

Factsheet 3

The Rural Network for Northern Ireland

September 2009



Sharing & Exchanging Information

Sharing and exchanging information is key to the work of the Rural Network for Northern Ireland. We will share and exchange information in a number of ways.

These include:-

- A dedicated website www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk
- Newsletters, publications and fact sheets
- Events, meetings and visits

This Fact sheet provides information on the 'Social Economy sector' and the sources of support available.

The Rural Network for Northern Ireland plans to focus on Enterprise & Entrepreneurship as part of a planned series of thematic groups. LAG representatives will be invited to participate in themed activities designed to enhance awareness of this sector.

Please Note: This factsheet is for information purposes only.

Focus on Social Economy Enterprise

The Social Economy Enterprise business model is gaining in popularity as an opportunity to combine commercial objectives with social responsibility. DETI is currently inviting views on the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy 2009-2011 which will have a significant impact on the sector. Closing date for comments is 9th October 2009. Copies available at www.socialeconomynetwork.org.

What is a Social Economy Enterprise?

A social economy enterprise is an organisation that trades in goods and services primarily for a social purpose. They have clear social aims but have to compete in the marketplace like any other business. DETI defines a Social Economy Enterprise as "*a business with primary social objectives whose surpluses are re-invested, for that purpose, in the business or in the community rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders or owners.*"

What type of enterprise can be 'social'?

Social Economy Enterprises operate across a wide range of business sectors such as hospitality, tourism, catering, finance, ICT; and could be involved in the delivery of, among other things, housing, environmental and health and social care services.

What is the level of Social Economy Enterprise in Northern Ireland?

In 2007, DETI carried out a survey among 400 known Social Economy Enterprises in Northern Ireland. It found that they employed 6,000 people, had 5,000 volunteers and a turnover of

£335m per annum. It is estimated that there are over 1,000 Social Economy Enterprises in Northern Ireland and that social economy activity accounts for approximately 5% of economic activity. According to Social Entrepreneurship Monitor Report 2006, the social entrepreneurial activity rate for Northern Ireland, at 3.3%, is the 5th highest out of 12 regions in the U.K.

What is the interest elsewhere?

There is an increasing interest in the Social Economy Enterprise model of business across the globe. In Europe, 3.5 million jobs are provided by Social Economy Enterprise, delivering a broad range of services. In England and Scotland there is strong government support for the increased involvement of Social Economy Enterprises in the delivery of public services.

What can Social Economy Enterprise contribute to the economy?

Social entrepreneurship can be a driver for regeneration, neighbourhood renewal, employment in deprived areas and social reform. It can meet a social need, encourage ethical markets, improve public services and increase enterprise.



Promoting the social economy sector in Northern Ireland

Who are the Social Economy Network?

The Social Economy Network (SEN) is the regional umbrella organisation for Social Economy Enterprises in Northern Ireland. Its role is to represent the sector at all levels of government and to influence and shape policy. SEN draws its membership from Social Economy Enterprises, social economy support organisations and stakeholders throughout Northern Ireland. Current membership includes over 100 Social Economy Enterprises throughout Northern Ireland.

What do they provide?

SEN provides information, advice and signposting services to opportunities in funding, training, public procurement and national events. For further information on the Social Economy Network visit www.social-economy-network.org

What other sources of support are available?

Invest NI Social Entrepreneurship Programme is currently open for applications. It helps to build the skills and capabilities of social entrepreneurs and focuses on supporting social economy businesses that are

capable of making a significant economic impact. The Programme will be offered to social entrepreneurs and enterprises at differing stages of development.. The Programme will be managed on behalf of Invest NI by Enterprise NI, in conjunction with UCIT. For further information contact Audrey Murray (Programme Manager) on 028 2826 9973.

Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT)

is a key provider of loan finance, free advice, business support and mentoring to the social economy sector in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. As a registered charity, all profits generated by UCIT are recycled for reinvestment into the community and Social Economy Enterprise sector. For further information visit www.ucitltd.com

UnLtd is a charitable organisation promoting social entrepreneurship through providing grant awards, research and support to the sector. For further information visit: www.unltd.org.uk

How can the Rural Development Programme support the Social Economy?

Social Economy Enterprises can apply into 5 of the 6 measures within Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme: M3.2, 3.3, 3.4,

3.5 and 3.6. Grants of up to £150,000 are available at a grant rate of 75%. There is also the potential to include 20% contribution in kind towards total project costs. As DETI/Council led Local Economic Development Plans provide a potential source of funding for workspace these would not be deemed eligible under the Programme at this stage.

Finally...

Social Economy Enterprise Day will take place on 19th November 2009 which provides an opportunity to celebrate and promote Social Economy Enterprise across the UK.

News You Can Use

Do you have information worth sharing? Help us to contribute to the transfer of information sharing practice within and across the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme.

Contact the Rural Network for Northern Ireland:-

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The Rural Network for Northern Ireland is a member of:
UK National Rural Network:
www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/uknationalruralnetwork

And European Network for Rural Development: www.ec.europa.eu

The Rural Network for Northern Ireland has also established links with the *National Rural Network for Ireland:* www.rdsu.ie



The Rural Network for Northern Ireland is managed by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) through the Agri Rural Form as part of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development on behalf of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD).

References and links to any external websites or publications shall not be taken as an endorsement by the Rural Network for Northern Ireland of the opinions expressed or services provided by those sites and publications.