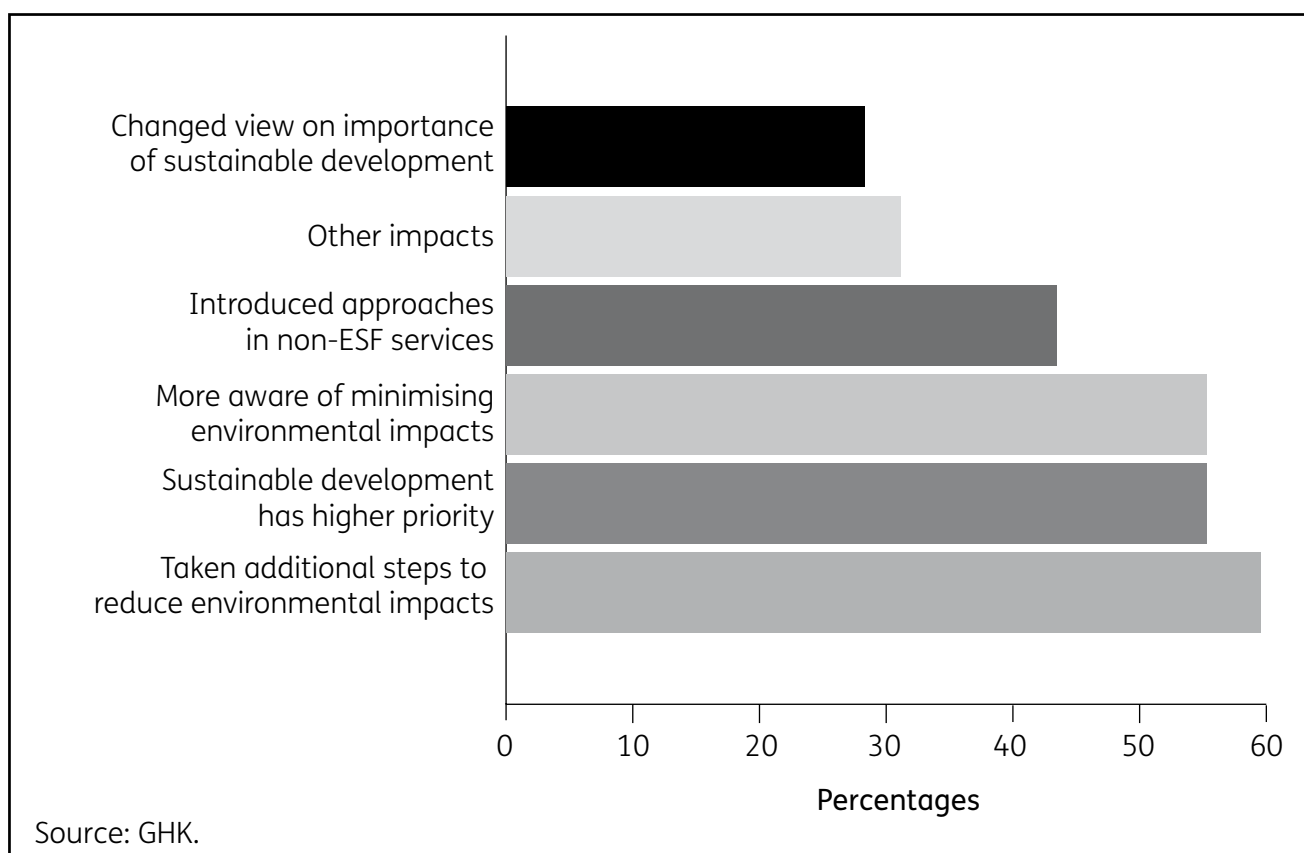
30 Delivering European Social Fund sustainable development and green jobs – the horizontal dimension

For those who felt that they had not seen the impacts identified in Figure 4.3 their overwhelming response was that they were already aware or doing it anyway but not as a result of ESF.

The main other impact reported by the projects was in terms of cost savings, which for the most part resulted from reductions in energy and consumable costs and through mechanisms such as car sharing. However, these ‘financial’ impacts were rarely quantified.

For those providers who used subcontractors, there was limited impact on the supply chain, largely because subcontractors tended to be large organisations with their policies and plans already in place, with limited capacity for lead or prime providers to review these policies or plans.

Figure 4.3 Impacts of ESF requirements



Projects which were not delivering the vertical theme were asked whether market opportunities existed in delivering in or to green sectors, skills and jobs. Half said there were, and around one-quarter said there were but they had not pursued them.

For those who saw market opportunities, most mentioned that there was demand in their local area for such services, especially in rural areas and within the construction sector, and with ‘Train the Trainer’ type support. Five providers were either piloting projects in these areas or looking for such opportunities.

Only one in ten providers thought that there were no market opportunities. This was mainly because of the nature of their local economies, opportunities in the care and retail sectors were much more abundant and therefore, it made sense for them to target these. Some providers felt that green sectors, skills and jobs involved technical and higher level skills which were not appropriate for the client group they worked with.

5 Delivering ESF Sustainable Development and green jobs – the vertical dimension

Main points:

- Most vertical projects focused on addressing worklessness, increasing skills, and exploiting market opportunities and as such were typical of other ESF projects. Increasing environmental awareness and activities were the main wholly ‘green’ project types.
- Client groups were also typically European Social Fund (ESF), i.e. disadvantaged groups and Small to medium sized enterprise (SMEs).
- The main project drivers were also a mix of environmental (organisational objectives) and practical (meeting identified need and filling gaps).
- The beneficiary ‘journey’ was also typical of wider projects: engagement; assessment; delivery and support; completion and progression.
- Beneficiary demand was also driven by practical concerns (meeting legislation, reducing costs), attraction (outdoors manual work, exploiting market opportunities) and interest in promoting sustainable development in its own right.
- Most projects had met/were likely to meet their output targets.
- Impacts reported by projects included:
 - **Employers/employees** – competitiveness; skills; career opportunities; environmental awareness, and business diversification.
 - **Unemployed people** – jobs; vocational, basic and employability skills; increased confidence and motivation; a sense of achievement; reduced social isolation, and; environmental awareness.
 - **Other – meeting** Local Authority Associations (LAA) targets; supporting regional priorities; new provision; networking, and environmental awareness.
- The main challenges were mostly generic: the economic climate; changing political agenda; rurality; lack of appropriate qualifications; working with hard to help clients; time away from work, and; tutor shortages.
- Similarly, the main success factors were also generic: partnership working; experienced staff, and; developing flexible and tailored provision. More specific sustainable development factors were: delivering outside rather than classrooms; developing attractive, credible and evidence based interventions, and; support from sector specialists.

This section explores projects’ experiences of delivery under the ‘vertical’ dimension of sustainable development, i.e. where projects were delivering interventions to develop green skills and jobs.

It is based on information collected through the project survey, which although focusing on ‘horizontal’ aspects of sustainable development also included questions on vertical project activity, and through the 11 project case studies. The case studies featured projects either delivering vertical or green tinge projects, and which had responded to the initial telephone survey.

5.1 The project case studies

The case study sample resulted from the review of information collected during the Government Office (GO) and CFO interviews, and a thorough search of available project documentation from a variety of sources. As each project also participated in the project survey, projects' credentials for inclusion in the sample could be verified. While, as with the project survey, there was no 'population' on which to establish the representativeness of the sample, the final sample includes a broad range of projects in terms of their scale, location, lead partner and activity/target group. The vertical project sample was limited by the number of available projects, with 23 vertical projects being identified (which we are confident represented the majority of vertical projects operating nationally), nine of which participated in the case study fieldwork.

The project case studies consisted of visits to each project site in March and April 2011, in-depth interviews with lead partner and other partner representatives, and where possible consultations with participating or previous learners, and employers. Project documentation, including delivery plans and the most recent performance monitoring reports, were also reviewed, and case study summaries produced (which appear as Appendix 1 of this document). The projects participating in the case study fieldwork are summarised in Table 5.1 below, which shows that the case study projects:

- Were supported under different priorities and funding programmes – with three Priority 1 and three Priority 2 projects from Competitiveness, one Priority 4 project from Convergence and four ITM projects.
- Received ESF funding of between £316,000 and £2.4 million.
- Included a range of CFOs – with four Skills Funding Agency, one Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), one National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and one Regional Development Agency (RDA) project.
- Were based in Cornwall (2), the North West (3), the West Midlands (2), the South West (2), London (1) and the South East (1).
- Were led by a range of organisations, including colleges (4), the third sector (4), a private provider, a housing association and a local authority.

While the majority of the projects were following the vertical theme, two were 'green tinge' projects (one ITM and one Priority 2 project). In addition, several of the projects had either recently completed or were about to complete at the time of the case study visits, while others were at earlier stages of delivery.

The remainder of this section focuses on projects' experiences of delivering vertical and green tinge interventions to their target groups, and combines the findings from the telephone survey of projects with the more in-depth case study fieldwork.

Table 5.1 Case study projects

Provider	Project	Region	CFO	Vertical/ green tinge	Project start date	Project end date	ESF budget	Priority
ReZolve Kernow (Third sector)	Key Sectors – Environmental Skills Network (ESN)	Cornwall	Skills Funding Agency	Vertical	June 2008	June 2011	Share of £8.5m	P4
Groundwork (Third sector)	Host Borough Employment Offer	London	ITM	Green tinge	August 2009	April 2011	£2.4m	ITM
The Intraining Group (Private provider)	Intraining Ltd ESF Project Cumbria and Lancs	North West	DWP	Vertical	June 2009	June 2011	circa £4.5m	P1
Recycling Lives (Third sector)	Achieve North West	North West	NOMS	Vertical	January 2010	December 2011		P1
North West Kent College (College)	Gateway to Suscon	South East	RDA	Vertical	August 2009	March 2011	£2,000,000	P2
Medway Council (Local Authority)	Eco Advantage	South East	ITM	Vertical	April 2009	May 2012	£672,742	ITM
Hartpury College (College)	SWEET	South West	Skills Funding Agency	Vertical	August 2008	March 2011	£903,850	P2
Birmingham Metropolitan College (College)	Skills for Climate Change	West Midlands	ITM	Vertical	April 2009	December 2012	£725k	ITM
BTCV Enterprises (Third sector)	The Great Escape	West Midlands	Skills Funding Agency	Green tinge	December 2008	June 2011	£316k	P2
Cornwall College (College)	Strengthening the Environment Sector	Cornwall	Skills Funding Agency	Vertical	November 2009	June 2011	£500k	P2
Impact Housing (Housing Association)	GreenWays to Work	North West	ITM	Vertical	August 2009	April 2012	£806k	ITM

5.2 Overview of vertical activity

The activities of, and groups targeted by, the 11 case study projects are summarised in Table 5.2 below.

5.2.1 Project aims, objectives and activities

The project survey, and subsequent case studies, found that the aims and objectives of the projects consulted covered a wide range of areas. While all featured combinations of awareness raising and the development of green skills and jobs, the responses to the project survey showed that their approaches varied but could be grouped as follows:

- **Reducing unemployment** – many of the projects were focusing on reducing unemployment across a range of disadvantaged groups including the long-term unemployed, people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young people NEET, offenders, and individuals living within deprived areas. Several projects reported that delivering green skills and employability skills for green jobs/sectors was an effective approach as these were expanding sectors, while others found activities in these areas were an effective way of engaging/re-engaging ‘hard to reach’ groups, especially males, as they involve manual outdoor work.
- **Increasing workforce environmental skills and provision** – this involved meeting the needs of businesses across a wide range of green skills and jobs, including the ‘greening’ of existing skills and jobs (e.g. plumbers), developing green practises and processes within businesses (such as, environmental management systems), and higher level green skills (for example, green modules within MBAs and technical skills development). In some cases, these projects were opportunistic, in that they were responding to gaps in skills provision in the learning and skills sector, and in many cases included the development of new provision (accredited or otherwise).
- **Increasing environmental activities** – the aims of some projects were to increase recycling, reduce energy usage and improve resource management. These projects tended to be responding to the broader sustainable development agenda, e.g. meeting climate change objectives by reducing carbon footprints.
- **Responding to identified market opportunities** – a number of projects were responding to developing green sectors, skills and jobs as current and future areas of expansion. Some of these projects had an environmental focus only because it represented an opportunity for expanding job opportunities, businesses and skills development, whereas for others the environmental focus came first and market opportunities were a means of delivering to that agenda. This provision covered support for unemployed and disadvantaged people, as well as for business development and self-employment opportunities.
- **Awareness raising** – finally, the majority of the projects’ activities included raising awareness of the need to respond to, or the benefits of engaging in, the sustainable development agenda. This included making businesses aware of their legal obligations (e.g. in procurement and construction) and helping them to meet these requirements, as well as providing information on employment and business development opportunities within the sustainable development sector.

In several cases projects had **developed new, or amended existing, training courses** as part of their activities. This was a response to limitations in existing provision, as well as to make provision more attractive, for example through the development of short courses and modular provision which their preparatory research identified as being most attractive to learners.

Table 5.2 Case study project activity

Provider	Project	Priority	Main Target Groups	Activities
ReZolve Kernow (Third sector)	Key Sectors – ESN	P4	Staff in SMEs without existing level 2 qualifications.	The provision of basic skills, generic and specialist environmental training (from awareness raising to environmental management).
Groundwork (Third sector)	Host Borough Employment Offer	ITM	Unemployed individuals, SMEs, social enterprises and community interest companies in five London Boroughs.	Creating new green employment and training opportunities through the creation of social enterprises/ community interest companies where potential exists to create green jobs or training placements.
The Intraining Group (Private provider)	Intraining Ltd ESF Project Cumbria and Lancs	P1	Unemployed individuals, people in deprived areas and other hard to reach groups.	Providing employment and volunteering opportunities – comprising support with jobsearch and interview skills and a day placement with a local wildlife trust.
Recycling Lives (Third sector)	Achieve North West	P1	Offenders approaching the end of their sentences.	Providing pathways for offenders to find employment – including training and support to help them prepare for work and 13 week placement opportunities in the recycling sector which may lead to permanent employment.
North West Kent College (College)	Gateway to Suscon	P2	SMEs in the construction sector and their employees, and unemployed/ inactive individuals.	The development and delivery of a modular curriculum to improve knowledge and skills of the construction industry, and others seeking to work in the sector, on sustainable development principles and practice.
Medway Council (Local Authority)	Eco Advantage	ITM	Unemployed and disadvantaged groups, individuals in work and SMEs.	The development and delivery of a suite of training and awareness raising tools to improve the green skills base, based on transnational innovative and good practice – including short programmes for front-line workers and work with communities to promote environmental and other community initiatives.

Continued

Table 5.2 Continued

Provider	Project	Priority	Main Target Groups	Activities
Hartpury College (College)	SWEET	P2	Employers, employees and self-employed individuals across all sectors.	The development of new training units, and the delivery of these and existing courses, in different aspects of sustainable development including renewable energy, environmental awareness and waste management.
Birmingham Metropolitan College (College)	Skills for Climate Change	ITM	Employers and employees.	The provision of short courses to raise environmental awareness, at Levels 2 and 3.
BTCV Enterprises (Third sector)	The Great Escape	P2	Young people aged 16 to 18 year of age who are NEET (to 25 if lldd).	Providing work experience and qualifications to help progress to E2E and the Foundation Learning tier, through ‘hands on’ activities including a series of environmental activities.
Cornwall College (College)	Strengthening the Environment Sector	P2	SMEs and their employees operating in, or planning to diversify into, the environmental goods and services sector.	Providing tailored environmentally focused training at level 3 and above, including existing and new qualifications to meet gaps in available provision.
Impact Housing (Housing Association)	GreenWays to Work	ITM	A wide range of individuals and employers, from employed individuals learning new skills to unemployed individuals looking for work in recycling.	Providing awareness raising, training and capacity building in the areas of recycling, renewable fuels and energy efficiency, as well as providing training to offer advice on tackling fuel poverty.

