

MBO Annual Report 2009-10

Executive summary

This report outlines the Merseyside Brussels Office's main achievements for 2009-10. These are categorised under five themes of strategic importance to the Liverpool City Region. The annual report covers work done with all the MBO's thirteen partner organisations. It also contains more detailed case studies from individual MBO partners/networks. Overall, the report aims to give a clear picture of both the breadth and depth of the MBO's work with its partnership.

This report outlines the main activities and achievements of the Merseyside Brussels Office (MBO) for the twelve months from April 2009 to March 2010.

The MBO represents Merseyside at the heart of the European Union. It has thirteen partner organisations from the public and voluntary sectors in Merseyside. The MBO has two officers in Brussels, who provide a link between these partners and the EU institutions and other European regions. The office helps Merseyside to:

1. Influence policy
2. Access funds
3. Build European partnerships

Brussels is where the major EU institutions are located and where most European regions and sectors are represented, so it is the ideal place for Merseyside to be making its voice heard. Much of the legislation that affects the local level is formed in Brussels. There is also considerable EU funding available from Brussels that local organisations can compete for. The MBO has a good relationship with North West MEPs, the European Commission and the UK government's representation to the EU. It is also active in various European regions networks, which lobby jointly, bid for funding together and share best practice.

The MBO's focus is on areas of joint EU-Merseyside interest. The annual report groups the MBO's activities and achievements under the five Liverpool City Region Development Programme (LCRDP) themes, as this was the strategic framework previously used for the MBO work

programme for 2009-10, which was set in March 2009. Keeping the same themes for both documents allows for easier comparison between the objectives set for the office at the beginning of the year and the achievements reported at the end.

These themes focus on:

- improving the city region's creativity and competitiveness
- making the city region an attractive destination;
- improving the connections within the city region and beyond
- fostering talent and skills
- encouraging sustainability

The MBO keeps partners informed in a variety of ways including: organising visits to Brussels; setting up meetings and seminars in Merseyside; and sending out regular thematic bulletins. It works with partners bilaterally and through Merseyside-wide networks. There is also an MBO web site (www.merseyside-europe.org), which promotes Merseyside and MBO partners in Brussels and beyond.

The annual report focuses on major actions only. Some regular MBO activities are not included in the report, such as:

- Attendance at and feedback from Brussels conferences and meetings;
- Production of reports and bulletins;
- Regular meetings with partners in Merseyside.

Every two months, the MBO produces one-page reports that outline these regular activities.

LCRDP theme: CREATIVE AND COMPETITIVE CITY REGION

Work programme activity – Continuing engagement with the EU policy agenda on cohesion policy (how the EU allocates funds to the regions) and economic development policy

Actions completed:

- The MBO facilitated Merseyside involvement at a meeting in Brussels of a grouping of “transition regions”. This group would like to achieve a new definition of Structural Funds transition regions in such a way that Merseyside could qualify for extra aid intensity in the next programming period. More generally, the MBO has been following the ongoing debate on the definition and status of “transition regions” in the future EU cohesion policy. This has included attending a consultation event at the Committee of the Regions, monitoring discussions in the EU institutions and liaising with other potential transition regions.
- The MBO has been following other aspects of the debate on the future of cohesion policy, including the urban dimension and the status of “macro regions” (functioning regions straddling the borders of two or more countries or around a shared sea). It has attended meetings in Brussels on these issues and reported regularly to relevant policy groups in Merseyside.
- The MBO and the NW Brussels Office have had accepted a proposal to organise an event on women’s entrepreneurship as part of the 2010 European Group of Regions and Cities (also known as Open Days) in October 2010. The event will be organised by the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Liverpool’s new Women’s International Centre for Economic Development (WICED) will be showcased.
- The CoR formally approved Liverpool’s involvement in a separate initiative under Open Days. This is a consortium, led by the German region of Saxony-Anhalt, that will organise a seminar in October on the theme of innovative support for entrepreneurship. It will include presentations of good practice from a number of European regions, including Liverpool’s new Women’s International Centre for Economic Development (WICED), which will be presented by Cllr Flo Clucas. The MBO has facilitated Liverpool’s involvement in this consortium.
- The MBO arranged for an upcoming local event in Liverpool to be branded under Open Days 2010 and receive marketing from the CoR and the European Commission. The session will look at “developing integrated approaches to gender and enterprise policy” and set this in a European context. It will take place in September and include the participation of Train 2000, WICED, Liverpool Vision, Liverpool City Council and the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurs.
- The MBO has advised on a recent consultation by the Office of National Statistics on reviewing UK NUTS regions’ boundaries. The NUTS are the administrative divisions of a country for statistical purposes.
- The MBO gave input to Cllr Flo Clucas on a presentation she gave at a recent conference on maritime spatial planning, which Maritime Commissioner Joe Borg attended. The presentation was on the Irish Sea region; the MBO’s input was to show how the Irish Sea region

