

Rt. Hon. Eric Pickles MP
Department of Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

10 December 2014

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Regional EU Funding for England

We are writing to express our concern at the delay in the agreement of Operational Programmes for England, caused by concerns about Local Enterprise Partnerships' involvement in managing Operational Programmes.

The European Commission agreed the UK's Partnership Agreement in October, with Operational Programmes yet to be finalised. Wales has had both its programmes approved and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Gibraltar's are expected to be adopted by the end of the year - yet England's regions are affected by this delay.

We understand that in order to avoid a further delay in the adoption of Operational Programmes, stronger concentration on thematic objectives is needed to ensure the effectiveness of the funding. Additionally, a clearly defined strategy needs to be put in place which addresses existing needs and outlines what results are to be achieved.

The late adoption of Operational Programmes presents challenges for national, regional and local authorities' capacity to plan effectively and implement the European Structural and Investment Funds. There is a risk projects currently underway will see a gap in their funding.

While Labour had serious concerns about the replacement of Regional Development Agencies with Local Enterprise Partnerships, it is in all our interests that they work effectively, and our regions benefit fully from EU regional funding.

Please let us know what steps you are taking to ensure agreement is reached as soon as possible.

Yours,

Glenis Willmott MEP
Labour's Leader in Europe

Derek Vaughan MEP
Labour's European spokesperson on
Regional Development

(Signed on behalf of all Labour MEPs)