Examples of new or revised provision developed are provided below.

Developing new provision

Several of the case study projects had developed new, or amended existing, accredited and unaccredited training provision. For three case study projects, each of which was targeting employers and employees, the development of new accredited qualifications represented a significant proportion of their activity.

- The first project (Suscon) had developed 30 new or re-designed courses for employers in the construction sector, offering modular provision of up to five days duration and set within a matrix based around eight subject areas (including energy efficiency and supply, water management, waste management, sustainable materials, biodiversity integration and climate change adaptation) and overview courses. The provision is innovative in that, unlike other training, it is based on eight sustainable development themes rather than individual construction disciplines. The training matrix model reflects the fact that construction employers now need their staff to have a mix of skills, rather than the ‘silo’ approach followed previously. The matrix also allows progression within each theme, with courses being available from entry level to Level 7. The new courses are also delivered to mixed groups of learners, allowing different construction disciplines to mingle, learn together and learn from each other.
- The second project (SWEET) had also initially focused its attentions on the construction and building services sector, but extended their coverage to include sustainable development issues across all sectors. They had developed 13 new ten hour units, which could be taken individually as CPD or on a combined basis, but in both cases could lead to full qualifications at award, certificate or diploma levels. The courses were developed due a lack of suitable Level 2 and 3 courses on the Learning Aims Database, and the fact that their prior research identified that stand alone qualifications were not appropriate as environmental skills were often an extension of existing roles rather than representing new occupations.
- The third project (Strengthening the Environment Sector) also found that available provision for businesses beyond Level 2 in the sustainable development area were limited. Employer research indicated a preference for short courses, which could be accessed flexibly, so the new provision was designed accordingly. In all three qualifications were developed (FdSC Carbon Management at Level 5 and FdSC Planning for Energy Level 4, both validated by Plymouth University; and CIEH Level 3 Environmental Management), with two being piloted at the time of the visit (An Energy Advisor Award at Level 3 with Asset Skills, and a Level 4 qualification in Renewables).

Each of the three projects also called upon the experience of employers to ensure that the new provision met their needs. In the first project a curriculum development group commented on the new provision developed, and in the second considerable research with employers and employees underpinned their work. Each also referred to the time taken to develop provision and have it accredited, notably at a time of change in the qualifications regulation infrastructure.

The extent to which the case study projects had developed new training courses suggests that existing provision in the sustainable development field can be limited – both in terms of local provision and the availability of suitable accredited qualifications. Indeed, several projects referred to this being a lengthy and sometimes complex process, and an area where further development may be necessary.

5.2.2 Project target groups

The case study projects were delivering services to a range of target groups, including individuals with a range of characteristics and employers across a range of industrial sectors:

- In four cases, projects were delivering to a mix of target groups, comprising employers (SMEs, social enterprises and community interest companies and the self-employed) and individuals with a range of characteristics.
- Four projects were targeting employers and their employees – across a range of sectors and including organisations operating in the environmental goods and services sector or wishing to diversify into the sector.
- Three projects were specifically targeting unemployed individuals or others facing disadvantages, including ‘hard to reach groups’. These included the long term unemployed, individuals living in disadvantages areas, young people aged between 16 and 18 not in education, employment or training, and offenders approaching the end of their sentences.

Projects targeting employers, either as their sole or as part of their wider target groups, included those focusing on specific sectors (for example, providing sustainable development skills for the construction industry), other supporting employers already operating in the environmental good and services sector, and more ‘generic’ employers seeking to improve their environmental capabilities or take advantage of associated opportunities. In several cases, sectoral targeting took place in line with the local and regional priorities (for example, targeting the hospitality and catering sector in the South West, and construction in the South East).

5.2.3 Project development

The case study fieldwork allowed the origins of the projects, and their development, to be explored in detail. The projects described a range of drivers for their involvement in vertical and green tinge activities, which in addition to the opportunity to bid for funding included:

- Fit with organisational objectives – including where lead and other partners had specific strengths in the sustainable development area, or where their remits included working with individuals for whom hands on activities were particularly attractive (notably the green tinge projects). Organisational ethos also had a role to play, with many projects referring to ‘social responsibility’ being an important driver of their participation.
- Previous experience of successful approaches – which were replicated or built upon in their current ESF activities. Two projects, for example, described how previous work had established that disengaged young people, and other hard to reach groups, were attracted to outdoors and environmental activity, while others based their thinking on potential demand for their services on similar services delivered previously.
- Meeting identified gaps in local or regional provision – where demand for sustainable development training and other support had been identified.
- Meeting identified need – where the need to establish new or improve existing staff skill sets was identified, as a result of legislation or to keep up with expectations or opportunities within a range of sectors – and developing the skills required for an expanding market area.
- Entering new market areas – in one case a college reported entering the ‘sustainable development’ market as a natural extension of their previous agricultural provision, after identifying provision gaps and unmet demand locally. In a second example, a third sector provider described how their project had allowed them to maintain their presence in a particular area when its other contracts completed.

- Contributing to the wider sustainable development agenda – while many of the projects referred to their contributions to local, regional and national sustainability objectives, others described contributing to more local agendas and developments. For example, one project (Suscon) had supported the development of a regional centre of excellence for sustainable development, by supporting an initial training offer which will continue to be delivered.
- In the case of the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) projects, the opportunity to share transnational practice, and to trial innovative approaches, were key drivers for their involvement.

While many of the case study lead partners considered that they had a thorough understanding of the potential demand for the services of their projects from their core business, others reported undertaking specific research with individuals and employers in their areas. Examples of preparatory research undertaken are provided below.

Preparatory research

Several of the case study projects described undertaking research as part of the development of their project ideas. This most commonly related to the likely demand for their proposed services, although in some cases their research continued throughout their projects to ensure new provision developed met the needs of the intended target groups.

This research commonly investigated the extent to which demand for environmental and sustainable development provision existed in their areas, and where identified what provision was required and what would be the most appropriate forms of delivery. As described previously, in several cases projects identified that appropriate qualifications for the sector were limited, which led to the development of new and amended accredited provision.

Research was also undertaken, and previous studies drawn upon, to identify gaps in sustainable development provision at both local and regional levels. This included research into specific sectors, including the environmental goods and services sector, but also including construction, which included surveys of employers in the relevant sectors.

In other cases, projects continued to follow a formative approach through the delivery phase. In one example, where a range of new provision had been developed on sustainable development practices in the construction sector, a curriculum development group was established to review the new and revised courses developed. Comprising regional employers in the construction and associated sectors, the aim of the group was to comment on the suitability of the provision developed. In addition, college staff attended each new course delivered and new provider used. Along with the review of evaluation forms completed by each participant, the college was able to identify where issues arose and take steps to address them, so ensuring the provision offered was relevant to the target group and of a high quality (Suscon).

5.2.4 Project partnerships

In common with other ESF projects, each of the case study projects were delivered on a partnership basis, with a range of roles being taken by the different organisations involved. In the case of the ITM projects, project partnerships also included a range of transnational partners, given their objectives of sharing innovative practice and learning between organisations from different Member States.

The domestic project partnerships, again in common with other ESF projects, described a range of partnership models and relationships. In addition to involvement in the development and management of the projects, partner roles also included:

- Core service delivery – the most common partner activity, and including cases where partner providers were used to extend service coverage across regions/sub-regions, or where they held specific expertise not available from the lead provider.
- Supporting delivery – in this case where partners had specific roles around recruitment and engagement activities, for example of working with disengaged young people, offenders, and individuals with learning and other disabilities.
- Providing specialist advice and expertise – ranging from service planning, ensuring the services provided were appropriate, and that provision was delivered in a means that met the needs of employers and individuals.

5.3 Delivery models

The delivery models followed by the case study projects reflected their activities and their individual target groups. However, in common with other ESF projects, the majority of projects followed delivery models which broadly comprised four steps:

- Engagement.
- Assessment.
- Service delivery.
- Completion and progression.

5.3.1 Employer and learner engagement

The case study projects described promoting their activities through a variety of mechanisms, with some variation on the basis of the target groups involved:

- When promoting themselves to individual/non-employees, mechanisms used included local media, posters and leaflets. The role of referral partners was also important, and depending on the client group included the involvement of Jobcentre Plus and the Connexions Service. Word of mouth was also important, especially those initiatives which were targeting deprived communities.
- Routes to engaging with employers included contacting previous employer clients, referrals through local organisations (which ranged from organisations active in the environment/low carbon sector to Business Link and local partnership bodies), and local and regional business networks.

Project engagement processes built on their approaches to promotion, and again varied on the basis of the target group involved. As several of the projects were using the environment/sustainable development as a means to engage individuals (including those disengaged or suffering disadvantage), the opportunity to work in the outdoors rather than in a classroom, and to undertake activities of benefit to the wider community, were highlighted.

Projects' experiences of engaging employers suggested that while many are aware of the necessity of being 'environmentally aware', and the resulting benefits for their businesses, others still remain to be convinced. As described later, the fact that the majority of projects had either met or were expected to meet their performance targets suggests that they were successful in their engagement activities.

One project working with individuals also described their approach to contextualising the importance of sustainable development for their participants. Having joined the project, an initial ‘induction’ task was to get participants to calculate their own carbon footprints. As well as providing an initial introduction to the science of sustainable development, this exercise was useful in raising awareness of both the importance and the scale of the challenge faced.

5.3.2 Assessing needs

Each of the projects included some form of needs assessment process, either prior to or sitting alongside registration and induction stages, which varied on the basis of the project target group(s).

Employers and employees

In most cases, the projects included an assessment of individual employer needs as part of the initial engagement process, although where targeting employers several projects described how this was not always done if the employer knew what they wanted.

Where the assessment of employer needs took place, they most commonly took the form of formal or informal training needs analyses undertaken with individual employees. This most often took place in the context of discussions with employers – to establish their wider business needs, skill gaps they had identified, awareness of environmental legislation and wider business objectives.

In some cases, a more formal brokerage model was in place. For example, one project described undertaking initial diagnostic assessments based on the needs of the business, which led to a workforce development plan outlining the employer’s training needs and identifying potential learners. Following this, individual employees are provided with guidance by project staff on the training options available to them, leading to a final holistic training plan for the employer covering a range of generic (such as basic skills) and more environmentally focused training (e.g. through the ESN project).

Needs assessment activities with employers were undertaken by a range of individuals, ranging from project staff to external agencies. These included, where they were in place, Business Development or Employer Liaison teams in participating colleges.

Individuals

Where projects were working with individuals, as opposed to employees, the assessment processes followed varied depending on the characteristics of the projects’ target groups. For example, one project targeting young people not in education, employment or training (BTCV) described holding taster days for potential participants, which is followed by an induction session that includes an initial assessment of their basic skills, and personal and social development. Project participants interviewed during the case study described how the assessment process covered their experience, skills and aspirations. This formed the basis of individual action plans which they were able to ‘sign off’ with their provider.

A second project worked with unemployed individuals, including those considered ‘hard to reach’, including the long term unemployed, lone parents, residents of deprived areas and offenders. The characteristics of the target groups influenced both the assessment and engagement process, with individuals missing appointments for initial interviews and induction sessions being given three more chances to attend, after which they were no longer actively chased by the project. Assessment is light touch – although all three of the learners interviewed during the case study recalled being asked about their previous work experience, their qualifications and skills, and what they wanted to get out of the project. Again, individual action plans were produced which they could agree with the provider.

A third project working with offenders approaching their release dates described how initial discussions take place between case managers and individual offenders to explore their plans for re-integration on leaving prison. This is the first part of the selection process, where the motivation to gain employment and move forward with their lives being a key variable. Following this individuals are referred to one of several providers offering employment and training opportunities. A meeting then takes place between the case manager and provider around the needs of the individual, and if considered suitable they will be recruited to the provision. (Recycling Lives)

5.3.3 Service delivery

According to the telephone interviews with the 21 vertical and five green tinge projects, most projects were focusing on people who were out of work, and this naturally affected their client group and the composition and nature of delivery. As we have seen most clients were disadvantaged and faced a number of barriers. Those projects focusing on employed people tended to work with those in construction trades – both generic (plumbers) and green jobs/skills (e.g. installing solar panels). Other occupations included supervisory or management staff, and procurement staff. In terms of businesses and organisations, most projects worked with SMEs, where time-off from work is a big issue and therefore, necessitates flexible provision.

Projects had a series of formal targets and aspirations they were working towards under their ESF contracts, namely:

- Skills. A quarter of projects were delivering Level 2 qualifications and a further quarter was delivering Level 3. Other skills outcomes were basic skills, Level 4, professional qualifications, soft skills and accrediting existing green skills.
- Jobs. One-third of projects were focusing on employment outcomes. These included getting clients into work or closer to employment, and creating ‘sustainable’ jobs, i.e. future proofing existing jobs with green skills.
- Environmental outcomes. Around one in five projects were focusing on broader environmental issues. Some projects aimed to reduce recycling, some wanted to raise awareness of environmental issues, and others were supporting the implementation of environmental policies and management systems.
- Provision. Five projects were developing industry standard or accredited qualifications for green skills and jobs.
- Business support. This included creating SMEs and also support for priority sectors, including environmental sectors.

For two-thirds of projects, their provision reflects demand for green jobs and skills in their local economies. For most of these projects this reflects existing demand which is based on a number of factors. The two main drivers are legislative requirements and cost reduction. These can often be linked, for example, recycling diverts waste away from landfills so while this is not a legislative requirement the landfill tax is and therefore, impacts on costs. Some projects have linked in with the retrofitting of houses by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). There are a number of drivers of demand for these activities including reducing costs (making houses more attractive to tenants, increasing the value of properties), addressing fuel poverty, and a desire to meet local or national carbon reduction aspirations. While some projects did not necessarily see much existing demand for their services, they expected growth in green sectors, skills and jobs in the future both as a result of the economy coming out of recession and an expectation that businesses, jobs and skills will have to become greener.

One-third of projects were not responding to local demand, and their green activities tended to be a by-product of their wider support. For example, one project helped people create their own business, if someone approached them with a green business idea they would support them, but this was not the main focus of the project. One project also said that demand was reducing as a result of Government cuts.

Few projects required any support with their intervention either because they were skilled in their area of work, or their delivery model included specialist organisations that could deliver that support.

Therefore, the vertical and green tinge projects were 'typical' ESF projects focusing on hard to help groups of people, SMEs, priority sectors, and innovative activities. They covered a range of provision from Entry and Level 1 basic, employability and vocational skills up to technical skills and HE. While focusing on green sectors/skills/jobs after the content of delivery, there was little effect on delivery models. The large majority of the key challenges (see Section 5.4.4) and success factors (see Section 5.5) are not related to delivery in the environmental/sustainable development agenda, and the two challenges that are – specialist support skills, and qualifications – are not inherently 'green' but more to do with delivering in new and specialist sectors.

As Table 5.1 illustrated, the case study projects provided a range of services to their clients, ranging from using the environment as a mechanism for engaging individuals distanced from the labour market and enhancing their basic and broader life skills, through to providing high level training on specialist aspects of the sustainable development agenda. Consequently, many projects were delivering discrete strands of activity.

There were, however, case study projects which were delivering across a range of activities either to meet the needs of their different target groups or to provide a portfolio of services to maximise coverage and opportunity.

Service delivery – multi-strand projects

In one case (GreenWays to Work), a housing association led project worked with both employers and individuals, including with their tenants and other unemployed people in their area. The project followed three themes of activity delivered by different subcontractors, namely:

- Renewables – including training on the installation of several micro-generation technologies, and awareness raising and training on forest management and wood fuel (from better woodland management to the use of wood burners).
- Energy efficiency – including providing advice and guidance to housing association staff on increasing the energy efficiency of their properties, and delivering courses to planners to outline the range of energy efficiency technologies currently available.
- Recycling – offering volunteer/work placements for unemployed individuals at the housing association's recycling centres, and providing training for volunteers and recycling centre staff to accredit the experience gained.

