



REPORT TO FISHERIES WORKING GROUP – 17 JUNE 2016

BLUE CAREERS PROJECT

1 Recommendation

1.1 It is recommended that the Group notes this report

2 Discussion

2.1 On 29 February 2016 the EU Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) issued a Call for Proposals paper entitled Blue Careers in Europe under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The paper described the importance of seas and coasts as key drivers of economic development in the EU and that around 5M people are employed in the 'blue economy' (including fisheries, marine transport and shipping, ship building and repair, offshore energy, aquaculture and biotechnology).

2.2 The paper went on to describe apparent skills gaps in the sector and the need for collaborative action to increase the number and diversity of trained and educated personnel to serve the future needs of the blue economy. The purpose of the call was to invite project groups to submit applications for financial assistance to help address such skills gaps, specifically to:

- Attract higher education graduates or persons with a vocational/technical qualification to maritime professions through targeted and innovative education and/or training initiatives, including career guidance
- Retrain and upskill workers employed in other sectors and/or the unemployed for a job in the blue economy
- Diversify and expand the skills of people currently employed in the blue economy to progress in the careers and/or to facilitate their mobility to other maritime jobs

A key element of the call was to signpost blue careers to young people

2.3 The level of financial support available under the project call was €500k-€700k for a coordinated two year project, to which match-funding in the form of in-kind contributions will be required. The call came to the attention of the Fraserburgh Task Force (FTF) and its high relevance to the future challenges faced by the 'blue economy' (primarily fisheries) in NE Scotland was noted. A (successful) approach was made to the Scottish Seafood Partnership for financial support to appoint a project coordinator/consultant and a meeting at NE Scotland College was convened in late March 2016 for interested parties.

2.4 The deadline for the application – 31 May 2016 – left little time for such a wide-ranging application to be properly researched and compiled but the excellent buy-in from project partners enabled the business case to be prepared in short order. Partners include Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC), Developing the Young Workforce (DYW – arising from the Wood Commission report), NE Scotland College (NESCOL – lead

partner), Scottish Enterprise (SE), Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Aberdeenshire Council, Seafish, Scottish Seafood Association (SSA), Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF), Fraserburgh Harbour and individual businesses such as International Fish Cannery and the Klondyke Fishing Company. A number of meetings and conference calls ensued. The coordinating consultant (Roger Horam) invested very considerable time and effort - in excess of his contracted commitments – to compile the submission and chase partners for supporting information required.

- 2.5 Only seven bids from across the whole EU will be supported and so the project team is under no illusions that the prospects of success are slim. A decision is expected from EASME in October 2016. Successful applicants are expected to initiate their projects in January 2017 and conclude no later than 31 December 2018.
- 2.6 As the project meetings and final document have progressed over the past two months, the partners have become increasingly aware of the powerful benefits of collaboration in the context of blue careers and a contingency plan to try to deliver the substantive elements of the submission – should the application to EASME be unsuccessful – will be prepared in the coming weeks. Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Scottish Enterprise and in particular NE Scotland College deserve particular credit for their unstinting commitment to the project.
- 2.7 Members will be kept informed of progress.

3 Financial Equalities and Staffing Implications

- 3.1 There are no current staffing or equalities implications. Council contributions to the Blue Careers work stream will largely take the form of officer time. Any future financial support for Blue Careers will be met from the Council's Marketing and Task Force Budget using officers' delegated powers.

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