

[REDACTED]

From: Martin Kennedy [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 May 2019 15:05
To: DRCD SEConsultation
Subject: Social Enterprise draft policy doc
Attachments: Response to draft social enterprise policy.docx

Please find my response to the above attached. Regards, Martin Kennedy

- To Social Enterprise Policy Consultation
- From Martin Kennedy, Derries Lower, Killashandra Co Cavan 086-2608326

This submission is informed by the following:

1. My report on a study of social enterprise in Co Cavan submitted to *Breffni Integrated* last November*.
2. My reading of the recent County Wicklow Partnership *Social Enterprise Development Strategy*
3. Preparation of a report with a community group in Glangevlin, West Cavan that highlights the potential for social enterprise as a driver of social and economic development in a very marginalised community.
4. A lifetime involvement with community development groups.

Overall I welcome the draft *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022* for two reasons.

- a. It recognises and affirms the existence and value of social intelligence as a fundamental driving force in Irish society behind many social and economic initiatives. These initiatives go beyond personal financial interests and look to the good of the wider community.
- b. It offers social enterprise as a particular, concrete mechanism for the application of that social intelligence to social needs that neither private enterprise nor State can adequately address.

I note the three basic objectives in the policy and the proposed 21 action points.

1. *Building Awareness of Social Enterprise*

- a. I welcome action points 1-3 in regard to raising the profile of social enterprise. The Cavan study highlights the unfamiliarity of the concept, even among those actively involved. It also notes the discomfort many community activists feel in regard to the language of social enterprise. This points to the need for 'user friendly' language and the value of action 2 - the use of stories to illustrate the scope and value of social enterprise.
- b. I welcome actions 4-6 in regard to increasing the initiation of social enterprises. I think action 4 is especially important with its emphasis on targeted programmes and initiatives. Here I think the strategy proposed by County Wicklow Partnership offers some very good examples of this - *Large scale demonstration social enterprises* (9.3), *Strengthen social enterprise via collaboration* (9.4) and *Scaling up social enterprise activity* (9.5).

2. *Growing and Strengthening Social Enterprise*

- a. I welcome actions 7-10 which focus on building business leadership capacity. Many people involved in social enterprise do not have a business background and a tailored support here is very necessary. The Cavan study highlights the weakness in the sector in particular with regard to strategic planning.
- b. The Wicklow strategy highlights the value of identifying and utilising social enterprise 'champions' from the business sector (9.9).

- c. The Wicklow strategy also highlights the importance of training for key personnel within State agencies and local authorities to heighten their awareness of and capacity to support social enterprise (9.9).
- d. I welcome actions 11-14 which focus on the funding of social enterprise. I note especially the focus on actions 12 and 13 in regard to gaps in funding and the need for innovative funding schemes. The Wicklow strategy seeks to put local flesh on the bones of a national policy. It sees the need for two dedicated social enterprise workers to deliver its strategy in the county. If a similar approach developed across the country the funding levels indicated in this draft policy seem well short of what would be needed. While CSP, Leader and SICAP provide some funding, the specific funding of €2 million annually from the Dormant Accounts and the €1.6 million Social Enterprise Development Fund (also from Dormant Accounts) suggest that social enterprise is a marginal concern among national policy makers. In theory the policy recognises three main contributors to social and economic development in the country - the private sector, the State and the social sector. If national development is imaged as a three-legged stool then further thought needs to be given to how the third 'leg' is resourced, especially its social enterprise dimension.
- e. I welcome actions 15-17 which focus on enabling market opportunities. This section highlights the particular role that social enterprise can play in disadvantaged communities. My experience with the Glangevlin community organisation is that it represents very high quality social capital in an environment that is economically very weak. Investment in that capital makes huge sense - building its capacity to function as an economic driver where neither State nor private enterprise is willing to tread.

3. Policy alignment

- a. I welcome points 18-21 in that they seek to give equal status to the not-for-profit sector and the social intelligence that drives it. My experience in community development work over the years is that this intelligence is widespread in the country and represents massive social capital that is necessary for balanced social and economic development. The policy does recognise it as an under-tapped and under-resourced asset. My concern is that this recognition will not be matched by a concrete commitment to the development of the sector. In particular this means the identification of specific growth targets for social enterprise across the country and the allocation of an appropriate level of resources. *end*

*The study of 90 social enterprises in County Cavan highlighted the following:

- Most of the organisations are **rural, stand-alone** and were formed within the last twenty years.
- **Thousands of hours of volunteer commitment** are given by the organisations every year
- Between them the 90 organisations **employ 482 people in county Cavan**
- Their predominant sources of income are through **trading and fund-raising**
- Their main objectives are the **betterment of their community and the provision of essential services**
- The main challenge they experience is **increased demand for their services**
- The main challenges they see ahead of them are **retention of volunteers, compliance with legislation, uncertain statutory and public support and increasing operating costs.**
- Only a small minority had developed a business plan - the majority seemed unfamiliar or **uncomfortable with social enterprise language** and policy issues
- The majority felt **confident that they will be able to cope financially** with their challenges