In total, the project provides over 30 different training courses, forming a '*continuum of accredited and non-accredited training*' ranging from two hour sessions through to full traineeships.

In a second example (Eco-Advantage) the project was delivering, or in the latter stages of the development of, six strands of activity to its employed and unemployed clients:

- Sustainable Living programme – featuring the production of information and a booklet on sustainable living (covering sustainable buildings, transportation, water/waste disposal, and wildlife), which has been used in schools, family workshops, and in Skills for Life/other courses.
- Ambassador Scheme for Sustainability – targeting lower skilled employed and unemployed individuals to provide a basic understanding of sustainability, to allow them to progress to accredited Level 1 and 2 qualifications.
- Greenhouse Challenge – a 12 month programme being delivered on two deprived housing estates, working with 12 families to help them become more environmentally friendly through a range of informal learning activities.
- Green Entrepreneur and Skills for Climate Change courses – training sessions delivered in three prisons on an introduction to skills for climate change and green entrepreneurship (i.e. starting green businesses).
- Training to local businesses – half day training for business managers on carbon management with a follow-up after six months, with further provision being explored at the time of visit.
- Sustainable business network – partners in the project have established a 200 member network, meeting quarterly to explore different topics around the sustainable development agenda.

5.3.4 Completion and progression

Projects varied in the extent to which formal completion and progression steps were in place for learners, and where they were in place they tended to focus on individual learners rather than employers and employees.

Processes in place for individuals included:

- the completion of end of provision forms, which captured information commonly including their achievements and views on/satisfaction with their experiences, and highlighting any additional training needs on a self-identified basis;
- formal exit reviews and the production of forward plans – which in some cases also offered the opportunity for individuals to continue their involvement on a drop-in basis (e.g. Intraining, where individuals could receive a further six weeks support and advice on a drop-in basis);
- review and forward planning sessions with external partners – for example in one project working with young people (BTCV) Connexions Service Personal Advisors meet with the project manager to discuss individual participants towards the end of their provision, which is followed by a discussion of future options with the individual. Those who are not yet ready to progress further are offered an OCN in Preparation for Employment with a view to progressing to a Foundation Learning provider;
- undertaking a final assessment of needs/future requirements – building upon the initial assessment process, with the aim of illustrating progress and providing a progression plan. For example, one college provider described how their IAG staff maintain contact with individual participants throughout their time with the project, which culminates in a final review of their progress and the review of emerging needs and future progression opportunities.

One project raised the issue of continuation opportunities being limited due to the requirements of ESF funding, following information from their CFO which suggested that an individual (employed or otherwise) could only be eligible for one piece of provision. As the project had developed a programme of provision which allowed participants to progress both vertically and laterally, this restriction meant that they were less able to test the progression element of their support (Suscon).

5.4 Project performance

5.4.1 Performance against target

The case study projects were at different stages in their delivery cycles, with some completing shortly prior to the case study visits while others were continuing into 2012. The projects described a wide range of targets, which ranged from throughput/output targets (such as the number of individuals or businesses participating, part or whole qualifications achieved, etc) to outcomes (such as finding work for those unemployed at the outset).

From the evidence provided by the case study projects it would appear that they are performing well, with the majority having already met or exceeded their targets (all the projects that had completed at the time of the case study visits had met or exceeded their targets). Where projects had fallen behind their delivery profiles, they were commonly confident that their overall targets would be met by the end of their funding.

Where a small number of projects reported difficulties in achieving their targets, they most commonly referred to the challenges in engaging employers, initial slippage in implementation impacting on delivery timetables, and delays associated with the accreditation of new courses and units developed (see also delivery challenges at Section 5.4.4).

5.4.2 Project impacts

While the case study projects were at different stages of delivery, each reported a range of positive impacts for their individual and employer participants, and in some cases unexpected or spin-off benefits resulting from their activity.

No examples were identified where projects were attempting to quantify the environmental impacts of their activities – partly because this was not expected of them at the outset, but also due to the complexity of doing so in the absence of a robust and practicable methodology.

Impacts for employers/employees

Here the main benefits for employers and employees sprang from the training received, and the resulting improvement in the capacity and capability of their staff. More broadly the benefits and impacts cited included:

- Increased awareness of environmental issues – for employers and employees, both at work and at home.
- Improved business competitiveness – through a raised awareness of the opportunities available to them.
- Realising business benefits – although largely anecdotal and rarely quantified, the projects and the employers interviewed described examples of environmental benefits, such as the reduced use of packaging and the more efficient use of resources, which also helped reduce costs.

- Businesses were able to diversify their offer – for example within the plumbing/electrical sector to keep up with new legislation, and in newer industries such as solar/photo-voltaic power generation and other emerging sectors.
- Sustainability of employment and increased career enhancement/progression – for employees, the benefits included being better placed to sustain and progress within their existing jobs.

Other benefits for employers included participation in networking events around the theme of sustainability supported by several projects, which were reported to have led to collaborative working arrangements between small employers to help them tender competitively for work.

Impacts resulting from project participation were also identified amongst the employers interviewed as part of the project case studies, examples of which are provided below.

Impacts of participation – case study employers

In addition to the impacts described above, the project case studies also explored the impacts resulting for individual participating employers. Examples of the range of benefits cited are described below.

- One employer in the waste management sector had received a holistic package of training from their project. The business, which employs fewer than 20 staff, were keen to up-skill their workforce to ensure they were able to do their jobs effectively. Staff were provided with a range of training, including basic skills (funded by another project) and health and safety training, and more specific provision including Level 4 Waste Management Industry Training and Advisory Board (WAMITAB) and train the trainer courses. The employer welcomed the opportunity for free training at a time of financial stress, and the resulting improvements in staff performance and motivation. An additional benefit has been that the firm recently gained ISO 14001 accreditation, which they would not have been able to achieve without the training input.
- A second employer, participating in the same project, was an expert in ground source heat pumps, but lacked the management expertise to take the business forward. The project provided higher level management training, which improved the effectiveness of the management team and in turn the competitiveness and growth prospects of the company.
- At a second project, an employee working for a solar photo-voltaic installer described how he had learnt his trade ‘on the job’ through shadowing his colleagues. Recognising that he needed to formalise his experience, the employee had joined and completed a Level 3 course. While he had not expected to learn much on the course, he found the coverage and level of detail provided impressive. Although he did not find any gaps in his knowledge, the course provided additional knowledge in the area of renewable which had found interesting and practical.

Other employees attending the second project also described specific impacts for them, including:

- A self-employed domestic electrician, who undertook Level 3 training to be able to gain Micro Generation Certification Scheme (MCS) accreditation and work on solar photo-voltaic installation, described how his confidence had increased and he had acquired new skills. As a result, he was able to diversify his service offer, and is confident in the entire range of tasks from providing costs to clients to installing and maintaining the necessary equipment.

- In another case a self-employed electrician had been offered a management post with a large employer to lead their investment in renewable resource technologies. The job offer came from a company he was working with on a subcontract basis, who were impressed with his knowledge of solar and other renewable energy technologies, which were acquired as a result of project participation.
- In a third project, which provided training in sustainable development principles and practice to the construction industry, a director of a small quantity surveyor and project management company described attending a one day course on codes for sustainable homes, to develop an understanding of the codes and their implications for a project they were currently working on. The course was described as excellent, and provided useful information to meet his immediate needs, and similar provision was not, to his knowledge, available elsewhere in the region. The course was delivered to a mixed group of individuals from different construction disciplines, which was in itself interesting and enlightening.
- In a fourth project, the employers interviewed were impressed by the project's willingness to develop packages of training to meet their needs, rather than delivering discrete pieces of provision. In one case, an employer required specialist training in a range of areas including CCTV training, training for working in confined spaces and specific sustainable development practice. Although all this training could not be funded by the project, they were able to create a holistic training package and are now better placed to compete for contracts. The other employers interviewed described receiving other packages of training, which had:
 - Enabled a small waste management company to up-skill their staff and meet legislative requirements, which would have been prohibitively expensive otherwise, and which had led to individual productivity improvements.
 - Supported a self-employed electrician to gain accredited qualifications and meet the requirements for new legislation on electrical installation, as well as providing him with ideas on potential areas of business diversification.
 - Led a biomass fuel production business to enhance the skills of the employees across a range of areas, from WAMITAB certification to fork lift driving and environmental awareness training at Level 2.

Impacts for unemployed individuals

While the main impacts of the case study project for employees related primarily to skills development, the main impacts for many unemployed or otherwise economically inactive participants related to attitudinal and motivational effects, such as motivating them to engage/re-engage with the labour market and giving them the confidence to seek work. Project participation also provided individuals with experience of work or training that could be added to their CVs, as well as qualifications where accredited training was included in the project offer.

One project, working with young people not in education, employment or training, described their impacts as developing an awareness of environmental issues amongst their clients, and progressing to E2E and Foundation Learning provision. However, their main impact was in engaging the young people and providing them with a sense of achievement otherwise missing from their lives. Increased motivation was also an important impact (*'...giving them something to get out of bed for'*), and seen as equally important as providing them with practical skills. The young people interviewed as part of the case study supported this view, describing how they enjoyed working in the outdoors, with the only improvement suggested being longer days.

In one project working with prisoners, although at an early stage of delivery, project staff described how benefits included getting their clients to think about the future, finding work and providing employment pathways. Staff in a second project working with offenders reported how ten of their clients had secured permanent employment in recycling, which they had been able to sustain, and central to the objectives of the project none appeared to have re-offended.

Individuals' employment prospects were also increased through the acquisition of accredited qualifications – particularly where they had few previous qualifications – and the opportunity to gain experience through work placement programmes.

Impacts of participation – intraining

Intraining is a national organisation with an extensive track record in supporting unemployed people, including previous ESF projects. However, the development of environmentally focused projects was a new departure for Intraining and the project team. The project visited on the day (at Walney Island Wildlife Reserve) was one of several strands within Intraining's current ESF projects in Cumbria and Lancashire.

The main aim of the project was to reach and work with hard to reach people, to engage them in a productive activity where they would acquire a range of 'hard' and 'soft' skills which would lead them into employment. The main motivation for the project was to develop outdoors (as opposed to classroom based) community based provision. It was one part of a broader offer intended to appeal to male clients who prefer 'hands-on' experience, and therefore, not necessarily environmentally focused.

Clients received a range of 'hard' and 'soft' outcomes including:

- Progression into work.
- Progression into FE provision and other programmes.
- Volunteering.
- Getting back into culture of work.
- Improved confidence and motivation – to look for work, and working with other people.
- Reduced social isolation.
- Employability skills – CV writing, references and improved people and communication skills.

While the environmental focus was not originally planned, it did provide an activity based on outdoor manual work which appealed to out of work males, and contrasted with the usual activities focused on retail and care sectors.

Wider impacts

Several of the projects described how a series of wider benefits and impacts had resulted from their project activity. The case study projects, and others responding to the project survey, identified a number of areas in which their project contributed to local, regional and national environmental strategies. At a local level, projects were helping local authorities meet some of their Local Authority Agreement (LAA) targets (such as N186 climate change reduction in the local authority area, and N188 climate change adaption). Others mentioned helping local authorities to meet green standards and promote themselves as 'green cities'.

At a regional level, projects were supporting identified priority sectors and skills (identified through Regional Economic Strategies and Regional Skills Partnerships), as well as regional environmental strategies. Projects were also helping a range of other agendas including: the Environment Agencies' objectives; the aims of Sector Skills Councils, and; the Olympic legacy of developing a sustainable Olympics.

As described previously, several of the case study projects had developed new accredited qualifications or units, which would have a continued currency beyond their period of funding and could be applied elsewhere. In addition a couple of projects had developed 'train the trainer' packages to allow new courses to be delivered more widely.

Projects also reported establishing new contacts, and engaging in wider network activity, as a result of their project activity. These were often thematic, focusing on environmental issues and sustainable development, and were also expected to have a life beyond their particular projects. Indeed one collaboration formed under ESF led to the submission of a bid to become a national skills academy for Environmental Technology, and a second project working with offenders described how their work had led to discussions with the Ministry of Justice around the concept of a 'green prison'.

More broadly, several providers described how participation in the project had led to an increased awareness of sustainable development and environmental issues within their own organisation. In one housing association-led project, project staff described how they had become more responsive to their tenants, and that visiting tenants to advise on energy efficiency in their homes also allows broader issues to be raised. The visits were considered to have improved relationships between the housing association and its tenants, not least when cost saving resulted from any improved efficiency.

In a final example, one project described how ESF funding had allowed them to develop and 'trial for real' a curriculum of provision targeting the construction industry, which would form the core 'training offer' for a new centre for sustainable development being established on a regeneration site in the South East. The project completed at the end of March, with delivery continuing from late April in the new purpose built centre, with the new courses developed being delivered across ten colleges and four universities across the region.

5.4.3 Evidencing demand

As the text above suggests, the majority of the case study projects had either achieved, or considered that they were likely to achieve, their performance targets before the end of their ESF funding. Although referring to a sample of just 11 projects, this finding suggests that demand exists for the services offered by the majority of projects within their individual catchment areas, with many taking a positive view in terms of future demand and the increased importance of green skills and jobs. Few examples were identified amongst the case studies where projects experienced low levels of demand for their services, and where they did they tended to be related to controlling demand flows across the year rather than an absence of demand.

However, it is also clear that much effort was exerted across the case studies to engage with participants and, in the case of employers, convince them that the costs of training (financial and otherwise) in this area are worth the benefits resulting. In many cases projects have had to work hard to convince employers of the need for change associated with the sustainable development agenda – raising awareness of new legislation and sustainable working practices, and communicating the opportunities that exist as the 'green' sector expands. While much headway has been made in terms of convincing employers of the importance of the green agenda, it is clear that future project activity will face similar challenges and that 'awareness raising' will remain a requirement for many. So while the experience of the case study projects is positive in terms of the demand for their services, their small number means that it is not possible to extrapolate from their experiences to forecast demand nationally.

5.4.4 Delivery challenges

Both the telephone survey and the project case studies described facing different challenges, the majority of which related to generic delivery issues while others were related to delivery around the sustainable development theme.

The challenges reported included:

- The current economic climate – perhaps the most frequently mentioned, which manifested itself in: difficulties in engaging with employers (who were no longer able or were reluctant to meet the costs of training); achieving job outcomes for disadvantaged clients in a tight labour market; difficulties in securing match/additional funding because of cut backs; and clients getting start-up funding for their businesses. However, one project had benefited from the current climate, by being able to recruit high quality, well experienced staff that they would otherwise have been unable to afford.
- Finding experienced tutors to meet demand – several projects reported difficulties in identifying suitable qualified and experienced tutors to meet demand, which was most often addressed by extending partnership networks to include other public and private sector providers. However, in one case this had led to a project ‘putting the brakes on’ recruitment in certain areas of provision.
- The absence of appropriate sustainable development/green skill qualifications – which in many cases led projects to develop and accredit new qualifications or modules, or amend existing provision to be attractive to employers as well as meeting their needs.
- The qualifications development process – as described previously this was challenging for some of the projects, taking longer than planned and so impacting on delivery. The main challenges were identifying appropriate existing qualifications to ‘bolt’ provision on to, and having to adjust to the realities of the market (e.g. market research identified that employers wanted something different).
- The costs of taking time away from work – a general issue with providing workforce development, especially to hard to reach employers, is reducing the costs to employers of time away from work. This was being addressed through approaches such as delivering provision in discrete blocks at a time convenient for the employer, and providing training at the employer’s premises.
- Geography – with several projects referring to the challenges of delivering across rural and sparsely populated areas, and the difficulties of delivering across the South East region due to its shape and scale. Other rurally based projects also referred to the absence of large employers, who can exert pressures for change down the supply chain and drive demand forward.
- The changing political agenda – the change of Government, and thereby policies and priorities, impacted on some projects, for example, the incentive for some environmental activities has been taken away thus reducing the demand for it.
- Multi-partner working, particularly the logistics of working with a number of partners – particularly when partnerships are new or existing partnerships feature new partner organisations. The ITM projects also referred to the effort required in establishing their transnational partnerships, and while many of the links established had proved or promised to be fruitful, others seemed less likely to provide real benefits.
- Working with hard to help clients – while the environment was shown to be an attractor for certain hard to help groups, this still provided challenges in terms of the range and intensity of support needed to work with such clients, as well as the difficulties in progressing them to a standard where they could progress to work or further training.

