

To: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE		Subject: NEW DEAL ENVIRONMENT TASK FORCE - STAFFING
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 25 th January 2001	Ref: JT/REP.768	

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to amend the temporary staffing requirements of the Environment Task Force which will enable the Council to fulfil its contractual obligations in respect of the operation and management of the New Deal Environment Task Force option in Lanarkshire.

2 Background

- 2.1 The New Deal for 18-24 year olds in Lanarkshire is the keystone of the Government's Welfare to Work Initiative. While there are other key elements to New Deal, addressing unemployment among young people has been very much the initial focus of Government policy. The options within New Deal for 18-24 year olds consist of Job Option, Full Time Education and Training, Voluntary Sector Option and the Environment Task Force.
- 2.2 North Lanarkshire Council leads a consortium in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council, to deliver the Environment Task Force option of the New Deal across Lanarkshire, under contract to the Employment Service. The day to day delivery is managed within the Planning and Environment Department (Economic Development Unit).
- 2.3 The initial contract which covers a three year period from 1 April 1998 to 31 March 2001 has recently been extended for a further year until 31 March 2002. The Chief Executive has previously confirmed this extension of the contract to the Council's Social Inclusion Committee on 23 November 2000 (report dated 1 November 2000 Ref. 01/SJCR164).

3. Current Performance

- 3.1 Members will recall that both monitoring and performance levels relating to the operation of the Environment Task Force (ETF) option of New Deal have been submitted to Committee on a quarterly basis since April 1998. One aspect of the overall performance of the ETF, namely achievement of Job Entry Rates, has however underperformed. For the first two years of the operation (from April 1998 to March 2000), the ETF option in Lanarkshire, achieved a Job Entry Rate of 12.4% and in this operational year (from April 2000 to October 2000) achieved 17.9%. While a creditable improvement has been achieved it is still not in line with the Contract requirement of 20%. Indeed, it is well below the Scotland Job Entry Rate of 27.3%. Members will be interested to note that Ministers now wish a Benchmark achievement level of 33% Job Entry Rate to be set for each of the New Deal 18-24 options.
- 3.2 The Employment Service recently introduced a tracking card system for use by all Option Providers to add value to the tracking systems already in place. These tracking cards have been issued to all ETF Providers and it is anticipated that this will assist in the achievement of higher Job Entry Rates in Lanarkshire.

3.3 It is recognised, however, that there are a number of barriers/constraints which relate to the overall performance of the ETF option. The Economic Development Unit is focussing on a number of Improvement Actions to improve overall performance and to reduce barriers/constraints. These Improvement Actions will concentrate on:

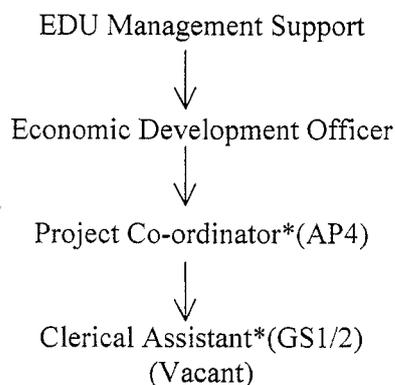
- **Availability of Projects** – increase the variety and availability of suitable ETF projects. Projects must not only offer suitable and worthwhile experiences for individuals but must meet the community/environmental objectives of the option.
- **Calibre of Participants** - many participants are referred to the option as the last resort or by mandate thus the participants often lack motivation, basic skills and have not chosen to be there. It is important to recognise the nature of participants referred to the option and evidence suggests that many individuals are the furthest removed from the labour market with multiple and significant barriers to employment. The level of turnover experienced by providers of the ETF option also demonstrates a need for earlier intervention and perhaps a re-design of the standard programme on offer.
- **Perception of Option** – the view of the ETF option as the “sink option” often contributes to participants having a negative perception and this often translates to poor attendance and negative attitudes.
- **Administration** – the administrative processes and procedures involved with the management and delivery of the ETF option is a substantial commitment, time consuming and often problematic. The level and complexity of paperwork involved is viewed as an additional unnecessary barrier.

3.4 The Economic Development Unit, in addressing these Improvement Actions which are necessary to ensure that the ETF option is more effective, efficient and attractive, is engaging with the Employment Service to consider possible improvements to the ETF Option. In addition, the Economic Development Unit will take advantage of the appropriate European Social Funding and/or other forms of support to offer an enhanced programme which will incorporate variations to the national model. The inclusion of labour market elective training, CITB certification, driving license and computing would increase the employability skills of participants, and these along with other added value support are being considered.

