

Leeds University Undergraduate submissions to the Review of the Balance of Competences

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Report Title: To what extent have UK places, companies and workers benefited or not benefited from EU structural funds?

A note on this submission

This submission was made as part of an assessed piece of work for a final year module at the University of Leeds. "Britain and the EU" covers key historical events and themes in the UK's relationship with the EU including non-membership to accession, debates over sovereignty, Parliamentary scrutiny, party politics and Euroscepticism. The module also explores key political issues (like foreign affairs and economic governance) to examine how European integration has influenced British politics and been influenced by them but does not provide detailed investigation into specific policies.

Students from this module presented work to the House of Lords EU select committee in its discussion of EU enlargement policy in 2013. This year's cohort has been asked to respond to one of four questions from the Review of the Balance of Competences. These reports were evaluated on the quality of the data collated, the argument and its presentation. These submissions are therefore presented not as expert opinions from practitioners but from an educated public that is both informed and engaged with the broader issues relating to the UK's relationship with the EU.

Module leader Charlie Dannreuther would like to express his thanks to the FCO Europe team for their cooperation and to the students for their extraordinary efforts in preparing these reports.

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To what extent have UK places, companies and workers benefitted or not benefitted from EU structural funds?

The UK received £9.5billion of EU structural funds to deliver strong sustainable growth, (Addorri, F, 2013) by tackling regional disparities (Gov.uk, 2013 (B)) and providing social innovation (Addorri, F, 2013); hopefully causing a multiplier effect as foreign aid leads to more growth (Dalgaard, 2004.) This report will establish the extent to which these funds have benefitted the UK by examining the achievements of the ESF (a main structural fund) in a predominant area of hardship that has required a large proportion of funding. The East Midlands received £203 million in the 2007-2013 ESF funding allocation; the third largest amount in the UK (European Social Fund, 2013.) The report will examine the effect of EU structural funds upon the market town of Worksop and also includes feedback from John Mann (2014), MP for Bassetlaw, on whether Worksop has benefitted from the EU structural funds. The town has received investment in a number of areas and therefore the effectiveness of each project can be assessed. Worksop is a prime example of the type of settlement the EU structural funds are assisting. The ESF priorities for funding in this region, and particularly in Worksop, are 'extending employment opportunities' and 'developing a skilled and adaptable workforce' (European Social Fund in England, 2013).

Worksop

Worksop is suffering regional deprivation (Government Office for the East Midlands, 2009) and is one of the most deprived communities in England (Sheffield City

Region, 2011; Table 3.3; 19.) The town is located on the northern edge of the Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire coalfield and was heavily involved in the mining industry (Sheffield City Region, 2011; 8.) Consequently the decline of traditional industries (East Midlands Development Agency, 2006) (ESF Works (A), 2013) has left a 'void' creating a number of social, economic and environmental problems, including heroin abuse problems (Mann, J, 2014).

EU structural funds attempt to remedy these problems by co-financing various projects in Worksop.

The 2007-2013 structural funds have provided economic support to many projects, including:

The rejuvenation and conservation of the Manton Pit Wood on the restored colliery site:



- Tracks and trails across the wood have been restored, wildlife habitats enhanced and a new car park constructed (Spittles, C, 2013.)
- The wood is now more environmentally friendly, aesthetically pleasing, accessible and useful. It provides a space for recreational activities (Worksop Guardian, 2013 (B)), education (Manton Community Alliance: 2011; 2 and 2010; 2) and offenders community reparation (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2013 (C); 7-8).

- However the previously redeveloped area has never been fully utilised in the past and was vandalised by bikers forcing closure (Workshop Guardian, 2009).
Nothing has been done to prevent this occurring again or to encourage use.

The makeover of the canal towpath:



- 1.5km of the path has been resurfaced (Canal and River Trust, 2013) and grass verges set aside for anglers, making the path safer for everyone to enjoy (Towpath Talk, 2013).
- It provides environmentally friendly accessibility to the town (Canal and River Trust, 2013) and also a route for Commuters.
- However there is limited residential access to the path aside from at Rhodesia and Shireoaks, meaning the use of this path may be limited to recreation.