Other challenges mentioned were: having to carry out health and safety risk assessments, and; competing with other business support programmes. In most cases, projects have been able to respond to these challenges by changing the nature of their provision, working with other partners, providing dedicated support for clients and identifying other sources of funding.

Several projects also made reference to the challenges they faced as a result of using ESF funding, and the requirements imposed nationally or by their CFO. These included:

- The requirement for participants to both live and work in the same region – which was a particular issue for a South East based project based on the borders of a London Borough.
- The ability to work solely with SMEs – which limited their ability to work with market leaders and influencers, which tended to be larger employers – and to only offer an individual a single piece of provision – limiting the extent to which progression could be offered across a suite of provision.
- The burden of ESF administration – although the majority of project staff had previous experience of delivering and administering ESF projects, several made comment about the scale of administration required and the differences in the requirements of different CFOs. One project noted ironically that the administration of ESF should itself be ‘sustainability proofed’, which they hoped would lead to a reduction in the volume of paperwork that providers and participants are required to complete by their CFO.
- A lack of understanding within employers about learner eligibility, combined with variable awareness of what has been received previously and so rendering learners ineligible.

5.5 Effective practice and success factors

The project case studies explored what had worked well in the delivery of projects under the vertical and ‘green tinge’ themes, and identified a series of key success factors for project delivery. Many of the resulting key success factors identified could apply to the delivery of training-based projects at the generic level. These included:

- providing quality provision – both in terms of content but also the way in which courses were delivered. In many cases the new and amended provision offered was delivered as short/bite sized courses, often on a modular basis, in response to the preferences expressed by employers;
- providing flexible provision – cited by projects working with both employers/employees and other individuals, with employees/employers valuing a modular approach where options could be selected to meet their needs and delivered at a location of their choice, and other individuals welcoming the range of options offered by their projects. Flexibility was also key in ensuring that individual interventions fit in with needs of the client groups in terms of timing, intensity and learning styles;
- experienced project staff – who combined project management skills, prior experience of ESF and an at least working knowledge of the sustainable development agenda; and
- strong and effective project partnerships – whose membership provide the range of direct and indirect inputs to project delivery, as well as the expertise and experience required. Interviewees spoke positively about having a range of partners to draw experience and expertise from, having specialist inputs, ensuring referral organisations are involved and ensuring openness and effective communications.

More specific examples of success factors for projects working in the sustainable development field identified included:

- Developing attractive, credible and evidence based interventions to ensure sufficient demand is generated from their target group. This was a result of several factors, including having a research component at the start of the project, drawing on specialist advice as necessary, and working closely with the target group (and particularly employers) in developing the intervention to ensure its appropriateness.
- Using sector specialists – while the majority of the lead providers were experienced in the delivery of training around sustainable development and associated topics, many also called upon the services of expert and specialist service providers within their project partnerships. Their roles varied between providing advice on the development of packages of provision to the delivery of training, often at a high level within their specialist fields.
- Delivering training outside of the classroom – each of the projects working with unemployed or inactive individuals described how provision based outside of the classroom was attractive to certain groups of participants, including disengaged young people and other hard to reach groups. This emphasised the use of the environment/sustainable development issues as ‘hooks’ to capture attention and promote engagement.

Finally, the ability to access funding under ESF, which allowed new approaches to be developed and trialled in comparison to mainstream funding, was an important factor for the majority of the projects. Indeed virtually all of the vertical projects responding to the project survey (95 per cent) claimed that their activities would not have gone ahead without ESF funding.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter provides the study conclusions and recommendations, based on the findings set out throughout the report.

6.1 Conclusions

The European Social Fund (ESF) is a key component of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, the primary objective of which is to reduce differences in prosperity across the EU by increasing employment (through the provision of training and support to unemployed and disadvantaged groups) and through the provision of training to raise skills and lead to a more competitive workforce.

Within this context, the study has shown how ESF also contributes towards the sustainable development agenda in two ways – first by ensuring that project delivery minimises any negative environmental impacts and complies with EU regulations, and second by funding discrete projects which seek to improve skills to exploit employment in the sustainable development field.

Our conclusions have been structured to reflect the aim of the study, aim and key areas for investigation below.

6.1.1 Progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan

The Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan aims to mainstream sustainable development to ensure that the ESF regulatory requirements are met and to encourage providers to reduce any negative environmental impacts resulting from their activities. It also sets out a series of objectives, with those of direct relevance to the study including:

- Objective 1 – That a high level of commitment to the promotion of sustainable development is expressed throughout the current ESF programme, and that partners understand the importance of the cross-cutting theme.
- Objective 2 – That the knowledge and capacity of key staff in Co-Financing Organisation (CFOs) and Managing Authority (MA) will be developed to ensure the sustainable development theme is mainstreamed and that the environment is taken into account in programme delivery.
- Objective 3 – By December 2009, sustainable development will have become a highly visible cross-cutting theme, sustained through the remaining years of the programme.

The findings of the study support those set out in the most recent Mainstreaming Plan progress report, in that:

- The profile of environmental sustainable development has been raised considerably in the current compared to the previous programme round, reflecting the increased emphasis placed upon it by the MA and reinforced through guidance materials provided and other support available to CFOs and providers.
- This has translated to an enhanced commitment to the cross-cutting theme at all levels – although understanding of what the theme meant and the resulting implications were not always clear amongst the CFO staff interviewed, suggesting that work remains to be done before a common understanding is reached.

- Efforts to increase the knowledge of MA and CFO staff and their capability to support the implementation of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme appear to have been successful, with the sustainable development toolkit and the training programme for Government Office (GO) and CFO staff being widely seen as useful and valuable.
- However, current changes in the ESF infrastructure, primarily the restructuring of the Skills Funding Agency and the loss of the GOs, means that the skills and experience developed may be lost. These changes, and their implications for the ongoing and future management of the programme, are ongoing, but their impact is likely to be substantial, and raises questions for the implementation and subsequent monitoring around the horizontal theme.
- Despite these concerns, it is clear that sustainable development is now a more prominent feature in ESF programming – as reflected in the enhanced support to ensure compliance with the horizontal theme.
- Overall, the study concludes that the sustainable development has succeeded in becoming a highly visible cross-cutting theme, with compliance with the horizontal theme being enforced and providers supported to develop policies and plans as appropriate. However:
 - while many CFOs described monitoring the implementation of provider sustainable development plans, this process was often light touch, piecemeal and frequently left little impression with the projects interviewed;
 - CFOs also described the challenges in their monitoring activities, not least as there are no specific quantified measures or good practice examples to measure provider progress against;
 - despite efforts to promote projects with a focus on sustainable development, comparatively few appear to have been proposed and received funding. The study attempted to identify vertical projects in each English regions, with fewer than 30 projects being identified (and excluding the Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming (ITM) Skills for Climate Change projects) representing a small share of all the projects funded. Where they were identified, these projects tended to be clustered in a small number of regions – suggesting that opportunities exist for new projects to be supported across the remaining regions.

6.1.2 Defining and understanding green skills within ESF, and how ESF is contributing to providing green skills

The study found that most GOs, CFOs and projects were satisfied with how the requirements of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme were communicated to them. However, many of the programme stakeholders interviewed showed a variable understanding of what exactly was meant by the term ‘green skills’, while recognising that the concept of ‘green skills and jobs’ was a relatively new concept the parameters of which are broad and open to interpretation. In many cases a more specific definition, with illustrative examples, was considered a useful addition to any future guidance materials.

The study identified a range of ESF supported projects making a direct contribution to green skills, although as suggested above these were relatively few in number. While the report provides examples of the nature and coverage of these vertical projects, it also identified that projects may also use the environment/sustainable development related activities as a means of engaging with disengaged and disadvantaged groups and providing skills and other support to help them progress towards employment. These projects are referred to in this report as ‘green tinge’ projects, as their objectives may primarily focus on moving individuals towards the labour market rather than providing green skills per se.

The vertical projects consulted in the study were found to be supporting the development of green skills in a variety of areas and levels – from basic awareness raising on the importance of environmental considerations to high level training in specialist areas. As a whole, the vertical projects shared many of the common features of ESF projects, in terms of their delivery approaches, target groups, interventions supported and outcomes. However, the projects differed from the norm in that they could require specialist inputs, and providers reported that difficulties could be experienced in identifying sufficient numbers or tutors (or external subcontractors where such inputs were required).

One issue identified in the study was the apparent lack of accredited qualifications in some sustainable development topic areas, which had led several to develop and accredit new provision. Both their experiences of the qualifications development process, and the new qualifications resulting, are of wider value and may be of interest to partners such as the Skills Funding Agency or individual Sector Skills Councils. Indeed, as one provider described, it will be important in future that the development of new qualifications keeps up with changes in the sustainable development sector. As the projects developing new qualifications were doing so in isolation of each other, there may be value in the Skills Funding Agency and/or Sector Skills Councils investigating the qualifications developed to influence mainstream provision in the future.

One important issue addressed by the study was whether demand existed for the services provided by the vertical projects, and whether this demand would continue into the future. Much has been written around the topic of new and emerging green skills and jobs, with the common view that this is an area where new opportunities for growth and employment exist. On the basis of the experience of the projects consulted for the study, and that the majority have either exceeded or consider they are likely to meet or exceed their participation targets, it would appear that demand exists in the experience of the projects consulted at least. However, given the small number of projects delivering under the vertical theme, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the level of future demand for services nationally.

6.1.3 Effectiveness of provider sustainable development policies, and the incorporation of sustainable development into procurement approaches

The study identified that the vast majority of projects consulted had sustainable development policies in place, although one in five reported not having a sustainable development plan.

For the most part, provider policies and plans pre-dated the current ESF programme, and were driven by a range of requirements outside of the requirements of ESF. Consequently ESF appeared to have only a limited on the development of policies and plans amongst the projects interviewed – although it is possible that in some cases their policies and plans may have been developed under the previous programme round given variations in organisational memory. However, in several cases the ESF requirements had served to maintain provider momentum and commitment to sustainable development, as well as to stimulate the development of policies and plans in organisations where these did not exist previously.

In terms of influencing subcontracting arrangements under ESF, over two-thirds of the projects using subcontractors required them to have sustainable development policies and plans in place. The remaining projects described expecting their subcontractors to have similar mechanisms in place, either due to their size or the nature of their areas of provision.

Despite the high share of projects with policies and plans in place, the majority of providers still considered a continued need existed for support to meet the requirements of the theme – notably concerning action plans and their implementation, generic support for smaller organisations, and in forming links to share good practice with other providers. There appeared to be strong support for the development of a provider network around sustainable development, with a view to sharing good practice and forming collaborative links.

Elsewhere, evidence was provided of the beneficial impact that the support provided by GOs and CFOs could have. Where CFOs and others had actively resourced the development of provider policies and plans, the impact on resulting policies and plans was positive.

6.1.4 Good practice in encouraging sustainable development

As described above, the support provided by GOs and CFOs was welcomed and valued by projects. This support took a variety of forms, including:

- provider workshops – which focused on the horizontal and/or vertical aspects of the cross-cutting theme and other communication events;
- the provision of additional guidance to that produced by the Managing Authority – to interpret the guidance where this was considered necessary, as well as contextualising it at the regional level; and
- the use of sustainable development champions – operating at the regional level and funded with Technical Assistance monies.

Other areas of good practice included the involvement of specialist stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency and other local and regional specialists, and the establishment of links with ERDF programmes and teams (with sustainable development being more prominent than in ESF). As described above, providers considered that continued support for sustainable development was necessary, and that this should be provided early in the programme cycle and be available on an ongoing basis.

6.1.5 The influence of sustainable development policy and delivery on mainstream provision

At this point it is difficult to establish the influence of ESF sustainability requirements, although over half of the projects consulted felt that they had impacted on their activities in some way. Of these 59 per cent considered that meeting the ESF requirements had increased their awareness of the importance of minimising negative environmental impacts, and 55 per cent that they had raised the profile of sustainability issues within their organisation. Finally, over half (55 per cent) reported that they had introduced sustainable development approaches into services funded from sources other than ESF – all of which suggest that the ESF sustainable development requirements were impacting on providers' internal and external activities.

Consequently, it is not clear to what extent the sustainable development requirements have influenced mainstream provision, although as described above there are positive indications. As described earlier, at very least projects considered that the ESF requirements had helped to maintain the profile and commitment to sustainable development internally, as well as providing an impetus for change amongst their partners and subcontractors.

6.2 Recommendations

Our recommendations regarding the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme are provided below.

6.2.1 Horizontal

- Continue to provide support to commissioners and providers in understanding the requirements under ESF and formulating policies and plans where required – although the study found high levels of compliance with the horizontal theme with many providers having existing policies and plans in place, both providers and CFOs considered that support will continue to be needed.
- In providing support in future:
 - Continue to support the use of the sustainable development toolkit introduced in the current programme round;
 - Consider new ways of developing and promoting the sustainable development toolkit; and
 - Provide support to CFOs and providers within the constraint of reduced resources – perhaps through network-based approaches as suggested below, and by scheduling future provision to match key stages in the project procurement and contracting cycle.
- Consider reviewing the current approach to monitoring the implementation of sustainable development plans. Current monitoring practice was found to be variable, with little evidence that the process was influencing change in provider practice. However, this poses a dilemma – more comprehensive monitoring of plan implementation will require additional CFO staff resources, which appears unlikely given the changes in the ESF infrastructure. The future monitoring approach is an important area for clarification as part of developments for the 2013 programme period. Although as above, firm decisions can only be made once more is known about potential resources and then a practicable approach can be formulated.
- Seek to develop provider networks focusing on sustainable development – on a virtual or physical basis and funded through Technical Assistance. The network could include both horizontal and vertical projects, with an initial objective of which could be to explore the development of quantitative measures of impact for the horizontal theme.
- Provide good practice examples of sustainable development policies and plans – to allow CFOs and providers to benchmark policies and plans against the best.

6.2.2 Vertical

Here our recommendations apply to the remainder of the current programme, and as far as possible at this time, the future 2013 programme.

- Seek to increase the number of vertical projects – potentially by:
 - considering a discrete strand of activity within the next programme dedicated to sustainable development activities;
 - promoting sustainable development projects alongside other ESF projects in future guidance materials;
 - emphasising the expectation, through guidance for the next programme period, that vertical projects will be actively promoted within each region; and
 - working with CFOs to promote vertical projects, by illustrating the links and potential contribution to their own sustainable development strategies, and ensuring that they feature in CFO tendering rounds.

- Ensure that new guidance materials provide:
 - a working definition of what constitutes green skills and jobs;
 - examples of vertical projects under the current programme – to illustrate the types of activities and target groups that can be supported, and what this can be for participants; and
 - reference to the key success factors for sustainable development projects.

The box below provides a potential working definition of green skills and jobs, with a focus on practical implementation and linked to project examples.

