

A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

CONTRIBUTION FROM FORWARD SCOTLAND

INTRODUCTION

1. Forward Scotland supports action for sustainable development through practical projects and research. Our mission is to champion innovative approaches to sustainable development. We are working to inspire a culture where the benefits of sustainable development are understood, valued and achieved. We aim to promote sustainability in the widest sense in ways that change people's perceptions, attitudes and behaviour, while also achieving economic growth, environmental and social justice.

OVERALL COMMENTS ON THE CONSULTATION

2. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland.
3. Our response is based on ten years of experience promoting sustainable development in Scotland, and of managing and delivering grant schemes which have supported a significant number of organisations that might be classified as social enterprises - in particular the [Transforming Waste Scotland \(TWS\)](#) Grant Scheme.
4. The aim of the TWS Grant Scheme was: "to encourage and support community-based waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting projects across Scotland to help achieve the targets set out in the emerging local, regional and national waste strategies."
5. The Scheme's objectives included:
 - to encourage and support community based projects designed to extend the infrastructure for collection and treatment of recoverable waste materials, in accordance with local priorities;
 - to extend public awareness and understanding of local priorities in waste management, their rationale and the benefits that will accrue;
 - to encourage new approaches to waste management, creating training, employment, environmental and other benefits for communities experiencing deprivation; and
 - to encourage networking and the creation of an advice and support framework to sustain and extend activities in the long- term.

RESPONSES TO KEY QUESTIONS

Do you agree with our vision for social enterprise?

6. Forward Scotland fully agrees with the draft strategy's stated vision for social enterprise, "as a dynamic and sustainable business model of choice – bringing social, economic and environmental benefits to Scotland." However, given the specific social, economic and environmental dimensions of this vision, we are concerned about the draft strategy's complete lack of linkage with, or reference to, sustainable development and to 'Choosing our Future', the Scottish Sustainable Development Strategy. We are concerned that the phrase 'sustainable business model' could be misinterpreted as it appears to refer to business viability and longevity.

If the strategy aims to increase economic growth in the social enterprise sector through this stated vision, then it is crucially important that this economic growth takes place in a sustainable way, i.e. balancing the social, environmental and economic aspects of development.

Does the draft strategy draw out all the contributions of social enterprise to social, economic and environmental life in Scotland?

7. Social enterprises have a significant and valuable contribution to make to Scotland's environmental, social and economic life. While the draft strategy acknowledges this contribution, it does not place enough emphasis on the environmental benefits offered by social enterprise, nor on the interlinkages between the social, environmental and economic aspects of social enterprise, i.e. the social enterprise sector's overall contribution (current and potential) to sustainable development in Scotland. For example, Forward Scotland would like to highlight that many of the community-based initiatives funded by the TWS Grant Scheme have developed, or are developing into social enterprises, while also directly contributing to sustainable development at the local level.

Furthermore, the draft strategy lists a number of key priority areas for the development of social enterprises in Scotland including employment and training, recycling, renewable energy, transport and community regeneration, all of which are directly linked to sustainable development. However, as we have already pointed out, the absence of any reference to sustainable development in the draft strategy text is noticeable.

Also, in terms of employment and training, the draft strategy makes no reference to the 'Going for Green Growth, a Green Jobs Strategy for Scotland', despite the wealth of business opportunities available in the waste management, recycling and renewable energy sectors. Forward Scotland's 2005 research into '[Environment Jobs Scotland](#)' further added to the evidence base highlighting the range of employment and training opportunities available in these sectors. In addition, as evidenced by our work with TWS Grant Scheme funded community projects, social enterprises are ideally placed to become leaders in 'green' enterprise due to their flexible and innovative nature, and their being driven by social, quality-of-life and environmental objectives.

Do you agree with the five strategic objectives and priority actions set out in Chapter 3?

8. Forward Scotland generally agrees with the five strategic objectives and the priority actions set out in the draft strategy. In terms of offering business support to social enterprises, various organisations are identified in the draft strategy as proposed key players, and indeed a range of organisations are already providing these services. However, while the Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone Community Interest Company (HISEZ CIC) offers targeted support to social enterprises in the HIE area, there does not appear to be an equivalent organisation offering the same services in the rest of Scotland. Similarly, we would like to point out that while the draft strategy makes several references to the new support agency, Cooperative Development Scotland, which was set up earlier this year, not all social enterprises are cooperatives and indeed very few organisations funded by Forward Scotland have adopted that structure.

Under Objective 4, the draft strategy indicates the need for clarification on business support to social enterprise in Scotland, and that as part of this the Scottish Executive will review the support services for the wider voluntary sector. It further states that Business Gateway provides services to more mature enterprises but that there is a need to provide support to pre-start up and start-up enterprises. Forward Scotland would like to draw attention to the fact that through our extensive grant scheme management experience, we have been significantly involved in supporting voluntary and community-based organisations in their transition to becoming social enterprises. We would welcome the opportunity to become involved in activities which can drive this forward.

Do you have any other comments on any other aspects of the draft strategy?

9. Forward Scotland currently chairs the [Vision in Business for the Environment of Scotland \(VIBES\) Awards](#) in partnership with a range of public, private and non-governmental partners, which aim to raise awareness of sustainable development and CSR issues within Scotland's private sector. There is an opportunity for social enterprises to become more involved with VIBES, thereby offering a valuable opportunity to significantly raise their profile and demonstrate the value of the social enterprise sector to Scotland's economic development (Objective 5). The VIBES award is also a feeder for the European Business Awards for the Environment.
10. Forward Scotland is currently developing a partnership project with [Studentforce for Sustainability](#) (England-based). Graduates Employed for Sustainability (GRADES) will offer graduates the opportunity to gain work experience in CSR/sustainability-related roles within Scotland's private sector. Given the increasing numbers of graduates interested in the social enterprise business model due to its social, environmental and economic objectives, GRADES can offer significant opportunities for graduates to work in Scotland's social enterprise sector.

CONCLUSION

11. Forward Scotland welcomes Communities Scotland's consultation on a Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland. Communities Scotland's has consistently supported the approach taken by Forward Scotland as we have worked across the spectrum of sustainable development related activity with public bodies, private companies and community organisations. As a result the organisation has developed a range of skills and experiences that we intend to apply to meet the emerging challenges of sustainable development in Scotland. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and we look forward to supporting the work of Communities Scotland's in promoting the development of the social enterprise sector and its role in achieving sustainable development in Scotland.

Forward Scotland
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REFERENCES

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 - [Transforming Waste Scotland](#) website
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2. 'Choosing our Future: Scotland's Sustainable Development Strategy'; 2005:
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/1493902/39032>
3. 'Going for Green Growth: a Green Jobs Strategy for Scotland'; 2004:
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4. Forward Scotland 'Environment Jobs Scotland' project; 2005, including:
 - [An Overview of Community Skills for Sustainable Communities](#), Executive Summary, 2006
 - [Skills, Training and Recruitment in Rural Natural Heritage Organisations](#), Executive Summary, 2006
 - [A Review of the Potential for SIC and SOC Codes for Categorising Jobs in the Environment](#), Executive Summary, 2005
 - [Skills for the Renewable Energy Sector in Scotland](#), Executive Summary, 2005
 - [Skills for the Waste Management Sector in Scotland](#), Executive Summary, 2005

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