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## **VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **WEST LOTHIAN SOCIAL ENTERPRISE NETWORK UPDATE**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to update the panel on the current activities being undertaken by West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN) in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice and representing the interests of social enterprises within West Lothian.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the panel:

1. Notes the positive outcomes in regard to the work undertaken by West Lothian Social Enterprise Network in supporting and representing the interests of the social enterprise sector within West Lothian.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs. Being honest, open and accountable. providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
<b>II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
<b>III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None.
<b>IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators</b>	None
<b>V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities
<b>VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	£31,500 has been awarded to WLSSEN from the Voluntary Organisation budget for 2021/22.

**VII Consideration at PDSP**

The Voluntary Organisations PDSP is updated on a quarterly basis.

**VIII Other consultations**

None.

**D. TERMS OF THE REPORT**

**D.1 Background**

West Lothian Council is committed to supporting the development of more enterprising and sustainable third sector that contributes to the key Community Planning Partnership outcomes.

**D.2 Current update**

A report from WLSSEN on the activities they have undertaken since the previous meeting of the panel is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

**E CONCLUSION**

The Panel is asked to note the update report but the West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN) that the PDSP will receive regular updates going forward.

**F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None.

Appendices/Attachments: Appendix 1 WLSSEN update

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04 November 2021

**Report to Voluntary Sector Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel**  
**4 November 2021**  
 (Report period 20/8/2021 to 21/10/2021)



## **WLSen's Mission**

At WLSen we are supporting our Network members to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and help them thrive. We are also raising awareness of the social enterprise sector's role in delivering a fairer, more inclusive, and sustainable economy.

## **1. WLSen Team and Board**

Our new Membership Co-ordinator joined WLSen on 13 September 2021 (contract expires March 2022). The Co-ordinator will play a critical role in raising awareness of WLSen, amplifying our messages through digital communications, and supporting Network development. The Co-ordinator is developing a communication and engagement strategy, building on a stakeholder mapping exercise. This will help us prioritise our workstreams while maximising impact.

Maria Throp has taken up role of interim Chair as Paul Renwick steps back from WLSen after joining in 2017. Adele Prendergast is replacing Victoria Pearce as Treasurer. June Dickson has also stepped back. We express our sincere thanks to Paul and Victoria for their long service to WLSen, and June for providing specialist advice around mental health support services. We welcome Angela Moohan to the Board. Recruitment of an additional two Board members is in progress.

## **2. Amplifying WLSen's voice and supporting members**

Our member has engaged continued over last quarter through delivery of:

- **Weekly news** (Three Things for Thursday) – A total of 9 have been delivered up to 21 October 2021. We are pleased and encouraged to see an increasing level of engagement from 49% in last quarter to 53.8% given that it spans school holiday periods. The highest recorded rate was 61.4%, this far exceeds our peers' average click rate of 45.6%.
- **Monthly Newsletter** – 3 newsletters have been delivered with an average click rate of 55.3%, an increase of 5% from last quarter. In response to member feedback, we are sharing information about national initiatives and engagement opportunities like Third Sector Collaboration Week, Poverty Week, and climate news.
- **Social media** – The last quarter has seen another significant increase in Twitter engagement in response to our posts about learning and funding opportunities, members' events and supporting stakeholders' posts. The number of followers and 'mentions' have increased with over 4,000 'impressions' over a 28-day period up to 20 October. WLSen's Facebook page is not live now. We will look at social media channels as part of our Communications & Engagement Strategy.

We are amplifying Network news and helping to build capacity and resilience by sharing details of learning, funding and collaboration opportunities through our regular updates and social media posts. Appendix 1 provides examples of recent WLSen's communications. We will host a 'meet WLSen' event for Network members this month, followed by a member showcase event in early December. Going forward, we plan to add an additional appendix to this PSDP report which showcases one of our Network members, highlight their activities and positive community impacts.

We are supporting the Third Sector Summit on 3 November by raising awareness of our HSCP funded mental health and wellbeing project and talking about challenges and opportunities. We held a collaborative event with Community Enterprise Ltd about understanding the Accelerator programme (21 Oct.). We also supported The Larder's bid to West Lothian Council's Young Person's Guarantee as part of a Third Sector led project team. This complements our ongoing participation in sector groups like the Third Sector Strategy Group and SENSco's network meetings. We are also connecting with other organisations and networks across sectors like Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and Community Enterprise in Scotland to broaden our reach and identify potential collaboration opportunities around business skills and building capacity.