Defining green skills and jobs

There are many definitions of green skills and jobs, which attempt to encapsulate the wide range of occupations and industrial sectors where green skills and jobs exist. For example, the United Nations Environment Programme defines green jobs as ‘work in agricultural, manufacturing, research and development (R&D), administrative, and service activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that help to protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high efficiency strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether avoid generation of all forms of waste and pollution¹.’ However, as a recent CEDEFOP report² describes, in future every job will be a green job, as employer decision making increasingly includes environmental considerations, and new jobs are emerging and existing occupations changing to meet the challenges of the low carbon economy.

Irrespective of the definitions applied, the implications are clear – there is a need to re-train the actual and potential workforce to: respond to structural changes, meet the skill needs of new green occupations, and respond to the requirement for new skills/address skills gaps resulting from the greening of existing job roles and occupations.

From a practical perspective, ESF can support project activities which:

- seek to raise awareness of the importance of environmental considerations in the workplace, and support the development of practical responses to ensure compliance with legislation and the adoption of good practice;
- support employers and the actual and potential workforce to develop the skills necessary to exploit the opportunities that arise from the ‘green economy’; and
- promote the development of new activities within the green economy and more widely, and the employment opportunities they offer, as well as contributing towards efforts to minimise negative environmental impacts of existing activities.

There are many examples of ESF funded activities which address these broad and interlinked issues, for example:

- projects working with employers and their staff across all sectors to ensure they have the skills in place to meet new legislative requirements – for example in the construction sector, where new skills are required to meet legislative requirements and new working practices;

¹ http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf

² Skills for Green Jobs, UK Report, CEDEFOP 2010.

- projects working with employers to exploit new opportunities – either resulting from new technologies or the ‘greening’ of existing activities for competitive advantage, for example working with the tourism sector to promote ‘green tourism’;
- projects supporting the development of new job types, and new skill requirements, in emerging and new technologies – for example working with firms in the renewable energy sector to develop the capability to install and maintain photovoltaic systems; and
- projects working with individuals not in employment to ensure they are able to compete for jobs where green skills are required.

(Links can then be added to ESF Works and/or other locations to provide examples of vertical projects as appropriate).

- Build upon the work undertaken by the vertical projects to develop new qualifications in sustainable development, through the Skills Funding Agency or Sector Skills Councils, to support the development of a range of accredited qualifications in the sustainable development sector.
- Provide access to specialist support and advice to help develop CFO strategies and prospectuses, where this is not available within the individual CFO.
- Finally, while this study focused on vertical projects in terms of ESF’s contribution to the sustainable development agenda locally and nationally, one important finding was that sustainable development and environment related training could also contribute to other agendas. As our ability to explore these ‘green tinge’ projects was limited, we suggest that:
 - further investigation takes place to characterise these projects, and explore their potential for engaging hard to reach clients in more detail; and
 - examples of such approaches are promoted in new guidance and other ESF materials to add to the body of knowledge on engaging challenging groups.

Appendix A

Case study summaries

Gateway to Suscon

1 Project introduction and background

The Gateway to Suscon project operated between October 2009 and 31 March 2011, and received just under £2 million European Social Fund (ESF) funding, co-financed by SEEDA, under Priority 2 of Competitiveness. The project is led by North West Kent College, working with a range of partners including colleges, universities and public and private sector organisations, and featured the development and delivery of a modular programme of sustainable development training for the construction industry and unemployed individuals.

The Gateway to Suscon project is part of a wider strategic approach to the greening of the construction industry in the South East, which includes the development of a centre for sustainable development opening in April 2011. The wider Suscon vision began in 2004 with an investment from Kent County Council to develop an exemplar visitor centre (to include skills development and an R and D function) based on a major regeneration site in Dartford.

As well as exceeding its targets, the project also won the South East and National ESF Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Leader Awards in 2010, and had just been informed they had won a Green Apple Award.

The project sought to address gaps in the market and unmet needs for training on sustainable development for the construction industry, where legislative pressures and market opportunities exist side by side. The project recognised that previous training for the sector tended to be grouped by discipline – e.g. for architects, building contractors, planners, etc – when sustainable development issues lend themselves to more of a thematic approach. To address this issue, and the fact that employers showed most interest in short, focused provision, a modular training matrix was developed which featured existing, amended and new provision across eight subject areas, delivered through short courses of five days duration or less.

Much preparatory research was undertaken prior to the development of the project, which identified that demand for such provision existed and that there were gaps in the market across the region. A Curriculum Advisory group was formed, featuring a range of large employers and the University of Greenwich, to comment on the project idea and new provision developed in terms of meeting the sector's needs. The project could also draw upon the specialist knowledge and experience across the partnership group, including the Institute for Sustainability, to ensure that the main drivers for the project were set firmly in identified demand and future skills needs.

2 The project

The project aims to raise the skills and knowledge of individuals employed in the construction industry, or who are currently unemployed, regarding sustainable development practices and principles within the industry. The training was based on a modular curriculum, based on common themes rather than specific construction disciplines, and comprised short courses of up to five day duration. It targeted employees in Small to medium sized enterprise (SMEs), the self-employed, unemployed or economically inactive individuals, across the South East region.

The project was led by North West Kent College, working with an existing partnership group and extending across a wider delivery partnership including colleges, universities and specialist private providers across the South East. Partners' roles included providing specialist support, ensuring strategic fit with the wider Suscon ambitions, and help with marketing and employer engagement.

The project was managed through three groups:

- A Steering Group – which focused on the detail of project management and meeting the requirements of ESF funding.
- A Curriculum Advisory Group – comprising a flexible group of 20 large employers across a range of disciplines working on a virtual basis to comment on the new courses developed in terms of demand, overall suitability and ability to meet employer needs.
- A Liaison and Marketing Group – which focused on marketing and communications work.

3 The project delivery model

The project marketed and promoted itself through a variety of routes:

- Employers/employees – through a combination of existing and new contacts, presentations from project staff to employer groups and business networks, local ads and mailshots, leaflets, link on Business Link website, large employers on the Curriculum Advisory Group, Sector Skills Council meetings, etc.
- Individuals – again a variety of routes were followed to raise awareness, including attending Jobcentre Plus and other events for the unemployed and establishing referral relationships with Jobcentre Plus advisors, regional IAG providers and other actors working with the unemployed across the region.

Research undertaken by the project showed the most common awareness raising routes differed by employment status, and included via colleges/universities, friends and colleagues, Jobcentre Plus, employers and job/trade fairs.

On joining the project individuals' (employed and unemployed) needs were assessed and appropriate training provided.

The training was delivered at West Kent College's base in Dartford and a range of sites across the South East – including partner colleges and universities (including West and Mid-Kent Colleges and the Universities of Greenwich and Portsmouth), community venues (such as community centres, Jobcentre Plus offices and Sure Start centres), and on employer premises.

Central to the project was the development of 30 new or re-designed courses, offering modular provision of up to five days across a range of subject areas. These courses are set out in the Gateway to Suscon Training Matrix, which groups the provision under eight subject areas and overview courses, ranging from entry level to level 7 and including introductory 'overview' courses. The new provision is innovative in that, unlike previous training, it is based on sustainable development themes rather than construction disciplines – reflecting the finding of the preparatory research that employers need a mix of skills.

The courses were delivered to mixed groups of individuals, often from different construction disciplines. This was considered a strength by the project staff and the employers contacted – with the sharing of experience and practice being described as 'enlightening'.

Most commonly unemployed participants would attend an ‘overview’ course, followed by a second course to investigate options in more detail. This would combine with access to Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services, provided by Babcock (formerly the Kent Guidance Consortium), which as well as advice on suitable courses also included help with CV production, interview skills and jobsearch activity.

On completion, participants would complete evaluation forms to identify their achievements and experiences of the training received, and any additional training needs. Each evaluation form received was reviewed by the project team, to check the quality of delivery and the participant experience, and to take action if required.

4 Project performance

At the time of the case study visit the project had already met, or exceeded, its performance targets, with almost 2,000 individuals receiving training, over 700 of whom were unemployed, and engaging over 500 employers. Targets for achievement were also exceeded, with over 1,000 individuals gaining units towards part qualifications and 52 units towards apprenticeship frameworks.

The performance of the project has confirmed that demand exists for awareness raising and training around the theme of sustainable development, and that the approach followed by the project has allowed them to engage effectively with both employers and individuals.

The main benefits and impacts for both **employed and unemployed participants** resulted from the training received. Unemployed participants also benefited from the opportunity to work alongside industry to gain experience. An independent survey commissioned by the project to explore the effectiveness of the training provided found that:

- the provision met expectations in 83 per cent of cases, with the participants considering it had improved their understanding of sustainable development in the construction industry;
- the majority of respondents considered that the course had helped them at work or jobsearch activities: with 22 per cent considering their business practice had improved, 22 per cent that their understanding of sustainable development had increased, and 11 per cent that their course helped with jobsearch activities – with further benefits being expected in the future; and
- an impressive 98 per cent of respondents suggested they would recommend the course to others, with others identifying areas of training they would be interested in for the future.

The three employers interviewed as part of the case study reflected these findings, each being highly satisfied with the training received and expressing the intention to use Suscon provision again. They cited a range of benefits including increased awareness of the importance of sustainable development from a legislative and business competitiveness perspective and improved practical understandings around new environmental technologies.

The project also reported a series of wider strategic benefits, supporting progress towards the wider Suscon vision of being a focus for sustainable development across the region, including:

- developing a flexible and innovative curriculum which will form the core provision offer at the new Suscon centre – and beyond through FE colleges and Universities in the region;
- raising the profile of the centre and extending the service offer to include large employers, who are showing an interest and getting involved in the training;
- evidencing that need and demand exist for provision in the construction industry, and that the short course, modular provision developed is both attractive and effective; and

- strengthening local and regional networks around sustainable development, with a positive view looking forward.

The project has continued to identify both gaps in the training market and in the capacity to address them – for example tutors at other colleges are now showing an interest in engaging with Suscon as a way of updating their knowledge.

5 Good practice and key success factors

A series of elements were felt to have worked particularly well, and represented key success factors for delivery, including:

- the high quality of provision – with the thematic ‘training matrix’ approach offering ‘bite sized’ modular provision to meet specific needs;
- a strong partnership and partnership approach in the region – with pre-existing working relationships and mutual trust, and good operational links into the target market;
- setting the training activity within the wider Suscon strategy – with the links between the project and the wider ambitions of Suscon being mutually self-reinforcing, and a clear vision to work towards;
- the amount of engagement from, and grounding the project in, the industry had been key – with the use of industry specialists to develop course ideas and employers to comment on the provision through the Curriculum Advisory Group being particularly effective;
- being proactive in engaging learners – while the project exceeded its targets for participation, this required considerable effort and a proactive approach by the project team;
- securing high quality of staff to work on the project – including well qualified and experienced staff who had been recently made redundant; and
- receiving constant feedback from the provision delivered – especially when new provision was being delivered for the first time.

ESF funding had allowed the training to be developed earlier than would have been the case otherwise, a wide range of provision to be trialled, and supported efforts to promote the new centre and the aims of Suscon more widely.

6 Project continuation/sustainability

The project activities will continue using funding secured from the Homes and Communities Agency, SEEDA and the Skills Funding Agency for the development of a new Suscon building. Delivery will continue to be managed by North West Kent College, with provision continuing from 27 April in the new centre.

7 Learning for similar projects

The project staff and stakeholders identified the following learning from their experience:

- The importance of the ‘big picture’/wider strategy.
- Having access to ‘experts’ in their fields – with the role of project staff, the Institute for Sustainability and others being key.
- Taking time to set-up pre-delivery is vital – even when deadlines are tight and targets high, holding your nerve to make sure everything is in place worked for them.

- Having an independent position – which offered what was felt to be a unique opportunity to engage across the construction industry.
- Proving that a ‘thematic’ approach to training works! – mirroring the reality and ‘the heart’ of sustainable construction.
- Much remains to be done to change the practice of a sector as diverse as construction.
- Rapid and continued change will continue to be required to keep up with legislation and technological development – can actors such as the QCF ensure that recognised provision keeps up?

GreenWays to Work

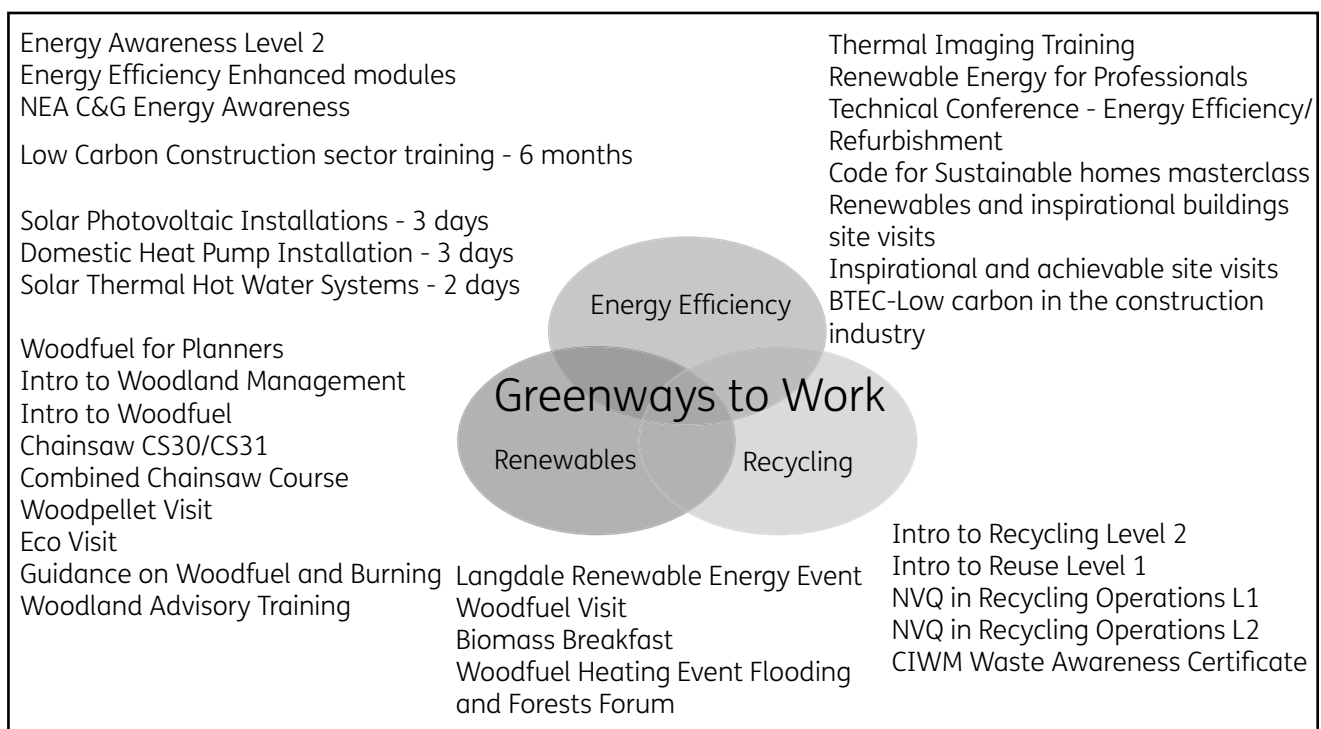
1 Project introduction and background

The GreenWays to Work project runs from August 2009 until July 2012. The maximum ESF funding is £806,000 which the project has had to match fund from a variety of other sources. The project is led by Impact Housing, a housing association in Cumbria which lets around 2,500 houses across the county, however, there are substantial contributions made by partner organisations.