The Creative Village for craft industries and companies:



- The Creative Village is a £693,000 project (Mann, J, 2014) that has redeveloped a derelict brewery in a declining area of the town. Such investment is said to generate economic growth and prosperity and is consequently beneficial to all companies in the town, particularly as it is hoped that it will encourage further development (Ashe, 2011.)
- The Village provides affordable business space for new diverse niche industries (Bassetlaw District Council, 2012; 1). It should provide the town with higher paid and skilled, sustainable employment; 45 new jobs are expected to be created in addition to internships for young people (Worksop Guardian, 2012).
- However, the village has limited access to the central business district and is in an area with high levels of anti-social behaviour (Crime Statistics, 2011). This means that it is at risk of vandalism and may not fulfil its full potential or provide substantial employment.

‘A Sporting Chance’, helping young people to change their lives through physical activity:

- ‘A Sporting Chance’ is aimed at post-16 NEET skills development (Mann, J, 2014) and encourages lifestyle changes, helping participants to gain sport

related qualifications and integrate them back into the educational system (Bassetlaw District Council, 2013.)

- 'A Sporting Chance' has assisted over 1200 young people (2007-2013) (Bassetlaw District Council, 2013), improving their; self-esteem, skills, health and wellbeing (Bassetlaw District Council, 2013). Participants also gain voluntary experience, with 21 youths progressing to employment in recent years (Bassetlaw District Council, 2013).
- The initiative helps provide a more educated workforce by enhancing skills appropriately and increasing employability, to help meet the needs of employers (ESF Works (B), 2013).
- However the programme only reaches a limited audience in a specific area of interest and employment fails to be secured for all participants.

Supporting the Nottinghamshire Broadband Plan; expanding the breadth of superfast broadband:



- By the end of 2014, over 400,000 premises in Nottinghamshire should receive fibre broadband (D2N2 (A), 2013). Most of Worksop should receive speeds of up to 80Mbps, thus ending the digital divide in this rural area of Bassetlaw (D2N2 (A), 2013).

- Research has shown that broadband is a core driver of the economy and such initiatives should bolster the economy of the town by £143 million (D2N2

(A), 2013). It will help businesses reach new markets, improve their productivity and allow them to compete globally, (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2012 (B); 4) as well as creating 225 new jobs, 140 new start-up businesses and 1000 more home workers (D2N2 (A), 2013).

- The initiative is part of 'Transformational Digital Infrastructure for Nottinghamshire' (Mann, J, 2014) and will enable faster and more technologically advanced work. It also complements the work of the 'Business Start Up Bus'. This is another EU funded initiative that provides Worksop's 'budding entrepreneurs' with information, advice and support to enable them to 'start up' their own businesses (D2N2 (C), 2013). The superfast broadband provides these new small businesses with the tools needed to be competitive, technologically advanced and attractive (D2N2 (C), 2013).
- However the new speeds are more expensive and may not be accessible for all. The village of Shireoaks is still suffering the digital divide as high speeds only reach certain areas.

The creation of the Worksop Turbine; a Nottinghamshire innovation centre:



- Innovation centres “aim to stimulate business and economic growth by helping fledgling knowledge based enterprises to develop, which in turn will bring higher-skilled and better paid employment to North Nottinghamshire” (D2N2 (B), 2013.)
- The Turbine provides tenant businesses with a broad range of excellent facilities and support (D2N2 (B), 2013). Occupancy rates at the centre have increased by 10% from 2011-2013, despite some businesses having outgrown the centre (D2N2 (B), 2013).
- New Worksoop companies now have access to a supportive location for diverse industries. And Worksoop workers are provided with opportunities for higher paid and skilled sustainable employment (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2013; 1.)
- However the Turbine may only provide for a limited number of businesses in particular fields, thus isolating other industries that need the same support and facilities it offers.

Community courses for adults at North Nottinghamshire College:

- The Skills Funding Agency works in partnership with the ESF, providing funding to help finance courses (Skills Funding Agency, 2013).
- The affordable courses aim to enhance the skills and education of the populous. They help provide varying skill sets to enhance the employability of local people including; cooking, cake decorating, IT, photography and languages (North Nottinghamshire College, 2012).
- The workforce consequently becomes more educated with a greater skills base, helping them to meet the needs of employers (ESF Works (B), 2013).

