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**From:** Senan Cooke [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 03 May 2019 12:51  
**To:** DRCD SEConsultation  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Response to draft social enterprise policy

Hi

These comments are from Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd, Ballyphilip, Dunhill, Co Waterford.

Department to be complimented on being allocated responsibility for social enterprise. It now has a minister responsible for it. Extensive research has been completed and international best practice included. We now look forward to the launch of the new policy.

We think that the draft policy is excellent. It is now time for implementation. The implantation structure is critical and in doing it work it will map the sector, identify resources, opportunities, barriers, fragmentation, duplications all of which can be sorted and some very easy that will make a big difference.

Communications of supports from the agencies is currently dire and confusing. The lack of communications costs the voluntary social enterprise money to decipher the support and then it forces them to hire consultants to help them with applications so that it has a chance of success. This should not be the case and it can be sorted easily.

Relationship between support agencies and social enterprises is unbalanced in terms of work with too much of the work allocated to the volunteer. The agency is an observer, manager, controller, adjudicator while the social enterprise leader and team does all the work in meeting strict EU and government guidelines and criteria. A new arrangement is required where the agency works with the social enterprise – community to achieve a common objective i.e. start up and sustainability of a service, facility, development of a solution to a problem and this requires the organization of a partnership between agency and social enterprise- community.

The agency has the full time, paid expertise and resources to work with community to get things done. The agencies should be conscious of easing the burden on the volunteer and backing the community in its efforts. If a new relationship was established that was more positive, collaborative and proactive it would make many improvements of serious benefit to local communities. What exists at the minute is a waste of talent, time, funds and potential good will between community and agency.

There is also a mass of dormant resources that the state can help to leverage for voluntary community developments. Many of these resources are declining and laid to waste and include buildings, land, landscape, heritage and people – retired all of whom would contribute if the incentives were there – or if some of the barriers were removed that would allow these and many other resources to be activated.

We think that the launch of the current draft policy with proper implementation structure and government support will allow for so much to be done that will increase social cohesion and economic prosperity in EVERY community, urban and rural countrywide. It is in the implementation of the policy that all the issues will be identified.

County and regional social enterprise networks should be encouraged in the implementation phase so that there is a direct conversation between the department implementation group and social enterprises operating on the ground.

The state agencies purporting to represent social enterprise is not the proper connections as they have all as first priority their own survival and growth and control of the sector. As examples only - Councils, Leader Partnerships, Local Enterprise Office's, Irish Rural Links, Muintir Na Tire, Social Innovation Fund Ireland, Social Entrepreneurs of Ireland, Clann Credo, Irish Social Enterprise Network, The Wheel and many others provide important supports to social enterprises mainly as PART some a very small part of their overall remit. Most of them have a much wider brief. Much of their support is very welcome and fully appreciated by social enterprises BUT only social enterprises on the ground starting up and managing and sustaining services, facilities and infrastructure or problem solving know what needs to be done to improve the support system and eliminate barriers and problems some caused by the above agencies. Social enterprise has to speak for itself. Waterford has set up its own social enterprise network

and Southeast has also set a network up which is currently being strengthened. They should be regarded as primary sources of research throughout the implementation phase 2019-2022.

If this is done we will end up with a powerful socio-economic sector that has the power to transform urban and rural communities. There is not a shadow of doubt about that and many communities have against the tide made outstanding progress. What they could achieve through social enterprise with social enterprise policy and supports in place is something very special.

The help of all the agencies and others listed above will be more than welcome and all in the sector can then work together. This cannot happen if they are the only ones speaking for social enterprise- their opinions are welcome. Some of them are critical of social enterprise and do not see them as a separate sector and others adopt penal attitudes to them and see them as a nuisance and a bother. Voluntary community and private enterprise they can handle and are most comfortable with.

Wishing the department every success with the new policy and we look forward to working with it and all others including the agencies listed above in developing a more cohesive and prosperous network of communities across the country in 2019-2022.

Kind Regards,



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