4. Current Staffing

4.1 Over the past two years the Council has employed a small dedicated team to ensure that the ETF Contract is delivered in an effective and efficient manner. The current staffing structure is noted below in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - Current ETF Staffing Structure



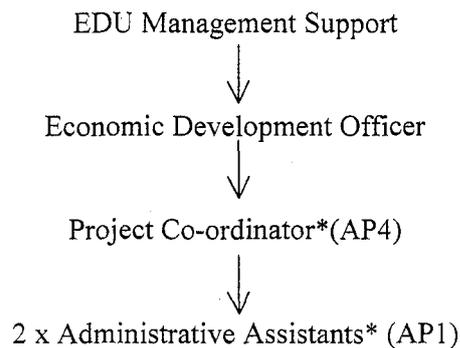
*ETF Funded Post

4.2 The level of support that has had to be dedicated to the delivery of the ETF Contract has not been met by the existing structure. For some time now the Council has been subsidising the delivery of ETF from mainstream resources which has impacted on other areas of service delivery, If the Council is to achieve its contractual obligations, e.g. in relation to Job Entry Rates noted above in this report, additional dedicated resources to operate and manage the ETF option of New Deal is required.

5. Proposed Staffing Structure

5.1 The Director of Planning and Environment has consulted with the Head of Personnel Services in relation to the proposed revised staffing structure for the operation of the Environment Task Force. This structure is detailed below in Figure 2.

Figure 2



*ETF Funded Post

5.2 In addition to the above the Economic Development Unit will provide additional Economic Development Officer support to assist the ETF in developing new/additional projects to further enhance the quality of provision.

5.3 In effect the revised staffing structure results in the deletion of the Clerical Assistant (GS1/2) post and the addition of 2 Administrative Assistants (AP1) the cost of which will be met by the management income derived as part of the Council's contractual arrangements with the Employment Service. The staffing costs relating to the proposed new posts will not commit the Council to any staffing costs. The main duties of the additional posts would involve the following tasks:

Administrative Tasks

- Ensure that Tracker Card system is fully implemented and actively monitored on a weekly basis.
- Ensuring that the ETF database is accurate and up to date. This process is critical to ensure that financial ND10a claims are accurate.
- Compile and collate monthly ND44/47 statistical return and submit these to the Employment Service meeting strict deadlines. This is the base of information used by Employment Service to assess ETF performance and is, therefore, critical that the submission is fully inclusive and accurate.
- Ensure that "Taster" referral process is implemented and maintained at all times.
- Liaise with Employment Service to ensure that accurate information is recorded on the Management Information System.
- Report on and compile a varied range of weekly/monthly ETF reports ie. Performance Indicators, Committee Reports etc.
- Ensure that all ETF Information Technology systems are maintained and "cleaned" on a regular basis.
- Devise and implement a "League Table" of ETF providers.

Financial Tasks

- Ensure that cheque requests and invoices are settled in line with Standing Orders.
- Input to and monitor all aspects of ETF financial system.
- Provide regular financial reports on ETF budgetary performance.
- Reconcile ETF financial system with monthly Budgetary Control Reports.
- Appraise monthly Provider ND10a claims for accuracy and continuity. Where variances arise a timeous solution should be sought with the applicable ETF provider.
- Ensure that monthly ND10a Claim Form to Employment Service are accurate and compliment previous ND10a claim.
- Liaise with ES New Deal payment team to ensure that variances are resolved in timeous manner.

5.4 Members will note that the contract of the Project Co-ordinator is due to end on 31 March 2001 and given that the Council contract has been extended to 31 March 2002 the contract of the existing postholder will require to be extended on a temporary basis for a further year until 31 March 2002.

5.5 The Director of Planning and Environment has identified that the clerical support requirements of the ETF can be supported by the EDU clerical support unit.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Given that the Council's contractual obligation to meet, for example, required Job Entry Rates and allow for the development of a more effective and efficient model of delivery there is the requirement to provide administrative support to the existing ETF staffing structure. Contract negotiations will require to be undertaken with existing ETF providers to extend these contracts to March 2002 and the recent successful ESF Objective 3 Project "Safer Homes" together with proposed ESF Objective 2 submissions will increase administrative support requirements for the ETF team.

7. Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this report and:

- i) Agree to the establishment of 2 additional posts of Administrative Assistant (AP1) on a temporary basis until 31 March 2002 to be recruited internally and;
- ii) Agree to the extension of the existing Project Co-ordinator post on a temporary basis until 31 March 2002 and;
- iii) Note that the staffing costs relating to the above posts will be met exclusively from within the Management Fee derived from the operation of the ETF.
- iv) Delete the Clerical Assistant Post (GS 1-2) from the revised staffing structure, and
- v) Remit the report to the Personnel Services Committee for interest and approval.


for **David M Porch**
Director of Planning and Environment

Date of Report: 17th January 2001

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