- However the skills provided by these courses enhance employability in the new niche business sectors, with minimal employment opportunities. They neglects the skills needed by employers in the developed industries of the town.

Conclusion

John Mann (2014) claims, “there can be little doubt that the EU structural funds have provided benefits for the community of Worksop”. Worksop has benefitted in a number of ways through various projects funded by EU structural funds. Mann (2014) states that EU funded projects also improve the business, commercial and shopping environment as well as helping to create a cohesive community, lowering of crime rates and creating pride in the town. The place has benefitted from regeneration and redevelopment including the Manton Pit Wood, the Tow Path and the derelict Brewery. Worksop companies have benefitted through the Nottinghamshire broadband plan, Turbine, Craft Village and the increased employability of local people. The workers in Worksop have benefitted as a result of the investment in companies and industries, meaning they have access to higher paid and skilled jobs. John Mann (2014) believes that such job creation and diversification of employment are essential in this post mining area. Workers also benefitted from the encouragement into entrepreneurship and the educational programmes enhancing their employability. All investment in the town should, over time, cause the positive multiplier effect and bring even greater benefits for all, particularly as the generations grow older and the residual effects of the mining industry minimise. The investment in Worksop helps fulfil the aims of the structural funds and has worked towards the aims for the East Midlands; as it has extended

employment opportunities and helped develop the workforce. John Mann (2014) claims that EU structural funds provide significant benefits to the whole of East Midlands. However, there are limitations to the projects occurring in the town. Most of these are due to the limited numbers of people that are able to be assisted due to the niche aspect. Also investment has not been made in developed schemes and industries, which may generate the greatest benefits. Investment has been primarily made in new initiatives and the benefits may take time to filter through to the populous and the local economy.

1643 (*Maximum of 1500-1650*)

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Appendix:**Response from John Mann MP to questions on the EU structural
fund****09/01/2014**

The importance of the EU structural fund to Worksop, and the rest of my constituency of Bassetlaw, is difficult to analyse in isolation. However, the European Regional Development Fund in the East Midlands and the European Social Fund – the funds which make up the majority of the EU Structural Fund – can be seen to bring significant benefits.

My constituency is a former mining area in need of development. The removal of the industry has left a void, and created its own problems, not least heroin abuse.

The benefits of EU funding can be analysed primarily in terms of sheer numbers, although their wider impact is difficult to quantify in a precise manner. Furthermore, not all money that Worksop and Bassetlaw receive is identifiable as it comes under larger regional projects that local people and businesses make use of, for example the £2.8 million fund for the project called Transformational digital infrastructure for Nottinghamshire.

Some projects are however readily identifiable. The only funds provided directly to Bassetlaw District Council from the European Social Fund relate to the programme called A Sporting Chance, aimed at post-16 NEET skills development.

Specific beneficiaries from the European Regional Development Fund in Bassetlaw are as follows:

- Worksop creative village (£693k)
- Retford Market Square development (£494k)
- Invest in Bassetlaw scheme (£147k)
- Worksop Waterside Gateway (£200k)
- Music enterprise project (£115k)

These projects will also have received co-funding from UK Government and other sources, and again I should stress that Worksop and the rest of Bassetlaw will receive further funding from projects based over larger areas.

There can be little doubt that the EU structural fund – specifically the European Regional Development Fund – has provided benefits for the community of Worksop, as well as Worksop as a town. Redevelopment of areas is an important part of creating a cohesive community with a lower crime rate, and creating pride in the town.

This of course has a positive effect on doing business in Worksop. The aforementioned digital infrastructure project has gone some way to addressing the plague of poor broadband coverage for companies and self-employed individuals for example, and all development creates an improved business, commercial and shopping environment.

An improved business and commercial environment naturally impacts positively on job creation, development and stability. This is in addition to EU funding for skills programmes. Both are essential for our post-mining area – job creation and diversification.