activities fit with the EU maritime agenda.

- The MBO arranged for Cllr Clucas to attend a meeting in Lisbon organised by the Lisbon region to explore setting up an interregional observatory on the EU's Lisbon Strategy for jobs and growth.

Work programme activity - Supporting involvement in EU funding for research and development, competitiveness and innovation and co-operation with other regions

Actions completed:

- The MBO reported to relevant Merseyside policy groups on the latest opportunities in relation to FP7 (the EU research fund) and CIP (the EU innovation fund) and developments within the ERRIN network of European research regions, of which the NW/Merseyside is a partner.
- The MBO joined a Halton BC bid for Europe for Citizens funding for a project to organise three events in Merseyside and Brussels to promote local engagement with different aspects of the EU.

Work programme activity - Supporting implementation on the ground of the Merseyside European programme 2007-13

Actions completed:

- The MBO sent a number of policy reports on changes to legislation (the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and General Regulations) that could allow the Merseyside programme better to support recovery from the recession and to fund green technologies in housing.
- The MBO met with the manager of the UK ESF ITM programme (the part of the European social fund that funds joint projects between Merseyside and other parts of the EU) and reported back on the latest opportunities under this initiative.

Case study from the MBO Strategic Board members

The MBO has supported its partnership in Merseyside over the last year in understanding the changing EU agenda on regional policy (how the EU allocates funds to the regions) and in feeding into the debate taking place in Brussels. EU regional funding (also known as cohesion funding) will allocate a total "ringfence" of €468m to Merseyside over the period 2007-13, so understanding changes being introduced in Brussels to how these funds can be used allows Merseyside partners to exploit the full potential of the ringfence to invest in infrastructure, employment and training and regeneration locally.

Alongside these changes to the rules on how regional funding can be used in the short term, the European Commission is also beginning to look at the next round of regional funding allocations for after the current programme ends in 2013. Indeed, the coming year will be a crucial one for this debate: the European Commission's fifth Cohesion Report, due to be published in November 2010, will be a major consultation on the broad lines of the post-2013 funding; this will be followed in early 2011 by the next Cohesion Forum, a major stakeholder event for regions and city regions such as the NW of England and Merseyside. Over the past year a lot of discussion has been taking place within and between the EU institutions to prepare the ground for the coming year's activities. The MBO has been keeping its partners abreast of these developments, using intelligence gained from meetings with the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the UK government's Permanent Representation to the EU.

The MBO has also helped Merseyside partners to get involved in a grouping of European regions called "transition regions". These are regions, such as Merseyside, whose wealth is below the EU average but not low enough that they can benefit from the extra regional funding the very poorest regions get under current EU rules. The transition regions are arguing that, post-2013, the rules should be changed so that these in-between regions can get more funding than wealthier EU regions.