The project delivers training in three areas: recycling, renewable technologies and energy efficiency, however, improving the skill base and sustainability of the green industries in the sub-region is only one of the rationales for the project. The core rationale for the project is related to Impact Housing’s role as a Housing Association: a large proportion of their tenants suffer from fuel poverty (defined as spending more than ten per cent of income on fuel). This project, and much of Impact Housing’s work around green skills, originally grew from attempts to address this issue through trying to ensure that the houses they manage have cavity wall insulation and other fuel efficiency measures. In summary, the contract ‘provides a vehicle to train up people across Cumbria to provide energy saving advice to tackle fuel poverty’. There is also a strong focus on ensuring that the recipients of the training and any new jobs created are in Cumbria.

2 The project

Figure A.1 Overview of GreenWays to Work



As illustrated in Figure A.1, GreenWays to Work is best understood as carrying out work under three themes: Renewables, Energy Efficiency and Recycling. Figure A.1 also outlines the current courses provided in each area but has the flexibility to respond to identified need. Under each of these three themes, GreenWays to Work has subcontracted partners to carry out capacity building, training and awareness raising activities.

Renewables

- **Lakes College West Cumbria**, a local FE college, is delivering training in the installation of several micro-generation technologies.
- **Cumbria Woodlands**, a specialist training and consultancy organisation, is delivering training and awareness raising activities in a wide range of skills related to forest management and wood fuel, a relatively new renewable fuel technology. This training and awareness raising activity spans the supply and demand chain of wood fuel. It involves teaching people how to cut down and process timber from trees, manage woodland areas (e.g. outlining how farmers with woodland can manage this better to provide wood for the biomass industry – and make money), through to awareness raising activities for architects and planners about the possibilities of including wood burners in new/existing properties.

Energy efficiency

- **Impact Housing** is delivering courses which aim to enable their workforce to provide IAG in increasing the energy efficiency of their housing stock to their tenants. The bespoke course has also been offered to frontline staff in other housing associations and social care agencies.
- **CAFS**, a local training and lobbying organisation, is delivering a range of training courses and awareness raising activities aimed at planners throughout Cumbria in order to outline the range of energy efficiency technologies available. The aim is that in the event that town planners review proposals with these technologies included, they do so with knowledge of the advantages of the technologies. ‘Cumbria has a “*certain type*” of building stock’ often with strict development laws. This activity is designed to ensure planners are aware of the possibilities of energy efficiency technologies and don’t automatically reject applications. CAFS is also delivering awareness raising activities among householders in order to highlight the opportunities associated with energy efficiency products.

Recycling

- In addition to being a Housing Association, **Impact Housing** runs four recycling centres across Cumbria. There are crossovers with their role as a landlord – for example, Impact Housing is able to recycle donated used furniture/sell second-hand recycled furniture and refurbished white goods to low income households. This ESF contract has been used for two purposes:
 - Impact Housing provides a number of voluntary/work placements for local people and those who are unemployed. They used the ESF contract to develop a bespoke Level 1 qualification aimed at accrediting the learning that these volunteers achieve while working at recycling centres.
 - For those who already work at Impact Housing’s recycling centres, they also developed a level 2 qualification which extends and accredits the knowledge they already have.
 - They are also providing Train the Trainer courses for identified staff at each recycling site in order that the training can continue after the life of the ESF contract.

3 The project delivery model

As noted above, GreenWays to Work is a project with a variety of different delivery models. The project delivers, 'A continuum of non-accredited and accredited training' for a range of people (from those who are without work through to people in high skilled jobs). The training also varies from 'light touch 2 ½ hour sessions through to full traineeships.' In total, across the three themes this contract provides more than 30 different training courses. Therefore, it is difficult to describe a generic delivery model. However, it is possible to outline some general points within each of the three focused sectors:

Renewable fuels

There are two components to this. Firstly, Lakes College, West Cumbria has been contracted to deliver training in the installation of solar voltaic cells, domestic heat pumps and solar thermal hot water systems. These courses are aimed at local construction and plumbing companies. Recruitment has been fairly straightforward – the college hosted an open evening for local companies and, after explaining that the courses were free, there was widespread sign up. Learners take a small amount of time off work to complete the courses which are delivered at the college and their learning is accredited if they pass an exam at the end of the course. The key driver behind this is that once they are accredited, they are able to help customers access government funding. This is the key driver behind demand for these courses.

GreenWays to Work has also partnered with a local organisation called Cumbria Woodlands to provide training and awareness raising activity in the wood fuel industry which is a fast growing sector of the renewables sector. The activity commissioned ranges from provision of training to foresters, about how to use trees as fuel, through to awareness raising and training for planners and architects about the possibilities of installing wood-fuel technologies in homes.

Energy efficiency

This strand of work is split into two sections as well. Firstly, Impact Housing is providing accredited training to their own staff (including volunteers and those on work placement), as well as frontline social care staff from a range of external organisations. The training aims to equip staff members with the skills to advise low income households about how to make their homes more energy efficient. This was the original goal of the contract – to address the fuel poverty of those living in Impact Housing's houses. Recruitment of these learners is straightforward, as most of them are already employed by Impact Housing and similar organisations.

In addition, Impact Housing has partnered with Cumbria Action for Sustainability to carry out another broad set of activities ranging from awareness raising in energy efficiency among planners and architects (as well as householders) through to provision of training to local people in energy efficiency technologies. Cumbria Action for Sustainability has contacts in the local planning departments in the councils in Cumbria; these are used as the chief source of learners.

Recycling

Impact Housing has also used this ESF contract to train staff in its four recycling centres. This money has been used to upskill existing staff as well as bringing new staff in on voluntary placements (using local third and voluntary sector organisations in order to engage with these groups) and then providing training, with the end goal of entering employment with Impact Housing or other organisations working within this sector.

4 Project performance

The project has fairly modest targets of 310 positive outcomes for participants (as well as several equal opportunities targets). They have currently supported over 525, however, the contract lasts until July 2012, and by this time they are likely to have supported in excess of 1,000 learners.

‘GreenWays to Work’ is an Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming project (ITM) focused, for the most part, on upskilling people in employment. Impacts so far, therefore, have been related to improving the sustainability of participants’ jobs as well as trying to increase their awareness of environmental issues. For example, within the renewable fuels strand of the project, individuals who have undertaken the accredited training in installing the micro-generation equipment at Lakes College are then able to install the equipment for clients allowing them to access government funding by doing so. Therefore, it is a significant boost to their career prospects or the sustainability of a small business. The contract has also funded training in lower skilled jobs – for example, those who already work for Impact Housing and a broad range of other social care agencies who have undergone training in energy efficiency. This improves the sustainability of their job allowing them to offer a new additional service.

The project has also supported a new and developing industry – woodfuel. The flexibility the contract provides has allowed Cumbria Woodlands to develop a suite of training and development activities to support the development of this industry which was identified as a key growth industry for Cumbria.

5 Good practice and key success factors

There are a number of factors, which were felt to have been important in ensuring the success of this project.

- Impact Housing noted that the flexibility of their offer was a vital factor in the success. This flexibility operates in a number of ways. Firstly, they have 30+ courses on offer so they are able to attract individuals from a broad range of sectors/with a broad range of needs. This has helped with recruiting learners. Secondly, within each of the different components of this project (i.e. recycling, renewables and energy efficiency) there is a broad enough range of courses to suit the different needs of learners (for example, within the wood fuel sub-sector, there are 14 different courses on offer, this will increase during the life of the project). The ESF contract manager also demands flexibility from the providers – they have to demonstrate that they are able to offer flexible learning opportunities to learners, i.e. training delivered in the workplace or at a range of venues, e-learning opportunities are also in development, in order to accommodate, for example, those that need to be in work.
- The partner organisations are experts in the industries in which they have been contracted to deliver training. For example, Cumbria Woodlands has experience and contacts with people across the woodfuel supply chain. Lakes College are specialists in the delivery of training in renewable energy and have links with local employers and knowledge of the local strategic environment.
- The project management interviewees considered that the key success factor in their work so far had been that the training had been closely related to employment opportunities and this was the case across the wide variety of training funded. Once participants in the training to raise awareness of energy efficiency among Impact Housing’s tenants had completed their training, they were able to immediately use the skills within their job role. The training courses in how to install micro-generation equipment in homes are also associated with labour market opportunities (although, this is typically within the companies in which these individuals already work).

- The training and other funded activities are also closely related to other public sector opportunities such as the Cumbria Energy Coast and the feed-in tariff for renewable energy. This latter policy (brought in by the Coalition government) encourages home owners to invest in renewable energy technology at the micro level by providing a financial incentive for people to invest in micro-generation equipment. The courses provided by Lakes College under this ESF contract accredit trainees to help home owners gain access to the feed-in tariff.

6 Project continuation/sustainability

There are no clear plans to keep the majority of this contract going after completion. However, there are a number of activities which the contract has funded which will continue after the project is complete. For example, the capacity building activities which have been carried out in the woodfuel industry are likely to have a sustained impact on this extremely small and nascent industry. Cumbria Woodlands has been able to establish a 'Woodland Advisory Service' on the back of the success of their involvement in this ESF contract and this will sustain after the life of the project. In addition, the ESF contract has allowed the Lakes College to prove to other funders that there is a market for the training they are providing. As a result, the college has secured funding to build a dedicated renewable energy department. An e-learning package on energy awareness and a variety of new learning materials focusing on low carbon building will be a legacy of the project while the recycling training will have become an intrinsic part of the activities carried out at the recycling sites, provided by those who have accessed the Train the Trainer course.

7 Learning for similar projects

There are a number of points of pertinence to similar projects.

- For those beneficiaries of this contract who were not in employment upon engagement, interviewees emphasised the link that there needs to be between the training delivered and there being a job available at the end. If this employment opportunity is not there, it will be more difficult to recruit learners and the knowledge accrued may be lost.
- It also became clear that many of the industries/markets which this project has become involved with are at an immature stage of their development. This is particularly true of the wood fuel industry but also of the micro-generation and retrofitting industries. Therefore, the multi-faceted approach taken in this contract – providing a number of different types of training, as well as awareness raising activities – is important. These industries need more than just training for those already working in them; the industry might also need demand to be stimulated through awareness raising activities.
- With these nascent industries, it seems that providing IAG and going further to providing advocacy are two sides of the same coin. It is essential that passionate and knowledgeable experts are commissioned to carry out the work. This is especially true of the woodfuel industry. Individuals need to go beyond merely explaining what the woodfuel industry is; there needs to be a lobbying function to get these industries off the ground.
- ESF is addressing a market failure in many of these cases. Interviewees described how they are using the monies to prove there is a market for these skills prior to other funders/the private sector filling this gap.

Recycling lives

1 Project introduction and background

Achieve North West is the project manager for this ESF contract which is worth around £8 million (including the match funding which is provided by the National Offender Management Service). Recycling Lives is one of their delivery partners and the subject of this case study. It is a recycling and waste management firm which has a turnover of around £20 million per year, and employs around 200 people. Recycling Lives is a twin operation with a commercial waste management and recycling operation co-existing with a charity which seeks to support offenders, homeless people and those facing multiple disadvantage into employment in the recycling sector. Both parts of Recycling Lives' business model contribute to each other: the commercial side provides financial support for the charitable side as well as employment opportunities for the beneficiaries of the charitable arm (i.e. offenders). Conversely, the charitable activities of Recycling Lives are used to evidence the organisation's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility which has contributed to success in several contracts.

2 The project

Achieve North West's contract (and, by extension, Recycling Lives') seeks to reduce recidivism rates through helping offenders gain employment and learn new skills. This is the core rationale of this project, rather than providing green skills/jobs, which is very much a by-product.

The rationale for this is twofold: firstly, interviewees thought that the scrap business already employs many offenders (and has always done so), so why not formalise the situation and try to channel funds into training. Secondly, interviewees thought that '*Recycling Lives is an ethos...the employing these hard to reach groups is integral to this*'. Recycling Lives is piloting a model of support for these groups based in their premises in Preston which is a large purpose built office and light industrial complex. There are a small number of rooms available for homeless people trying to get their lives back together. In addition, there are a number of incubator business units (which provides an extra source of income) and an outreach centre of Preston College which offers courses to residents and Recycling Lives employees as well as other members of the public.

3 The project delivery model

The project delivery model is based on a case management approach:

Participants are typically engaged in the latter part of their prison sentence. An Offender Manager from within the prison refers individuals they think might be suitable for this project. An Achieve North West case manager visits them to discuss their plans to reintegrate to society post-prison and their goals with regard to gaining employment. This is the first point at which selection takes place. The case manager is looking for motivation to gain employment or to move forward with their lives. If this motivation is not clear, individuals will not be selected.

Achieve North West has several sub-contractors offering employment opportunities in different parts of the region. Participants are referred to different sub-contractors depending on the sector they are most interested in working in, and their location. Recycling Lives is seen as a 'good' sub-contractor in this regard; participants are often interested in working in the waste management sector. Upon referral, a meeting takes place between the Training Manager at Recycling Lives and the sub-regional manager of Achieve North West to discuss the particular needs of the individual. If it is decided that an individual is suitable (again, the key factor is motivation to improve their situation, rather than previous skills/experience), they will be invited to attend a two day preparation for employment course at Recycling Lives. This is basically a set of health and safety, COSHH,

manual handling and first aid training courses; the environment of Recycling Lives is quite dangerous therefore, safety is considered paramount. Assessors will be looking for evidence that participants are interested in gaining a job. At the end of the two day course, participants will undergo a job interview – again focused on identifying whether participants are motivated.

If successful, participants begin working in the ‘Bulky waste’ department. This is a contract Recycling Lives holds with Preston City Council which involves recycling materials which can be taken from any bulky waste dumped in the Preston area – e.g. sofas/televisions. This placement is followed by movements around other parts of the company, for example, if an individual has an interest in cars/mechanics, there are departments for recycling car parts. Once again, individuals are closely monitored to ensure they are trying to adjust to a working life. Their engagement from the project can end at this stage if there is evidence that they are not.

After this, participants are offered a 13 week work placement (working 2 days per week) and this is the first point at which they receive remuneration. At the end of this period, there is a job offer made or not, depending on the success of the placement. If individuals are unsuccessful in getting a job with Recycling Lives, they will have a meeting with one of the managers at Recycling Lives focussing on the employability skills they have learned. Assistance is provided in preparing the individual’s CV. It is thought that the experience they received at Recycling Lives will help them get another job (*‘It’s always easier to get work when you’re in work’*). They also provide a reference and signpost to other companies – there are similar companies in the area which they have contacts with. Recycling Lives plan to develop this job agency feature in the future.

4 Project performance

This contract runs between January 2010 and December 2011. Recycling Lives’ sub-contract with Achieve North West is to have 50 offenders starting the programme with 25 per cent of this group achieving long-term employment (either with Recycling Lives or somewhere else). Of the remaining 75 per cent, Recycling Lives has to deliver employability skills to as many as possible. It does this through the introductory sessions provided and building on these skills in the work placements. Given that this was the first ESF contract delivered by Recycling Lives, and the risks of the client group with which they are working, the targets set in the sub-contract were quite conservative; they are likely to be increased significantly in future ESF contracts. In the next contract round, this target will increase to 200 offenders. Achieve North West has to help 2,200 offenders with the same 25 per cent: 75 per cent split as the sub-contract they hold with Recycling Lives.

5 Good practice and key success factors

Interviewees presented a number of success factors which have contributed to the achievements of this project, so far.

- Interviewees at Recycling Lives stated that: *‘We can literally make jobs for people’*. They have enough work available at their recycling yard that they are able to provide work for people if need be. Moreover, there is such a variety of work available (variety within the types of goods being recycled; within the types of skills required e.g. fork lift truck driving or manual handling skills; and between locations – e.g. there are office jobs available as well as the more manual tasks). This means that the skills and interests of participants can usually be met.
- Constant monitoring and the case management approach ensures that the risks associated with employing offenders are minimised. The programme set out in this ESF contract was likened to *‘A 13 week job interview’*. This means that by the end of the placement Recycling Lives knows whether or not participants will be a successful employee or not. Moreover, disengagement can take place at any point if behaviour is a concern.