### 3. WLSSEN Collaboration

#### a) Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) Funded Project

We are making good progress in shaping the HSCP funded project to deliver from the third sector early intervention and prevention services to adults in West Lothian experiencing low to medium mental health challenges. Sixteen organisations have come forward from the Mental Health Forum to help shape and deploy this pilot project. We are also drawing down support and expertise from Wellbeing Scotland and SENS Scot. Community Enterprise Ltd is providing specialist advice in relation to the project's digital space. We plan to recruit a project worker during November who will manage the referral service on behalf of WLSSEN and the project partners.

#### b) Climate Action

We're excited to have created a space for [SENS Scot](#) to participate in the ['Future' Series COP26 Conference](#) in collaboration with Net Zero Scotland Community (10 Nov.) which is focused on taking tangible action in the face of the climate crisis. This provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the Third Sector's [Net Zero Strategy](#), and explore challenges and opportunities across a diverse audience including SMEs. This Strategy has been informed by a [Survey](#) of over 500 third sector organisations. Of those who responded, only 11% of organisations have measured their carbon footprint. While the social enterprise sector is more aware of the need to act and act quickly, it is critical that organisations take action to help deliver greener communities. We will raise awareness of the potential adverse impacts and risks of climate change for social enterprises, signpost learning and funding opportunities and partnership opportunities to help WLSSEN members reduce their carbon emissions.

### 4. Scottish Government Consultations

In collaboration with [Social Enterprise Scotland](#) and other stakeholders, WLSSEN contributed to a [representation](#) in response to the Scottish Government's consultation about a [National Strategy For Economic Transformation](#). This letter spotlights the vital economic contribution of over 6,000 social enterprises in Scotland with an estimated net worth for the whole social enterprise community of £6.1bn. It also highlights that social enterprises and other values-led businesses are vital to Scotland's green recovery. We are also supporting VSGWL is hosting a Q&A session with the Scottish Government's National Care Service Consultation Team in relation to the [Consultation](#) on how social care in Scotland is delivered. The proposed changes have implications for organisations in the third sector supporting children and families, community justice, alcohol and drug services, mental health, and unpaid carers.

### 5. Social Enterprise Landscape

#### a) Programme for Government

The Scottish Government's [Programme for Government 2021-22](#), announced in September, makes a commitment to "support businesses with alternative ownership models, including cooperatives and social enterprises...". It also states that it will "support the social enterprise sector as it works to tackle pressing social issues including homelessness and climate change – investing £5million over three years to help community organisations recover from the pandemic, give every child the opportunity to engage with a social enterprise during their time at school, and promote international social enterprises ...". These commitments are made within the context of the Social Enterprise three-year Action Plan focused on: stimulating social enterprise; developing stronger organisations; and realising market opportunity. To support social enterprises in West Lothian, we will continue to signpost, and support, organisations to tap into funding programmes and look for collaboration opportunities with corporate partners.

## b) Scottish Single Intermediary Body

The Scottish Government proposals to create an enhanced single intermediary body for Social Enterprise Sector in Scotland are moving towards a competitive process. SENScot has prepared a representation to the Scottish Government, expressing their frustration about the delay and concerns that this approach could be damaging for the sector, and involve considerable time to work through the legal, financial, operational, and emotional issues involved. They have also reiterated their commitment to bring about a more consensual and constructive approach to the future development of the Intermediary Infrastructure which puts the sector's interests first. We will follow this process closely and ensure that WLSSEN's views are shared where appropriate.

## c) State of Social Enterprise UK Study 2021

This year's State of Social Enterprise Survey, compiled by [Social Enterprise UK](#), called 'No Going Back' shows that social enterprises have not changed their approach over the past year, unlike other parts of our economy. *"It has acted the way it has always done, driven by its values and a desire to do what is – in the long term – in the interests of people and the planet"*. The report states that 93% of social enterprises in Scotland experienced overall negative impact on operations due to Covid and 35% faced disruption to support or services to beneficiaries. Despite covid related challenges, it also highlights the positive impact, agility and resilience of social enterprises across UK: 44% grew turnover; 74% made a profit/broke even; and 66% introduced a new product/service.