The MBO has also helped its partnership to apply successfully to join this year's European Week of Regions and Cities, otherwise known as Open Days. This is a week of exhibitions, seminars and other events to showcase regional best practice. Thousands of actors from all over Europe will converge on Brussels for this major regional event in the EU calendar. This year, Merseyside will be getting involved in no fewer than three separate initiatives under the Open Days banner (two events in Brussels and one in Liverpool), all showcasing Liverpool's new Women's International Centre for Economic Development (WICED). This is a very effective way of promoting the new centre to a large European audience as well as to the EU institutions, which formulate policy, promote good practice and provide funding on themes relevant to WICED.

LCRDP theme: PREMIER DESTINATION

Work programme activity - Promotion of Liverpool Capital of Culture at Brussels level

Actions completed:

- The MBO organised two debates and a reception for the past, current and future European Capitals of Culture as part of the 2009 European Week of Regions and Cities (Open Days). The debates looked at the economic, cultural and social impact of European Capital of Culture and included a speaker and chair from Culture Liverpool. Results from the Impacts 08 study into the benefits of Liverpool 2008 were presented at the event.
- The MBO helped Culture Liverpool with Liverpool's representation at a European Commission-organised celebration of the 25th anniversary of Capital of Culture, where the MBO presented Liverpool 08 at an exhibition that formed part of the event.
- The MBO started work on the practical co-ordination of a planned final dissemination event in Brussels in July 2010 for the European Capitals of Culture Policy Group. The Policy Group is a network led by Liverpool and funded by the EU's Culture Programme for one year to look specifically into the impacts of Capital of Culture across a range of cities. The final event will present a series of case studies examining the key components of the programmes for a range of past and future Cultural Capitals together with recommendations and a model for assessing impact.

Case study from Neil Peterson, International and Commercial Manager, Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council

The MBO's work with The Culture Company/Culture Liverpool over the last year has been extremely useful in terms of supporting the international side of the Liverpool 08 legacy, promoting at Brussels level the achievements of the year and building our advisory role to upcoming Capitals and candidate cities. A seminar in Brussels in October, organised by the MBO as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities, generated a lot of interest among European cultural actors and was extremely well attended. It was a chance for the existing network of Capitals of Culture to present an outward looking face and have a useful and lively debate with other cities active in the cultural sphere. At the event, the participating Capitals presenting their work and findings on what the economic, cultural, social and educational impacts of the European Capital of Culture project can be. Liverpool presented the Impacts 08 study – our pioneering work, conducted jointly with the Liverpool universities, looking into what the full range of benefits of Liverpool 08 have been and how these can be evaluated. Impacts 08 has generated great interest within the Capitals of Culture community across Europe.

The MBO has also helped Culture Liverpool with two further Brussels events. The first was a European Commission-organised celebration of the 25th anniversary of Capital of Culture, where the MBO presented Liverpool 08 at an exhibition that formed part of the event. The second is a planned final dissemination event in Brussels in July 2010 for the European Capitals of Culture Policy Group. The Policy Group is a network led by Liverpool and funded by the EU's Culture Programme for one year to look specifically into the impacts of Capital of Culture across a range of cities. The final event will present a series of case studies examining the key components of the programmes for a range of past and future Cultural Capitals together with recommendations and a model for assessing impact. The MBO has provided invaluable help in the practical coordination of this event.

LCRDP theme: WELL-CONNECTED CITY REGION

Work programme activity - Following and engaging with EU policy on urban transport

Actions completed:

