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From: Swanlinbar Development Association [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 May 2019 15:42
To: DRCD SEConsultation
Subject: RESPONSE TO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE POLICY
Attachments: Response from Sharon Howe 13.05.19.docx

Sharon Howe
Community Co-ordinator
Monday to Thursday 8.30 am to 4.30 pm

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Response from Sharon Howe : Swanlinbar Development Association, Trivia House, Swanlinbar, Co Cavan

Ref: The Dept of Rural & Community Development National Policy on Social Enterprise

Background: I am currently employed as a co-ordinator of a Peace Impact Project funded by International Fund for Ireland. I provide support to the development association and these are my personal responses to the consultation process and may not necessarily represent the views of the Development Association

Building Awareness of Social Enterprise

Creating Awareness of Social Enterprise

Supporting Social Enterprise Start-up

Social enterprise is an excellent and sustainable way for rural areas which have been hit heavily through recession, troubles etc to create a workable future for their area. It can regenerate an area where private business would not succeed and have far reaching benefits in community development as well as providing an essential complimentary product to private business in the area. It would be helpful if this excellent and sustainable way of operating had an official recognition of social enterprise in Ireland - development of a social enterprise branding system (similar to Guaranteed Irish). This would allow projects to be identified as a social enterprise with recognition that funds generated go back to support the community which sets it apart from other businesses.

Similarly a networking system, exemption or lower rates and a specific funding to encourage social enterprise start up would be beneficial

Start up is extremely difficult with running costs as a major hurdle. Funding which would support this in addition to capital and salary costs would be beneficial in removing barriers to start up.

- Growing & Strengthening Social Enterprise

Community Services Programme (or similar) to be more widely available, essential to sustain social enterprises as dependence on volunteers is not a viable business option. This is probably one of the most important issues which require addressing for successful progression of social enterprises. Within our organisation our social enterprise is a coffee shop which can currently only open at weekends as it is dependent on volunteers to staff it. As we are based within the hugely successful geo-park it is essential that we are more flexible and able to respond to customer demand not volunteer availability. Volunteer retention is also presenting difficulties as we are a small rural area with low population statistics. We wish to grow our social enterprise within the tourism sector by converting the remainder of the property to a hostel in line with Council strategic plans however this will place further strain on our volunteers without specific staff to manage and grow the enterprise. Whilst volunteers are an essential part of all social enterprise it is

important that the driving force which enables volunteers to give back to their community is not over-stretched thereby causing “burn out”.

Leadership & Governance

Access to Funding – there is currently only a small number of funding specifically for social enterprises and some include in depth programmes which are too time consuming for volunteers to participate in but yet the funding does not allow for salaries paid staff who could benefit from such programmes. The very processes of applying for funding and keeping up to date with governance issues are also difficult for volunteers and often fall to paid members of staff (if any) who are inexperienced also in this area as employed for specific unrelated programmes .

Enabling Market Opportunities – a networking facility to allow shared good practices and allow working together. EG for hostels to meet private tourguide services

Achieving Better Policy Alignment

Interaction with national & international policies, Data and Impact

Measuring data and impact is essential to prove the worth of the organisation and to provide a business case for growing the organisation. This is a piece of work in itself and again impractical when utilising solely volunteers. Again all comes back to the essentials of funding salaried staff.