- The training manager described that a key way of teaching the green skills they offer (NVQs in Waste Management, chiefly) is ‘learning by stealth’. It is all learning on the job and this is seen as the best way of teaching these skills as well as teaching this client group.

6 Project continuation/sustainability

There are several points of sustainability attached to this contract. Firstly, the current contract between Achieve North West and Recycling Lives is seen as a successful trial run. It is due to be extended in the next contract round since they have proven it works. Secondly, the charitable arm of Recycling Lives aims to grow significantly over the next few years. They hope to extend the Recycling Lives centres to other towns in Lancashire, in the first instance, and then beyond. There have been expressions of interest from several locations. The centre at Preston is seen as a trial run of this approach.

7 Learning for similar projects

Key points for similar projects include highlighting the importance of vocational learning in this sector and with these clients: ‘*Training people outside of the classroom is key to success in this sector*’. The flexibility of provision is vital – learning needs to take place wherever is best for the learners. Many of those engaged in this project have had poor experiences of education in the past. Recycling Lives provides an environment where such learners are able to flourish.

However, interviewees noted that having up front honesty about the type of people they will take on is important. Throughout the process, Recycling Lives clearly states that the individuals involved in this programme must display motivation. The case management and referrals system ensures that the individual beneficiaries are closely supported throughout.

Eco advantage

1 Project introduction and background

Eco Advantage is funded under the ESF ITM programme, and is being delivered between 1 April 2009 and 31 May 2012 (delivery started in autumn 2009). It will receive £1,345,491 in total funding, half through ESF and the other half through its partners who act as the co-financers for the project. GOSE contract-manage the partnership.

Led by Medway Council, the project works with a range of national partners including Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council, Cementaprise Training Ltd (a social enterprise) and Reading Borough Council. The project has developed and delivered a range of climate change awareness training and skills tools and programmes, focusing on four of the ‘Diamonds for Growth’¹⁵ areas: Medway, Reading, Basingstoke and Milton Keynes. The project also draws on links with transnational partner organisations in Germany, Finland and Estonia – using transnational good practice to further support the development of innovative skills in climate change. The Eco Advantage project follows on from previous Equal-funded projects and while the partners had not worked as a group before, they had all had experience of delivering Equal projects in the past.

¹⁵ Diamonds for Growth areas originated in SEEDA’s 2006 Regional Economic Strategy (RES). They are the ‘sub regional functional areas’ with the greatest potential for significant contributions to economic growth in the South East. <http://www.southeastdiamonds.org.uk/>

The project has sought to adopt a ‘multifaceted approach’ using the climate change agenda as a means to improve the skills base, which was seen as a key response to the recession. It also aims to create jobs, encourage green economic growth and create an inclusive society. The project identified demand through their services through existing ‘skills mismatches’, specific sectoral needs and a demand for green skills and jobs. In addition, the project has sought to address the underutilisation of skills and competences and to provide greater validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In regard to the work that the project is doing with communities, it is seeking to promote environmental skills as a pathway into work. It is also seeking to provide low skilled employees with training to improve their environmental skills and access to sustainable employment opportunities, and the partners are working with communities to promote environmental volunteering within community initiatives.

2 The project

The stated aims of the project are to:

- maximise recruitment of disadvantaged groups into new employment opportunities linked to climate change initiatives;
- develop, pilot and mainstream ‘Eco Advantage’ short training programmes aimed at lower skills front line staff within businesses, in addition to helping businesses gain eco-competitive benefits;
- encourage local businesses to ‘green up’ existing processes;
- engage volunteers wanting to move into employment to become Community Ambassadors;
- provide ‘through the gate’ options for prisoners in self-employment as Green Entrepreneurs; and
- raise awareness of climate change, practical responses to it, and developing related skills which will be increasingly needed in the future.

In addition, the project aims to actively engage with local partners through the Diamonds network and to test the social incubation model for disadvantaged people in the local communities. These aims link to each of the project delivery strands which are being delivered by the partners as shown in the table below.

Table A.1 Project Delivery Strands

Organisation	Main project responsibility
Medway Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Living programme
Cementaprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador Scheme for Sustainability • Greenhouse Challenge • Green Entrepreneur and Skills for Climate Change courses (Prisons)
Basingstoke and Dean Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training to staff in local businesses
Reading Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable business network • Pilot of e-learning course on Eco Awareness • Pilot of Carbon Reduction Training Course

3 The project delivery model

As indicated in the table above, the project is delivering a wide range of activities. There are a range of marketing and promotional activities taking place for the project as a whole. For instance, all of the project materials refer to the Eco Advantage website, and there is an eco-sapiens website which is used to share materials with the transnational partners (www.ecosapiens-ac.net). The project still has one year of delivery left, and so some of its strands of activity are still in development. However, the following strands of the project are being delivered:

- The **Sustainable Living Programme** is being delivered by Medway Council. They have commissioned the production of a Sustainable Living booklet, DVD and other resources for learners and teachers. The content provides information and learning around sustainable buildings, getting around, water and waste usage, as well as wildlife – using local examples from the Medway area.
- The **Ambassadors for Sustainability Programme** is aimed at lower skilled employed and unemployed people which gives them a basic level of understanding around environmental sustainability that can lead on to L1 and L2 qualifications.
- The **Greenhouse Challenge** is being delivered by Cementaprise. It is a 12 month programme in Oxfordshire being delivered in two deprived estates. The project works with 12 families to encourage them to be more environmentally friendly through a variety of informal learning activities ('learning by stealth'). Families were recruited through Children Centres in the local estates as a result of a partnership with a local project. The families are 'distant from the labour market' and the project aims to assist them to move closer to the labour market through four weekly sessions of intensive activities.
- **Green Entrepreneur and Skills for Climate Change courses (Prisons)** – Cementaprise delivers two training sessions in three prisons – HMP Maidstone, Rochester Youth Offender's Institute (YOI) and Reading YOI. The two courses delivered are designed to help inspire and raise aspirations, as well as to provide relevant skills. The courses are delivered to prisoners (approximately 12-18 in each class) with support from training managers from within the prison and from Manchester College. The project has 'come onto the radar' of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), in terms of how it can be linked to the MOJ's and the prison's own SD policy.
- **Training to local businesses** – Basingstoke Council is leading on work with local businesses. They are providing half-day courses on carbon management with a follow-up after six months. Approximately 70 employees (within 55 SMEs) have received this training so far.
- **Sustainable Business Network** – Basingstoke and Dean Council have also established a North Hampshire business network (co-ordinated by the Sustainable Business Partnership). There are approximately 200 businesses signed up to the network and they have quarterly meetings. Each meeting has a different topic (e.g. sustainable supply chain, sustainable logistics etc.). There is normally an average of 40-60 businesses at each meeting.

4 Project performance

The main outputs of the project focus on employer and individual engagement (i.e. participation in provision) as well as supporting some participants into work. According to the bid document (June 2009), the specific project outcomes will be: engagement of 720 learners in the project (employed and unemployed); support 240 people in the process of social incubation; and 192 participants into employment.

So far some 235 learners have engaged with the project, and project staff are confident that they will meet the target of 720 learners engaging. There are no targets for numbers of employers receiving training but Basingstoke Council is 'expected to engage' 200 businesses either through the network or through the training. This number has already been achieved through the network alone.

Other achievements to date include:

- New course materials piloted in prisons.
- Course material developed for Retail, Construction and Hospitality.
- Carbon Reduction workshops designed and delivered with companies making pledges.
- The Sustainable Living Book placed and used in schools and by adult learners.
- Working with developers and architects to produce a further learning and teaching resources – 'Sustainable Materials'.
- Sharing of materials and knowledge between Transnational Partners.
- Presenting the project to two EU Commission Conferences – 'European Social Fund support for green jobs in the framework of New Skills for New Jobs' and 'Combating Poverty and Social exclusion: What can the ESF Contribute? These conferences were about job creation and reducing poverty and Eco Advantage was seen as good practice.

At this stage, benefits and impact have yet to be fully realised as the project is part-way through the planned delivery. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are benefits and impacts on prisoners and impacts on beneficiaries and learners are also being recorded on the closed user networking site through a blog of their own experiences of the support.

5 Good practice and key success factors

According to the partners and project managers, the key successes of the project have been:

- Making in-roads into the MOJ and exploring the development of a Green Prison – this is an unexpected outcome.
- The engagement of the third sector in terms of the delivery partners – it has brought together a diverse partnership which has led to other spin-off projects and outcomes.
- Networking with experts in climate change – translating material into 'laymen's terms'.
- The Sustainable Living book has been well received and presented as a useful outcome.
- For Basingstoke, the engagement of businesses has been higher than expected and they have been able to develop other opportunities with employers.
- The Transnational partners also allow for sharing of materials. Some of these partners are exploring how social networking can be used on the ground level and how you can raise awareness of coastal erosion and green marketing.

6 Project continuation/sustainability

As the project has not yet completed, the remaining year or so will see the continued delivery of the programme activities and a variety of spin-off projects, some of which are in development. The project partners expect that the key activities from the programme will be sustainable, including the continued use of the materials developed (and their wider use by other similar projects), with the expectation that some of the local colleges will take up the resources developed by the project and include them in their training materials. According to their calculations, the materials developed

by the project can save teachers 60 hours of work (saving the schools an estimated £60,000). In addition, the training to the community, and the work with the ambassadors within the community should also be sustainable beyond the life of the project.

The partners are exploring potential spin-off projects and networks to continue the work of the project. For instance, they have submitted a bid for Grundtvig (Lifelong Learning Programme) funding to further their learning around slow tourism (responsible tourism with a low carbon footprint) and green entrepreneurship. Other impacts are expected around individual behaviour changes and attitudes to environmental sustainability.

7 Learning for similar projects

The project has faced a number of challenges in delivering an innovative and diverse set of activities. While the project has not yet finished (and learning, particularly around delivery, is therefore, yet to be fully realised), a number of lessons/recommendations have been highlighted:

- Developing Sustainable Development Policies at the beginning of the project so that the partners can adopt it.
- Securing commitment from partners earlier, including matched funding arrangements, individual partner contributions, a detailed time line for outputs and considering the implications of partners leaving during the project lifetime.
- Establish earlier and more informed dialogue with education providers to identify abilities or inadequacy to deliver course material that is not part of the mainstream.

Host Borough Employment Offer

1 Project introduction and background

The Host Borough Employment Offer (HBEO) has been operating between 2009 and April 2011. It received £2.4 million ESF co-financing under the ITM strand of the ESF which aims to support strategic projects looking to develop new ways of extending employment opportunities and raising workforce skills, working collaborating with partners in other European countries. The project addressed the ITM theme of Engaging with Employers.

HBEO has been creating new green employment and training opportunities in the London Host Olympic Boroughs of Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. The main vehicle for doing this is by testing and creating new Social Enterprises (SEs) or Community Interest Companies (CICs) in public sector supply chains as well as working with existing employers in these boroughs where there is potential to create green jobs or training placements.

Groundwork London, an environmental regeneration charity, is working in partnership with a partner from Sweden, the Gothenburg City Region Municipal Authority. The partners have exchanged ideas through a series of study visits and each have gained from each other's expertise: Gothenburg's expertise in delivering public sector services through SEs and CICs and Groundwork's expertise in social sustainability.

Considerable background research was undertaken to identify opportunities where green social enterprises would offer viable solutions. It was found that disposing waste to landfill costs London Local Authorities about £350,000 a ton. There are incentives (Waste Credits) for third parties to recycle waste that could end up in landfill. Re-use of furniture and white goods has direct impacts on reducing landfill waste. There is already a nascent industry around waste credits (mainly social enterprises) but more can be done. Local authorities and the Government have an incentive to find

new ways to dispose organic waste because failure to meet organic landfill EU targets will result to fines. It also found opportunities for developing peri-urban agricultural. Agricultural use of land around the city limits to grow food or biofuel reduces food carbon miles, creates rural-type jobs for people in the city and provides an outlet for organic waste to be used as compost.

2 The project

The key aim of the project was to create new businesses and by extensions new jobs in the five Olympic Host Boroughs in London, which are characterised by high levels of worklessness and unemployment. The project rationale focused on the three most basic requirements of urban living – energy, food and waste disposal – and tried to produce innovative solutions using the CIC/SE model. The second consideration was that the CIC/SE had to be economically viable in the long run – the idea was to use ESF funding to test the viability but the project did not pursue any ventures.

The project sits alongside the East and Southeast London City Strategy Pathfinder (CSP) which covers the five London Olympic Host Boroughs. This is one of 15 pathfinders programmes funded by DWP between 2007 and 2011, aimed at tackling worklessness in the most disadvantaged communities across the UK. While the main CSP activities focused on traditional welfare to work actions, HBOE added value by creating new sustainable enterprises and business models in the ‘green’ economy.

3 Project delivery

In October 2009, the first transnational meeting took place with the UK partners visiting ‘Reningsborg’, a large social enterprise operating in the Gothenburg Region. Through its social business ventures, the organisation works with local government creates opportunities to redress worklessness and lack of skills, such as among asylum seekers and those newly settled in Sweden. The project learnt about how Reningsborg delivers a wide-range of services, including: peri-urban agriculture, furniture and clothes recycling, vehicle maintenance, catering and manufacturing of saunas from recycled wood.

‘Little Didsborg’ furniture and antiques restoration

HBEO were particularly inspired by the furniture and clothes recycling arm. On returning to London, HBEO approached the Newham Community Recycling Network (the Wombles). Groundwork have a long-standing partnership with the network, mainly through work placements. The Wombles operate a clothes and furniture recycling centre in The Didsbury Community Centre in East Ham, Newham. Recycled goods are offered to Newham residents in need following referrals from Social Services. Armed with knowledge from the visit to Reningsborg, HBEO identified the opportunity of adding value to the furniture recycling operation by setting up a pilot SME which would restore furniture and antiques in particular. The project created a partnership with The Wombles and LB of Newham Regeneration team and an SME dubbed ‘Little Didsborg’ was set up in early 2010. ‘Little Didsborg’ established a training area within the Wombles site where unemployed people are trained in French polishing and renovation of furniture. It has also set up a retail space within the Didsbury centre where restored antique furniture and objects are displayed and sold. The shop has made a number of successful sales.

This sub-project aimed to create ten job outcomes sustained for 26 weeks for Newham residents. Beneficiaries are identified through Groundwork’s other work programmes and are placed within ‘Little Didsborg’ where they are trained in furniture restoration but also learn basic business skills. So far, it has achieved six job outcomes at 26 weeks each and a further post with a 52 week contract. This is considered a success in a climate where several other recycling projects in London experienced serious fiscal issues in 2010 and some had to shut down. While the pilot has demonstrated that there is an opportunity for a commercial social enterprise in antique restoration,

the project accepts that a more commercial approach will need to be adopted for the enterprise to be commercially viable and operate without outside funding. The ongoing management and exit strategy for the project is currently being reviewed.

Low carbon food markets

A further visit to the Kalvinge district of Sweden where organic waste is composted in large silos proved the catalyst for the other business venture set up by HBEO. Upon returning to London, the project staff undertook research into organic waste disposal in the UK. They were surprised to find that the London Borough of Newham operates three food markets producing organic waste that cost £600,000 per year to dispose of in landfill. This provided an opportunity to implement the lessons from the Swedish partners about CICs. The solution identified was to set up a CIC which would clear organic waste from markets, financed by initially by waste credits (and in the future by commercial composting and/or biofuel revenue).