- The MBO produced responses to two consultations, one from the Department for Transport, the other from the European commission, on the next EU Common Transport Policy (the blueprint for the EU's work on transport for the next ten years). The responses were on behalf of the UK Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg). The MBO also fed into a separate response at Merseyside level to the DfT consultation. The MBO also attended a European Commission stakeholder conference on the future of EU transport policy and produced a briefing.
- The MBO, working with Eurocities (a network of major European cities), organised a reception at the European Parliament to promote the European Platform on Mobility Management to transport MEPs and national transport representatives; the reception also included a debate on the recent EU Urban Mobility Action Plan. Speakers included: Neil Scales, Chief Executive and Director General of Merseytravel; Brian Simpson, NW MEP and Chair of the European Parliament's Transport Committee; and the head of the Urban Transport Unit in the European Commission.
- The MBO arranged a meeting between Merseytravel, pteg and Brian Simpson MEP to discuss a number of current EU transport policy developments.
- The MBO produced a report and presentation for a recent meeting of the pteg European Group giving a guide to all "live" EU transport legislation and legislative proposals.
- The MBO produced a short document for pteg members to submit to their new regional MEPs giving the pteg view on a small number of key transport issues over the new Parliament's mandate.
- The MBO produced a response to the recent consultative EU Green Paper on the Future of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) on behalf of the UK Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg)
- The MBO produced a number of updates on the progress of two proposals currently going through the EU legislative process on bus and maritime passenger transport rights. The proposed legislation could introduce new requirements on disabled passengers' access rights and on compensation for injury to passengers and damage to luggage.

Work programme activity - Supporting involvement in EU funding for transport

Actions completed:

- The MBO produced a report and presentation for a recent meeting of the pteg European Group giving a guide to the current EU funds that can support transport projects.
- The MBO attended meetings of the transport working group of ERRIN (a network of European research regions working together to attract EU research funding) and reported back to Merseyside partners
- The MBO met with Mersey Maritime and Go Associates to discuss a potential sustainable freight project bid under the EU Marco Polo programme, which supports projects to shift freight from road to more sustainable modes.
- The MBO attended Brussels events on various EU funds that can support transport projects, such as Marco Polo and Intelligent Energy Europe.

Case study from Neil Scales, Chief Executive and Director General of Merseytravel, Chair of the Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG) and Chair of the MBO Board

Over the past year, the MBO has played a key role in helping Merseyside and wider UK urban public passenger transport partners in following and influencing the legislation coming out of the EU on transport. A number of key EU transport strategies and proposals for legislation have been under preparation and the MBO has supported and drawn up a number of lobbying responses and fed them into key decision makers, in order to ensure our voice is heard in this process.

The Common Transport Policy is the EU's overarching strategy for transport policy over the next ten years. The strategy will appear toward the end of 2010 and will aim to equip Europe's transport system to meet the identified challenges of an ageing population, environmental pressures, scarcity of fossil fuels, increasing urbanisation and globalisation. The MBO helped to produce three separate responses to DfT and European Commission consultations that will inform the eventual strategy, which could well be the single most important strategic European document affecting local transport organisation in Merseyside and the UK over the coming years. Many of these responses have been drawn up with the UK Passenger Transport Executive Group (PTEG), which I chair and which represents the interests of all the UK passenger transport executives.

Another key EU transport strategy that appeared in late 2009 was the Urban Mobility Action Programme (UMAP). This is the first time the EU has looked at its transport policy specifically from the urban angle. It proposed 20 concrete actions to be adopted by the EU between now and 2012 in areas such as integrated transport, citizen-focused transport, greening transport, innovative transport funding, sharing experience and knowledge and optimising mobility. The MBO had previously helped its transport partners to lobby the European Commission during the preparation of this strategy. Over the last year, with the emergence of the final strategy, the MBO's focus shifted to informing partners of its provisions. A key element of this was an event the MBO organised at the European Parliament in October 2009, in co-operation with Eurocities, the European Platform for Mobility Management (EPOMM) and NW MEP and chair of the European Parliament's Transport Committee, Brian Simpson. The event provided an opportunity for the European Commission to present the UMAP's main provisions to a range of key urban transport actors across Europe and for the Parliament and EPOMM to present their view of the strategy. As president of EPOMM, I welcomed the chance the event also afforded to promote the network at a time when it is trying to build its membership across Europe.

