

## Submission on Draft National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland 2019-2022

Leitrim Integrated Development Company welcomes the Government's draft Social Enterprise Policy, the first such policy for the sector which has considered the draft policy and its potential to underpin and significantly develop a key sector in Leitrim and in the wider Irish economy and society.

Leitrim Integrated Development Company CLG (T/a Leitrim Development Company) is one of many Local Development Companies nationally which provides a wide range of supports, services and funding to social and community enterprise since the early 1990's. As a social enterprise (and registered charity) ourselves we have been innovative, developmental, collaborative and work in partnership with many statutory, community & voluntary groups, representative organisation and communities to plan, develop, sustain and support social enterprises in Leitrim and beyond.

This Social enterprise sector and the many individual social enterprises which we work with and support have delivered much and have much more to offer for the citizens and communities in our county. There are at least 50 projects across the county which operating as and can be classified as social enterprises and this includes 19 projects funded under the community service programme (CSP). In Leitrim with low population density and high dependency levels which leads to low demand, market failures, low spending power of citizens / consumers, there is a very clear need for committed sustainable social enterprises across many sectors to fill the gaps in products and services between both commercial / corporate activities and statutory provisions and also to help provide employment and to generate economic activity. There are now many, some long established, social enterprises in Leitrim doing just that and they most certainly will benefit from this national policy and long awaited focus from Government.

Leitrim Development Company activities in incubating social enterprise has also resulted in three strong social enterprises spinning out of our company to stand alone and they include Leitrim Education and Training CLG, Leitrim Warmer Homes CLG and most recently Social Farming Ireland. Our national social farming project was one of eight awardees in the 2018 Social Enterprise Development fund through Social Innovation Fund Ireland and part funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development. This demonstrates a commitment, strong expertise and success in developing, supporting and sustaining social enterprise.

The supports which Leitrim Development Company provides and will continue to provide to social enterprises and the sector are as follows

- Providing professional expertise from and within our own qualified and experienced staff to social / community enterprises/ groups on all aspect of their activities to allow them to build their own capacity in governance, finance, accountability, financing /funding model, impact measurement, strategic planning, marketing and promotion, engaging with their customers/ service users etc. Some of our staff in SICAP and RDP have designated roles to support and work with Social Enterprises.
- Developing and providing training (formal and informal) for social enterprises in many of those aspects mentioned above.
- Providing funding to social enterprises from our own programmes SICAP, LEADER, for all stages of development and supporting and assisting them to apply to other third party funding streams and income sources (including statutory, philanthropic and corporate) for their development from concepts to established social enterprises.

- Adding value by providing staff resources through the various labour market schemes which we implement and manage such as Rural Social Scheme (RSS), Community Employment (CE), Job Initiative (JI), and TUS and also through student placements from our partners to many social enterprises in Leitrim.
- Providing volunteers and sourcing volunteers for some Social Enterprises through our Leitrim Volunteering Information Service.
- Developed, administer, facilitate and continue to support a peer social enterprise network (including the 19 CSPs) within Leitrim and also links with others or similar networks outside the county and particularly through the Irish Local Development Network (ILDN) and its active social economy / social enterprise working group.
- Providing developmental impetus and support to groups, partnerships and concepts locally (but also regionally and nationally) which respond to existing gaps, needs, services and products and which are giving rise to the next generation of social enterprises.

This new Government policy must recognise and understand this existing activity, this base of expertise and supports which has been successful and delivers effective national coverage through the local development companies.

Following from the ILDN/UL report on 'Creating an Enabling and Supportive Environment for the Social Enterprise Sector in Ireland'. [http://ildn.ie/files/page\\_files/ILDN\\_Social\\_Enterprises\\_Report.pdf](http://ildn.ie/files/page_files/ILDN_Social_Enterprises_Report.pdf) in mid 2018 we compiled a "State of the Art" on Social Enterprise in Leitrim and presented it to the LCDC for consideration. This defined the scope of social enterprises across the county and attempted to identify the characteristics' and definition of the social enterprises in Leitrim. It also compiled the elements of various plans LECP, LDS, SICAP, LEO action plan and Co. Development Plan in Leitrim with regard to Social enterprise so that the RDP LEADER 2014-2020 supports and funding (for Social Enterprise) could be delivered to add value and to contribute strategically to their development and impact.

We want to see this national policy adopted and a range of actions / supports introduced in a subsequent implementation phase which adds value to and compliments the work which we are doing with social enterprise and which are beneficial for the many people across Leitrim and Ireland that they

- Local Development Companies such as Leitrim Development Company are well-placed to support the implementation of actions arising from this policy, given our delivery of LEADER and SICAP our management of the state's main labour activation schemes, our provision of business, marketing and governance supports for enterprises (through Social Enterprise and BTWEA programmes) as well as our direct management and roll out of activities in a number of social enterprises.
- Dedicated Social enterprise support and interventions and the implementation of any actions etc. from this policy need to be flexible and responsive to the many variables. Leitrim Development Company is able to respond flexibly to the particular set of circumstances for communities and for social enterprises which are finding a niche, filling a gap and supporting people, consumers or communities in their actions.
- Continued and enhanced funding and supports such as that currently available under the Community Services Programme (CSP) are vital to underpin social enterprises and their activities in places like Leitrim. Wider availability of programmes and interventions like the

Social Innovation Fund Ireland accelerator programme (Social Enterprise Development (SED) fund) would allow for development and sustainability of social enterprises

- The draft policy is silent on social impact and social clauses and we believe that the inclusion and measurement of these are core instruments of policy and its implementation in the future. They should also be an important part of the consideration for supports rather than just the numerical indicators of jobs, service users, consumer numbers, and income or percentage earned turnover/ income etc. While these are important there are times in the lifecycle of social enterprise when these measures are not particularly flattering and do not convey the importance of what is happening and being delivered.
- It is our view that cross departmental and cross sectoral engagements and collaborations are vital to ensure successful implementation of this policy as social enterprises operate in areas such as housing, health & social care, agriculture, energy, environment, tourism, heritage, etc.
- National policy should encourage the sector and many stakeholders to come together for the purposes of ensuring that the voice of the sector is cohesive, comprehensive and independent and that it can strengthen the benefits, outcomes and impacts from social enterprises and the sector for Irish society, for our communities and for citizens and also for our economy.
- With over 40 designated social enterprise staff members in the LDCs across the country, ILDN represents the single most significant body of work being done on the ground to initiate, support, and expand social enterprises. This must be recognised and built on.
- The scale scope and sectors in which Social enterprises operate should not be restricted and there should be a local professional input and perspectives taken into account when classifying and determining supports or programmes and initiative for social enterprise projects in future and in the implementation of this policy
- These Local Development Companies, based on partnership structures, have full sectoral and geographic coverage and understand the challenges and opportunities for Social Enterprise from directly supporting the initiation, establishment, development and growth of social enterprises.
- Significant flexible investment in people, in training, awareness, capacity building and also some in capital to stimulate Social enterprises is vital to allow this policy to become a reality and to ensure enhancements, development, expansion and sustainability for social enterprises in Leitrim and in Ireland.

Leitrim Development Company is strongly committed to social enterprise development and to working with many stakeholders and interests in collaborative and innovative ways for many years and also looks forward to doing so in the years to come. We are open to engaging with the new national policy, with the Department of Rural and Community Development and to contributing in many ways to help achieve success in the implementation phases both here in County Leitrim and in the regional and national context as appropriate.

May 14<sup>th</sup> 2019

Ends