



Castlereagh Borough Council

Stye Braes o Ulidia Burgh Cooncil

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Social Economy Branch
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Netherleigh
Massey Avenue
Belfast
BT4 2JP

8th October 2009

RE: SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTERPRISE STRATEGY 2009 – 2011 CONSULTATION

Dear sir / madam

Thank you for giving Castlereagh Borough Council (CBC) the opportunity to respond to the draft Social Economy Enterprise Strategy 2009 – 2011. Locally, the sector has achieved immense economic and social benefits and a greater opportunity now exists for the sector to provide continued sustainable services to local communities. The Council has worked with many partners to increase the strength of the sector within the Borough and will continue to do so in future.

In response to your consultation questions:

OBJECTIVES:

The three strategic objectives are appropriate as they reflect the stages of the 'entrepreneurial pipeline' referred to within the enterprise strategy. I welcome that the original objectives have been retained from the 'Developing a Successful Social Economy Strategic Plan 2004'. This will allow progress against the objectives to be monitored throughout the lifetime of both strategies.

AREAS FOR FUTURE ACTION:

There are two actions in particular which are to be commended:

- 'All but measure 3.2 of the Rural Development Programme (farm modernisation) will be open to SEE's. Under eligible measures an enhanced rate of up to 75% will be available to SEE's'.
- 'That Social Economy Network (SEN) will work with the Credit Unions to identify opportunities to develop their role in the social economy sector'. If this role can be

determined at a local level it would further promote social entrepreneurship and sustainability.

There are actions which are less tangible because of the implementation role some departments have within the strategy. Such actions will not contribute greatly to enhancing Social Economy Enterprise's (SEE) contribution to the local economy:

- Roles of Departments and the sector: 'DSD will have lead responsibility for a range of strategies to encourage and support a more enterprising Voluntary and Community Sector'. The strategies are not referenced and a parallel seems to be drawn between their role / existing activity within the community / voluntary sector and the social economy enterprise sector.

Concerning the actions within the strategy and their ability to contribute to the three main strategic objectives please consider the following points:

- The Executive Summary states that the strategy 'can be considered as a transitional strategy in preparation for the enhanced role envisaged under the Review of Public Administration (RPA) for District Councils' (pg 8). However, the only action where reference is drawn to local authorities is 'DETI will work in partnership with the Social Economy Policy Group (SEPG), Social Economy Network (SEN) and local authorities to raise awareness of the sector through a range of initiatives' (pg 24). A cultural change is being initiated within Central Government without the same change being used to influence existing and future local economic development strategy. To ensure that the ethos of the policy, which is to be commended, is not lost through the transition period there should be greater engagement with local authorities. This could be done through representation on the SEPG or communication via SEN to local Council's. Similarly, SEN could promote the economic development activity of local Councils and invite SEE's to participate or influence existing and future local economic development strategy (supported by the NI Sustainable Competitiveness Programme).
- The strategy states that 'a general policy supporting the volume growth of SEE's is not needed' given that the focus of the strategy is on 'developing the business strength of existing SEE's'. I agree that an 'Executive Policy' is not needed but a policy by relevant departments is (ie. Invest NI). To state that a policy is not needed contradicts the future actions of some departments detailed within the strategy.
- At the consultation event held on 24th September it was recommended that a timed implementation plan should accompany the strategy. This would create a benchmark against which outputs can be evaluated.
- Fostering a SEE culture, DSD Development Offices will 'work with Invest NI to determine how action plans and priorities, developed for each of the Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, can provide opportunities to improve social enterprise' (pg 29). I feel that this should be revised to include Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships as well as Invest NI. The Partnerships are the origin of the local action plans and priorities.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

The proposed monitoring and evaluating mechanisms are appropriate alongside the cross-departmental implementation plan referred to above.

EQUALITY IMPACT:

The equality considerations are appropriate.

I look forward to receipt of the final strategy and look forward to helping the sector to develop and grow.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin McCabrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Colin McCabrey

Economic Development Manager