The project partnered up again with The Wombles and the London Borough of Newham to set up a model CIC in Queens Market in East Ham. Three beneficiaries of the Future Jobs Fund were placed at the Low Carbon Market CIC and each given a target to clear. Meeting this target guarantees pay for the new recruits, through waste credits. Overall, the project aims to sustain ten job outcomes for 13 weeks, potentially at £15,000 per year. Three jobs have already been created. The Wombles have provided structure to the enterprise and provide the CIC with a van to transport the waste. The project has applied for match-funding from DEFRA to purchase a closed cart which would be driven by a shire horse which would further reduce the carbon usage of the CIC.

In terms of the environmental benefit, the project found that the wet organic waste created by the market can easily be diverted. Under the current scheme, waste is given to zoos or city farms or composted locally for use at allotments. This is diverting around 10–20 tons of waste a week from landfill (saving the local authority £900 per ton). However, the project has reached a point where the existing facilities mentioned above do not have the capacity to use any more compost and therefore, the project has not been able to expand the successful model to the other two Newham markets. A potential future solution to this problem has been identified and is described below.

Peri-urban agriculture

The project researched potential solutions to this capacity issue and through this identified the possibility of creating a third CIC which would deliver peri-urban agriculture, fuelled by the market waste compost. Through the research, it was revealed that several London local authorities own agricultural land on the outskirts of London which are now fallow. For example, Newham owns Dedben Farm, near Epping, which currently is occasionally used as a camping facility and outdoor centre for Newham school children, however, the majority of the land is not put to use. HBEO has engaged with a peri-urban farm in Enfield which is interested in extending his operation to Dedben to create jobs and local food. This CIC is still at a development stage and additional funding is sought to get it started. However, ESF funding was the seed to developing this innovative solution which will provide jobs and also bring environmental benefits. The venture has also received the support of LANTRA, the sector skills council for agricultural, which is keen to encourage primary food production initiatives.

4 Transnational opportunities and challenges

The Swedish partners have also gained considerable knowledge from this ESF project. They were interested to learn about the UK's experience in engaging with employers through Corporate Social Responsibility considerations to offer placement opportunities for unemployed people. Groundwork

had significant experience in this and was able to help Gothenberg City Region set up their 'Bridge' project to deliver this employer engagement. As an additional benefit, ESF project through the study exchange visits has created strong links between Gothenberg and the London Borough of Newham. To celebrate the partnership and the role of Newham as key Olympic host borough, Gothenberg is organising a mini-Olympic Games and is inviting Newham school children to compete.

Not all partnerships with transnational partners have been productive. For example, it was initially thought that HBEO could work with the Kävlinge Learning Centre in Southern Sweden to expand their Workplace Ambassador scheme to London. However, through working through the details of the scheme and the differences between the Swedish and UK labour-market it was found that the scheme would not bring the expected benefits if replicated in London.

5 ESF funding

Several aspects of this project and in particular the transnational aspect would not have been able to take place without ESF funding. The ITM funding stream was ideal for a project whose rationale is to test whether an idea works and whether learning from abroad can be used in the UK. The project staffs were particularly grateful about the flexibility offered by the ITM stream. As the project activities changed and adapted to the economic situation the ESF ITM easily adapted their requirements.

6 Project continuation/sustainability

The future of the 'Little Didsborg' furniture recycling enterprise in Newham is currently being reviewed to identify strategies to allow it to operate as a commercially viable social enterprise. However, Groundwork have already implemented the learning from the Little Didsborg pilot (and the visit to Sweden) in other locations. The model has been replicated on a much larger scale in partnership with the Western Riverside Waste Authority in Wandsworth. Since September 2010, the London Community Recycling Network has been providing a service distributing restored furniture and white goods repaired at the Wandsworth workshop to used furniture shops in the network across London. Funding for this project has been secured for three years.

Additionally, Groundwork London are also working with Social Landlords to introduce a furniture restoration and recycling service for clearing leftover furniture and clothes from tenants. In addition to the creation of jobs and training opportunities from a potential venture, RSLs are expected to be able to achieve cost savings.

The future operation of the 'Low Carbon Food Market' is established and the three jobs created are permanent. As identified, the project has reached a limit and this has hindered expansion to other markets in Newham. However, there is an interest by both Hackney and Epping councils to develop a similar model for their food markets and city farms/allotments. The model is inherently simple and can easily be replicated by most urban local authorities in the UK and abroad which have city farms or wider agricultural opportunities in their surrounding areas.

The Peri-Urban Agricultural CIC is still at conceptual stage and is unlikely to be made operational before the end of the project. If funding is received the activity may take off at Dedben Farm. Additionally, the London Borough of Islington has expressed an interest in developing its farm in Stanstead.

7 Learning for similar projects

The project staff identified the following learning from their experiences:

- The social businesses ventures created focused on thinking about the three aspects of urban living (energy, waste and food) and identifying possible innovative solutions. Similar projects should first identify what the big problems are and then try and find solutions ‘thinking outside the box’.
- Focus on creating a viable businesses venture. So many projects have been about job brokerage and placements in existing industries. HBEO has successfully shown the way that ESF can be used to create new jobs and new (green) markets. However, appropriate emphasis should be placed on economic viability: there is no point creating a business model which will really forever on other funding rather than its core market.
- The current economic climate of public sector austerity offers opportunities for thinking about social and community-lead ways of delivering social services, which also deliver lower costs for local authorities.
- Working with transnational partners can be a source of inspiration and knowledge transfer. However, future similar projects should expect that it is not possible to translate all ideas over to a different culture and economic situation.

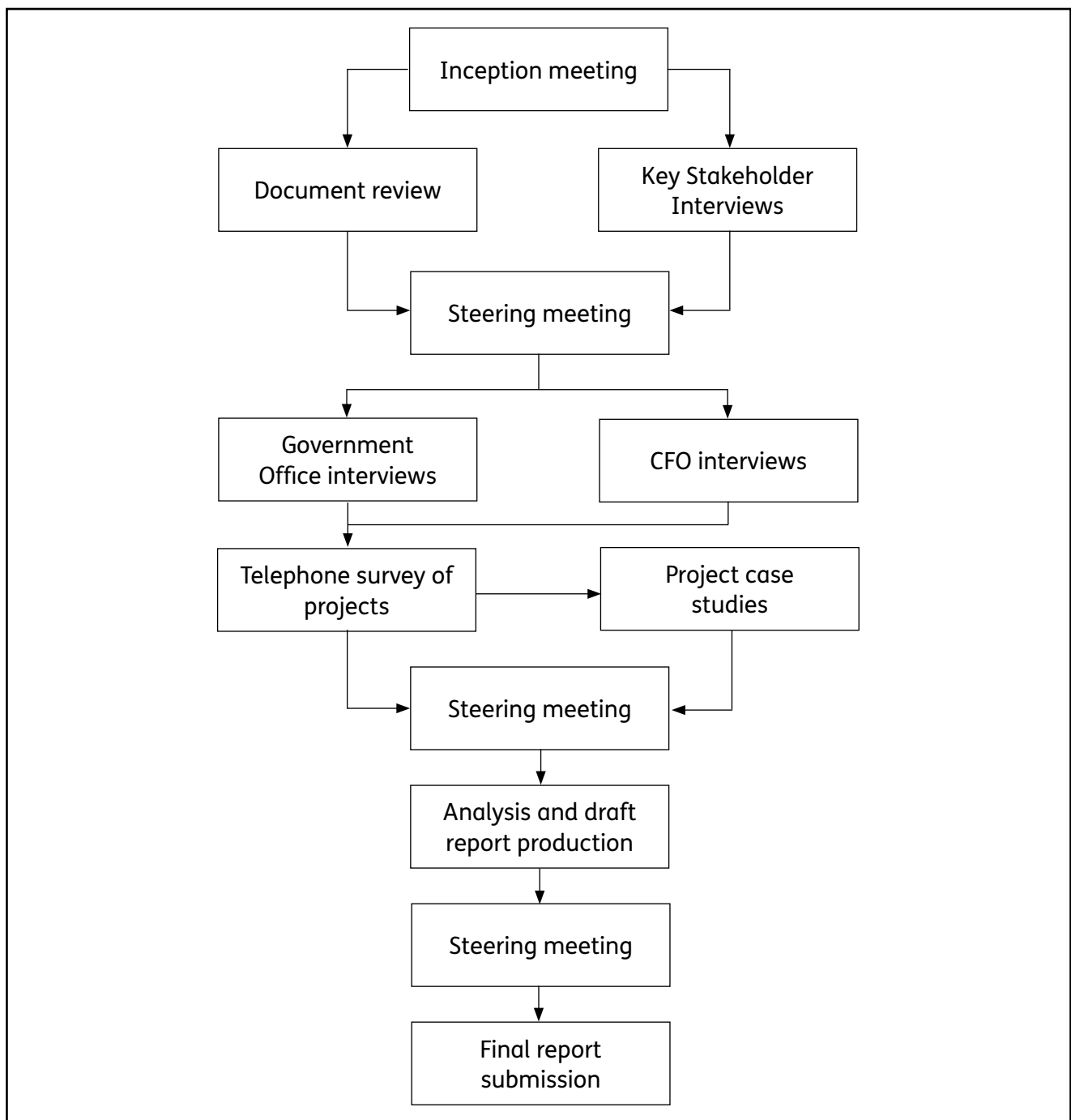
Appendix B

Study methodology

This appendix summarises the approach and methodology followed in the study. The methodology was designed to address the aims of the evaluation and the key questions posed, and to investigate both ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ dimensions of the sustainable development theme.

The study followed a mainly qualitative approach, with a three stage methodology as summarised in the figure below.

Figure B.1 Summary of study methodology



Each stage, and their constituent tasks, are described below.

Stage 1: Inception and scoping

This stage featured a series of preparatory tasks, to finalise the proposed methodology and develop an understanding of the context for the study.

Key tasks included:

- An inception meeting, where the proposed methodology was discussed and a briefing provided on the sustainable development strategy, progress and key issues with implementation, and other considerations to inform the subsequent stages of the study. A series of stakeholders to be interviewed, and documents to be reviewed, were also agreed.
- Document review – where a range of documentation was reviewed, including national and ESF-specific documents (including the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the current Sustainable Development Mainstreaming Plan, and guidance documents issued by the Managing Authority), and the broader literature on green jobs.
- Key stakeholder interviews – to extend our understanding of the sustainable development strategy and its implementation, a programme of interviews was undertaken with a sample of key stakeholders. These included Managing Authority staff, representatives of the sustainable development sub-committee, and representatives of organisations with an interest in sustainable development and ESF, including LANTRA and Environment Agency representatives. The interviews explored individuals' awareness of and engagement with the ESF Sustainable Development Strategy, their expectations of it and views on progress and good practice.

Stage 2: Fieldwork

This stage featured the main fieldwork elements of the study, comprising:

- Telephone/face to face interviews with Government Office staff with an involvement in/ responsibility for promoting sustainable development under ESF;
- Telephone interviews with appropriate individuals in a sample of 20 current CFOs;
- A telephone survey of a sample of 50 ESF projects; and
- Case studies with ten ESF projects where the sustainable development theme has been interpreted vertically.

Interviews with Government Office Staff

This task featured a combination of telephone and face to face interviews with 11 Government Office staff across each of the nine English regions with an involvement in, or responsibility for, sustainable development under ESF. The interviews explored:

- Individuals' understanding of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme as communicated to them from the national level, including any documentation and support.
- The understanding of the sustainable development theme within the region, and the mechanisms put in place at the national and regional levels to drive the theme forward.
- The practical support offered by the GO to CFOs (and individual projects as appropriate) to raise awareness of, and interpret and mobilise, the sustainable development theme.

- The success and challenges experienced, and views of the impact of both the horizontal and vertical aspects of sustainable development in their areas.
- Suggestions on potential improvements that could be introduced to aid the achievement of the goals of the Sustainability Development Mainstreaming Plan.

Government Office staff were also asked whether any CFOs or projects in their region which represented good practice in supporting the horizontal theme or in delivering under the vertical theme, to inform the CFO and project samples.

Interviews with CFO staff

Telephone and face to face interviews were undertaken with 31 staff in a sample of 20 CFOs, to explore their involvement and contribution to date to both the horizontal and vertical themes. The CFO sample comprised:

- Six Jobcentre Plus CFOs.
- Eight Skills Funding Agency CFOs.
- Two local authority CFOs.
- Two Regional Development Agency CFOs.
- The National Offender Management Service.
- The Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming Unit.

The interviews addressed both the horizontal and vertical aspects of the CFO's sustainable development activities, with topic coverage including:

- Their understanding and interpretation of sustainable development under ESF and how it has been communicated to them.
- Where the ESF sustainable development fits relates to other environmental agendas.
- The awareness raising and other support provided by the CFO to actual and potential providers as part of the commissioning process.
- The specific support provided for the horizontal aspect of sustainable development, provider responses and subsequent impacts.
- The support offered under the vertical theme – including the levels of response from providers and the type of projects resulting.

Each CFO was also asked to provide a list of projects funded under the current programme round, with contact details, to inform project sampling for the telephone survey and case study fieldwork.

Telephone survey of projects

A short telephone survey of 50 projects was undertaken, with the aim of exploring their individual understanding of the sustainable development agenda under ESF, their experiences of compliance with the horizontal theme and, where relevant, their engagement with the vertical theme.

Initially, the expectation was that the project sample would be evenly split between projects involved solely in the horizontal theme, and 25 where the vertical theme had also been followed. However, the split was revised given the comparatively small number of projects following the vertical theme, with the final sample comprising 24 horizontal projects, 21 vertical, and five projects which were using the environment as a mechanism for attracting individuals who would not normally participate in traditional approaches to learning (referred to as 'green tinge' projects).

The project sample was selected from the information provided by the CFOs interviewed, recommendations from Government Office staff, as well as internet searches and document review to ensure as many vertical projects were identified as possible. The resulting sample was developed on a purposive basis, and included examples of Competitiveness, Convergence and Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming projects.

Each interview was input into a specially developed database, which allowed for analysis across a range of variables.

Project case studies

The project case studies focused on projects whose objectives encapsulate the ‘vertical theme’, with a clear focus on the employment aspect of sustainable development and the promotion of ‘green skills’ and jobs. In total 11 case studies were undertaken, each of which comprised:

- A project visit – with one day being spent on site and including interviews with the project manager and other relevant staff, key delivery partners, and where possible current or former participants.
- One day to review project documentation, produce individual project write-ups and follow-up any contacts by telephone.

The case studies explored:

- The detail of project activity – in terms of aims and objectives, target groups and outputs and outcomes.
- The rationale for the project – including any underpinning research, contribution to wider agendas, expectations re demand and whether these had been realised, and provider motivation for involvement.
- The delivery model followed – including the role of partners, delivery modes followed, and the detail of the learner journey.
- Progress to date – in terms of outputs and outcomes achieved, and the wider benefits and impacts for participants and providers.
- Challenges and good practice – what had worked well and what less so.
- Areas for improvement – in terms of supporting vertical project activity in the future.

The project sample was developed from the project survey sample, which allowed their activities to be identified in advance, although the numbers of vertical projects limited the range available for inclusion. The final sample also included two ‘green tinge’ projects and four Innovation, Transnationality and Mainstreaming projects.

Stage 3: Analysis and reporting

This stage featured the analysis of the findings from the different elements of the study, the production of a draft final study report, and following comments the submission of a final study report.

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the sustainable development cross-cutting theme, and the promotion of green jobs, within the European Social Fund (ESF), focusing on the environmental aspects of the cross-cutting theme. The report is based on the findings from a programme of qualitative research with programme stakeholders, Government Offices and Co-Financing Organisations, a survey of projects funded under the current ESF programme, and case study research with a sample of projects.

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For more information see www.esf.gov.uk

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