LCRDP theme: TALENTED AND ABLE CITY REGION

Work programme activity: following and engaging with EU policy making on social inclusion, education and employment

Actions completed:

- The MBO held several meetings of its Social Inclusion Forum, where the latest Brussels developments on social inclusion were discussed with a range of Merseyside partners.
- The MBO produced a report and PowerPoint presentation on the current EU consultation on youth mobility. This was used by Merseyside Network for Europe in producing a draft response to the consultation; the MNE response was produced on the back of two consultation meetings with the third sector and other Merseyside partners

Work programme activity - Continued participation in relevant European networks, such as the European Network of Social Authorities (ENSA) social policy network and the European Regional and Local Authorities for the Integration of Migrants (ERLAI) asylum and immigration network

Actions completed:

- The MBO facilitated Merseyside involvement in a debate and networking reception in Brussels showcasing innovative local projects and structures around the theme of socially inclusive regeneration as part of the 2009 European Week of Regions and Cities (Open Days). Speakers included Merseyside Network for Europe and Social Enterprise NW.
- Working with its MBO Social Inclusion Forum, the MBO compiled a compendium of Merseyside projects for socially inclusive growth, which was distributed at the Open Days seminar.
- The MBO produced several editions of the ERLAI European asylum and immigration network newsletter. It also facilitated involvement by the NW health sector in an ERLAI seminar in Brussels on migration and health. The MBO used the ERLAI network to promote the MBO Social Inclusion Forum's response to the recent EU Education and Migration Green Paper.

Work programme activity: supporting involvement in EU funding on social inclusion, education and employment

Actions completed:

- The MBO supported MF&RS in a successful bid for a project grant from the UK ringfence of European Refugee Fund. This will support a project to build on MF&RS's pioneering community fire safety work with refugees; the project will run for three years and have an overall budget of £141,000. MBO support included: identifying the relevant fund for the project idea; obtaining intelligence on the priority themes and timing of available funding; brokering contact with the fund secretariat (the UK Border Agency); facilitating MF&RS attendance of a UK information day on ERF; advising MF&RS on their bid; and liaising with the UKBA on technical questions relating to the bid.

Case study from Myles Platt, Simon Chapman and Jennifer Welsh, Community Fire Safety Management, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

Over the past year, the MBO has been working closely with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MF&RS) to identify EU funding opportunities to support MF&RS's work. Particular focus has been given to EU funds in areas such as crime prevention, civil protection and migration. MF&RS recently learned that it has been successful in securing a project grant from the UK ringfence of European Refugee Fund with the help of the MBO.

The project should run for three years and have an overall budget of £141,000; it aims to build on MF&RS's pioneering community fire safety work with refugees. The objectives are: to improve the fire safety and awareness of all refugees as they make their permanent home within the community of Merseyside; to provide integration activities including work placements within MF&RS Community Safety Department; to increase accessibility of services to refugees; to improve suitability of housing offered to refugees; to ensure a reasonable physical standard of housing offered by private landlords; to provide fire safety equipment to refugee occupiers; to reduce barriers to communication between refugee community and statutory organisations. The project complements locally adopted national indicators and will contribute to the delivery of strategic outcomes as identified in the MF&RS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2010/13 and Liverpool's Local Area Agreement.

The support of the MBO has been key in securing the grant. This has included: identifying the funding opportunity in the first place; liaising with the fund secretariat (the UK Border Agency) around what could be funded and when the funding would become available; giving MF&RS a second opinion on their bid; and liaising with the UKBA on technical questions relating to the bid.

The benefit for MF&RS of the successful bid is clear: there is a net financial gain for the organisation directed at a project that would be difficult to fund from statutory funding or UK government grants. However, there are also less obvious benefits. For instance, the successful bid may put MF&RS in a stronger position to bid for future grants, as the organisation will be able to demonstrate a track record in securing European funding and running the projects. Furthermore, bidding for EU grants is recognised as a highly competitive process; the fact that MF&RS beat competition nationally to secure the grant can only add to the organisation's reputation.

