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Commission of the European
Communities,
European Commission
B- 1049 Brussels

Chief Executive

Mark Cullinan
Chief Executive

Town Hall
Dalton Square
LANCASTER
LA1 1PJ
United Kingdom

11 January 2010

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation Response – Future of the “EU2020” Strategy

Lancaster City Council is pleased to respond to the European Commission's Working Document on the future EU 2020 Strategy and we are happy for our response to be published on your website. The working document clearly recognises the issues presented by the current global economy, the underpinning requirements and the opportunities of the economy of the future, the importance of green and sustainable growth and the need for collaborative, partnership based policy development and delivery. As such, the key principles of the emerging approach generally reflect issues and priorities at our local level.

We would like to make a number of specific comments as follows:

The long term impact of the outline policy framework and any associated financial instruments will be directly affected by the level of integration that is achieved with the policies and instruments of EU Member States. However, the proposed partnership based, collaborative approach, which is consistent with current thinking around multi-level governance, could greatly facilitate integration leading to more consistent approaches, flexibility and solutions. In support of this, we emphasise the crucial importance of local authorities in terms of both policy development and delivery. Local authorities understand the needs of local communities, act as community leaders to bring together public sector, economic and social partners in order to develop appropriate policies and strategies, and can enable the delivery of complex, multiple interventions as required.

We note a thematic rather than spatial approach and it is likely that this will be effective if supported by strong partnerships and collaborative working to ensure that specific territorial challenges can be addressed.

The focus on economic growth based on knowledge fits with local policies and we fully recognise the important role of universities and knowledge based businesses in terms of research, innovation and creativity. The working document also refers to the importance of broadband connectivity and we are supportive of this as a key to driving up business competitiveness and also as part of a greener infrastructure. However, we emphasise that the long-term competitiveness of businesses in both urban and rural areas will depend on future-proofed connectivity through Next Generation Access.



The working document recognises the impact of recent economic challenges and outlines some approaches to ensuring social cohesion and inclusivity. It is realistic to recognise the needs of communities as well as the barriers to employment and we will welcome further detail on emerging policy, as well as specific measures and interventions, in due course. Policies and initiatives around 'flexicurity' and lifelong learning are interesting and relevant, given fast changing economic and demographic factors.

We are pleased to note the mainstream position of the green economy including energy, new environmental technologies, carbon constraints, and environmental targets as key theme in the working document and, again, this reflects local priorities. It seems clear that the energy sector, including nuclear and renewable energy sources, will be of primary importance in the future and there is significant potential for the development of this sector locally, which we are keen to support as far as possible.

We continue to set carbon reduction targets and work with our partners to deliver projects enabling our local residents and businesses to reduce their resource consumption. Although we strive to meet and excel demands in the creation of sustainable communities, a greater level of support would be appreciated to successfully achieve relevant funding and support through programmes similar to NWEIP's Local Improvement Advisors. Infrastructure for alternative fuel systems, greener fleets, the purchasing of clean technologies and relevant training would also be beneficial for the greening of our small businesses and social enterprises.

We understand the benefits of working across territorial boundaries via territorial cooperation and the range of transnational programmes that are currently supported by the EU, such as Interreg, Erasmus and Leonardo. However, these initiatives are often complex, bureaucratic and require investment of resources and expertise, so for many smaller local authorities and partners are still relatively inaccessible. If the full potential of cooperation across Europe and beyond is to be achieved it will be important to actively remove current barriers to participation at the transnational level.

Recent flexibilities in the way in which State Aid can be utilised seem to have been helpful for businesses. We would like to see more detail emerging within this policy framework on a longer term approach that deals with Competition Law more cohesively, upholding the principles of fair and reasonable support for businesses within the context of agreed economic policy.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Cullinan', written in a cursive style.

Mark Cullinan

CHIEF EXECUTIVE