It concludes that *"we need social enterprise to become the backbone of our economy as well as our society"*. They offer demonstrable value because a significant proportion not only operate in the most deprived parts of the UK, tackling socio-economic imbalances, but they are examples of how the Government's 'levelling up' agenda can be achieved at a community level. Key messages to share in our communications with funders, partners, and allies.

## 6. WLSSEN's Strategic Direction

From an operational perspective, we are continuing to develop our strategic approach around how we engage and support the Network while raising the voice of the social enterprise sector in West Lothian through dialogue with our member and stakeholders. When complete, our communication and engagement strategy will help frame what we do and how we prioritise our workstreams, using the three broad actions which we shared in our last PDSP report:

- **Amplify** the voice of the social enterprise sector to influence policy and decision making.
- **Empower** social enterprises to become sustainable, resilient, and inclusive.
- **Collaborate** with others to create ecological and socially just communities through action.

Over a longer timeframe, we are ambitious about helping our members to make strategic shifts in relation to their environmental credentials, market share and financial sustainability. We believe that collaboration will be key in shaping our strategic direction and working towards our vision.

## APPENDIX 1 WLSN NETWORK ENGAGEMENT – OVERVIEW OF TOPICS

### Grants and Funding Opportunities including:

- West Lothian Council's [Young Person Guarantee](#) which offers funding to create opportunities to remove barriers experienced by young people aged 16-24 and create opportunities within education/training/employment, and support progression towards a positive destination.
- West Lothian Council's **Voluntary Organisations** [Modernisation & Improvement Fund](#) to support voluntary organisations in the Council area to become more sustainable through action which helps deliver the Council's strategic priorities and/or helps build back better.
- **Ballie Gifford Grassroots Sports Fund** is aimed at supporting grassroots sports organisations. Grants are available for helping people to participate in sport by removing barriers and improving club sustainability - all ages and abilities, all sports. Up to £5k is available. Please [see here](#) for guidance and how to apply.

### Training & Learning Opportunities including:

- **2050 Climate Group's** [Youth Climate Summit](#) **Let's Talk COP26** was open to young people aged 18-35 from across Scotland.
- **FirstPort Scotland/Just Enterprise** workshops, offering tailor-made for start-up social entrepreneurs including finance and legal matters.
- **Sportscotland** in partnership with Hampden Sports Clinic, the Scottish FA and Scottish Rugby, released a new, e-learning module [Supporting Mental Health](#) designed to equip coaches with the knowledge to effectively support participants and hold a conversation about mental health.
- **Borrow a Researcher** event series across [West Lothian Libraries](#) to tap into expertise of a researcher to help you explore the latest research.
- **Big Society Capital** want to take social impact investment to the next level, doubling the size of the market by 2025 and creating even greater social change.

### Members News including:

- **Trash Panda's** *Sober October*. A challenge with a chance to win a big cash prize. Whatever the reason you want to give it a try; weight loss, better sleep, testing out the alcohol-free life, Trash Panda offered support and content from amazing educational people.
- **First Aid for Mental Health Training** was available through EnvironMENTAL Health CIC [Facebook](#)
- **Larder's** award recognitions including the Living Wage Scotland Awards ([Twitter](#)).

### Sector News including:

- [Third Sector NetZero Strategy](#) as part of the CEIS' [SE Policy and Practice Conference](#). It has grown through cross sector collaboration. Steering Group member, Pauline Hinchion (Director at Scottish Communities Finance Ltd), has written [this blog](#), highlighting the contribution the third sector can make and the importance of collaboration. To find out more about how social enterprises are tackling climate change, please join the SES event [COP26, social enterprise & the climate emergency](#).
- Scottish Government consultation about: Review Of Intermediaries to deliver a single body which better reflects the needs of the sector in support of [Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-2026](#); and their consultation about Appointment of a new economic council and the plan for a [National Strategy For Economic Transformation](#).
- Social Enterprise Scotland is hosting a [Buy Social Scotland Corporate Challenge launch](#). Corporate partners will join us in a discussion on what social procurement means to them, highlight work undertaken to date and share their thoughts on working with social enterprise organisations. You can also hear from social enterprise suppliers and more about the new Buy Social Scotland business site.