LCRDP theme: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Work programme activity - Following and engaging with EU policy making on justice and home affairs and civil protection

Actions completed:

- The MBO organised a seminar for Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service on the latest EU legislative, standardisation and funding developments of relevance to local fire services.
- The MBO met a delegation of Merseyside Police officers to Brussels. The delegation was organised as part of an EU Leonardo-funded exchange project. The MBO produced a presentation on EU legislation and funding of relevance to Merseyside Police.

Work programme activity - Supporting involvement in EU funding on justice and home affairs and community safety

Actions completed:

- The MBO worked closely with a number of partners (Merseyside Police, Knowsley) in relation to potential bids under the EU Programme for the Prevention of and Fight against Crime. The MBO sent a number of Merseyside ideas for bids under future EU Crime Prevention Fund and Daphne (prevention of violence) fund calls to the UK Permanent Representation, the UK's civil service representation to the EU, as UKREP was considering organising UK information days and surgeries on the two calls. Two MBO partners (MNE and Liverpool) ultimately attended a meeting with the UK Home Office and the European Commission set up by UKREP.

Work programme activity - Following and engaging with EU policy making on the environment

Actions completed:

- The MBO worked with the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority on responding to a DEFRA consultation on how the new EU Waste Framework Directive should be translated into UK law. The MBO gave a presentation to a workshop of the Merseyside and Halton Waste

Partnership Senior Officer Working Group on aspects of the revised EU Waste Framework Directive. The workshop was specifically organised as part of the preparations for a Merseyside response to DEFRA.

- The MBO recently produced for MWDA a guide to all current EU waste legislation at the pre-proposal, proposal or transposition stage. The report supports the review of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Merseyside, which is being led by MWDA on behalf of the Merseyside & Halton Waste Partnership. The guide also looked at the climate-change/low-carbon agenda; this is a rapidly developing area and is becoming a key driver in the development of waste strategy in Merseyside.
- The MBO had regular meetings with MWDA to update on proposed EU legislation affecting collection and treatment of various waste streams. These meetings also covered EU funding opportunities relevant to waste.
- The MBO, working with the MWDA, produced a comprehensive guide to all EU trans-national funding opportunities to support sustainable waste management; this included intelligence such as upcoming call dates and national and EU contacts.

Case study from Neil Ferris, Assistant Director Strategy and Resources, and Glynn Stevenson, Waste Strategy Policy Officer, Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority

The legislative framework for municipal and wider waste management originates largely from the EU. The European institutions set European-wide rules that are translated further down the line into UK law. Knowledge of the latest developments in EU waste legislation is invaluable for MWDA, and its partners, in allowing us to plan well in advance for the waste policy environment of the future and the kind of targets we may be asked to achieve. In particular, this supports the current review of the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS), which will enable Merseyside to achieve sustainable environmental, social and economic benefits in relation to how it manages its waste and resources.

In late 2008 the EU institutions completed a major revision of the EU Waste Framework Directive, which sets out the broad approach on how Europe will manage its waste for the years to come. Since then, the UK government has been considering how this key piece of European legislation should be implemented in England and Wales, looking at issues such as: waste prevention; encouraging re-use, recycling and recovery of waste; separate collection of different types of waste; financing of waste management. The MBO has given key support to Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority (MWDA) in developing the Merseyside and Halton Waste Partnership's response, in particular by helping the partnership to understand the provisions of the original EU legislation and the potential implications of the Directive for the sub- region.

The MBO has also worked closely with the MWDA in monitoring other emerging EU waste legislation. New rules are currently being considered in Brussels that will impact on how, for example, waste electrical goods and kitchen and garden waste are collected and dealt with in Merseyside.

As well as legislation, the EU offers a host of funds that can support the waste sector in promoting sustainable approaches to waste management, including energy from waste, eco-innovation and green technologies, better resource use and prevention of waste. Working together, the MBO and MWDA have produced a comprehensive guide for Merseyside partners of all the relevant EU funds, including intelligence such as relevant UK and EU contacts and dates of upcoming calls for proposals.