

# 2004 AGM

THURSDAY 23 SEPTEMBER

**Social Firms** Scotland

The last twelve months have seen Social Firms Scotland (SFS) truly grow in to an organisation having a significant impact in the growth of the social economy in Scotland. Social firms are now a well known and understood way of doing business with more enquiries than ever being received from organisations, individuals and the public sector.

Social Firms Scotland continues to be at the forefront of policy development both in terms of the social economy as a whole and in terms of championing employment opportunities for people with a disability or disadvantage in the workplace.

Our work with service user integration is well respected, with the Scottish Executive wanting to use our experiences as the basis for a series of case studies highlighting the importance of an inclusive and supportive work environment for all employees.

## Alternative Business Development & Business With A Difference

- Supported over 70 organisations and individuals to explore social firm development
- Offering specifically tailored business support and advice directly suited to our client's needs
- Gave out much needed grant funding to enable clients to push forward their social firm idea
- Delivered or participated in over 25 events
- Provided over 1,500 hours of advice and guidance to some 350 people
- Resulting in over 20 emerging and over 40 potential social firms in Scotland

Two quotes from our soon to be published evaluation report sum up the quality of support we provide; from our clients, "We've grown alongside each other", and, "It's hard work – they really go into things in detail!"

## HISEZ – Highlands & Island Social Enterprise Zone

- Researched and prepared a strategic plan for developing social enterprises in the Highlands & Islands
- Working in partnership with HIE and Communities Scotland on a landmark project to map and develop social economy
- Build dynamic and sustainable social enterprises piloting innovative methods to meet the sector needs
- Tailored business support
- Facilitating networking and information exchange in the Highlands & Islands

Procurement - SFS are at the forefront of creating social enterprises with sufficient capacity to deliver public sector contracts

- SFS launched the “Tendering for Public Sector Contracts” , a step by step public procurement
- Buy-Ethic, an online procurement prospectus funded by HISEZ was also launched
- Working With Winners – a new strategic management training package developed by SFS

All such initiatives give funded organisations the capacity to deliver public services to the same standards as private sector contractors

Bridging the Gap – research paper

- Following the universal recognition of the Mind the Gap report on the benefits trap.
- Asked by the Department of Work and Pensions to make recommendations for Working Benefits reform
- Interim paper “Bridging the Gap” due for publication later this year
- “Blue sky thinking” workshops planned as further research
- Highlighting the needs of the people social firms, and Social Firms Scotland, are ultimately here for

Service User Participation

- Unswerving advocate of service user involvement throughout the development of the social firm
- Section 10 providing particular remit within this of developing and encouraging service user involvement, producing a good practice guide
- Practice what we preach, as of 2004 AGM 30% of SFS board are service users

Just COZ! – Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Argyle & Bute

- Working in partnership with Linkwide Housing and Forth Sector
- Focus on using fast tracking methods for social firm development
- New Development Coordinator will be recruited
- Conduct the bulk of the pre-start activity prior to engaging with an organisation to take the ideas forward

## Funding for Social Firms Scotland – thank you

- ESF Objective 3 – main funder for Alternative Business Development and Business With A Difference projects
- Greater Glasgow Health Board, Esmée Fairbairn, Communities Scotland, Royal Bank of Scotland, Lloyds TSB foundation, Scottish Executive – match funders for the above projects
- Scottish Executive – Section 10
- Communities Scotland, HIE, Equal UK and Equal Scotland (Theme D) - HISEZ
- Equal Theme A – Bridging the Gap
- Communities Scotland – Just COZ!

## Future funding

- Demand for the services provided by SFS has never been higher
- Unstable funding climate
- Opportunities for SFS to develop trading income streams but this will be based on an expectation of excellence and experience
- SFS has matured greatly since its inception but it is still at the whim of political interest in the social economy as a whole and must work to reduce this over the coming year.

## The Future

- The need for Social Firms Scotland's services has never been greater
- SFS will have a growing influence on the way social firms and social enterprises are viewed, organised and run
- Building social enterprise partnerships
- Social Firms Scotland are and will continue to be the lead social firm development agency in Scotland
- Building close relationships with and supporting existing and new clients through the social firm development process

The influence Social Firms Scotland is having and will continue to have on both the Scottish and the UK social enterprise sector is something to celebrate and to encourage.

Social Firms Scotland are currently supporting 31 emerging social firms, imagine the number of employment opportunities that could be created if we had the right resources and the appropriate funding

The small business sector is the largest employer in Scotland. A social firm is a small business so what actually stops one of the Scottish Executive targets being to have a social firm in each town to create jobs for those who need them.

This is our vision for Scotland.