

Community economic development and the social economy

Traditional economic development and regeneration programmes have often failed to make any sustained impact on the problems of economic decline and social exclusion experienced in communities across the UK, including Bristol. Community based economic development approaches have emerged in response to the failure of prescriptive top down approaches. They emphasise the importance of encouraging local economic activity to ensure that investment can be drawn into priority areas and that the wealth generated from these activities can be retained within the community. In this way communities can be effectively supported in shaping their own futures within the wider economy.

The powerful contribution made to economic development by the social economy with this community-based approach is becoming recognised by government. Interest in the social economy has grown with the recognition of its potential to both promote successful local economic development and deliver valuable services. Social enterprises have become accepted as alternative ways of generating wealth and providing new routes into employment, as well as developing and sustaining vital community services. The emphasis on the local delivery of these services has also been acknowledged as a method for promoting sustainable development.

Significantly, despite a relatively buoyant economy there are still many communities who suffer high unemployment, low income and poor capital wealth. In particular, for people with physical and learning disabilities or from ethnic minority groups this situation is amplified by multiple disadvantages. These groups experience numerous barriers to acquiring quality employment and access to capital.

Bristol's communities have pioneered social economy development, often as a self-help approach to these seemingly intractable problems. The sector has already had a major impact in terms of creating jobs and wealth and promoting sustainable development. Sector organisations

have been highly effective at contributing towards local empowerment, capacity building, as well as extending democracy, combating poverty and overcoming social exclusion. They have achieved these results on the strength of local knowledge, a strong focus on needs, innovative and collaborative working and massive contributions of time and skills from thousands of volunteers. The social economy has also succeeded in dealing with some of the major issues faced by the mainstream economy: For example, the competitive delivery of public services and the development of entrepreneurial skills within excluded communities.

As a response to this energy as well as the opportunities and benefits provided by the sector Bristol City Council has invested £400,000 in the Social Economy Bristol Development Project (SEDP). The approach has been to build on existing strengths by involving neighbourhood and support organisations in a major research and development programme to support the growth of the sector. This report presents the results of the research and supports the progression of the development programme.



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Social economy bristol development project

The Social Economy Bristol Development Project has been a two phase development programme designed to support the growth of the social economy in the city. It has included a full audit to map existing social economy activity in the city and identified barriers and potential for growth. The project has addressed both opportunities and barriers for growth by implementing a series of practical initiatives to support development of the sector.

The work was originally overseen by a steering group of strategic development agencies from within the social economy and the mainstream. Local organisations from the sector were commissioned to devise the audit process and questionnaire as well as undertake the survey, to draw upon their wealth of local knowledge, to help them increase their networking capacity in their neighbourhoods and to develop a range of new skills.

Audit

The Audit was undertaken in two phases. Task one was a postal questionnaire, task two was undertaken as a series of structured interviews with a sample of participants. In response to the audit, out of more than a 1,000 organisations identified as operating in Bristol, almost 40% returned completed questionnaires for task one. An additional 70 structured interviews drew out more qualitative information from lead individuals in selected organisations. (Key findings of this work are presented in this publication. The full audit report and statistical appendix are available separately.)

As the process of developing and collecting the audit information was highly innovative the University of the West of England undertook to perform an evaluation of the process and helped validate the results, including the control group research that enabled a scientific extrapolation of key results. (Excerpts from the evaluation report are included within this publication.)

Development work

When the quantitative and qualitative information was collected the steering group and auditing organisations joined together as a project team to collate and analyse the returns in a series of workshops. The team drafted key findings as well as options for development activities, these were then presented to the wider sector for discussion in a series of workshops and meetings throughout the city. As a result of the feedback a series of development priorities were identified and agreed to support the growth of the sector in the light of the barriers and opportunities identified during the audit process.



Wider significance of the social economy

The Social Economy has been identified as a significant force for delivering sustainable economic regeneration, developing and delivering services and reducing social exclusion. Policy makers have been showing increasing interest in the Social Economy and the Social Enterprises that operate within it. The Social Economy is not a new phenomenon, it has been growing for over 150 years, but there has been limited information available on the income, employment and services that it generates.

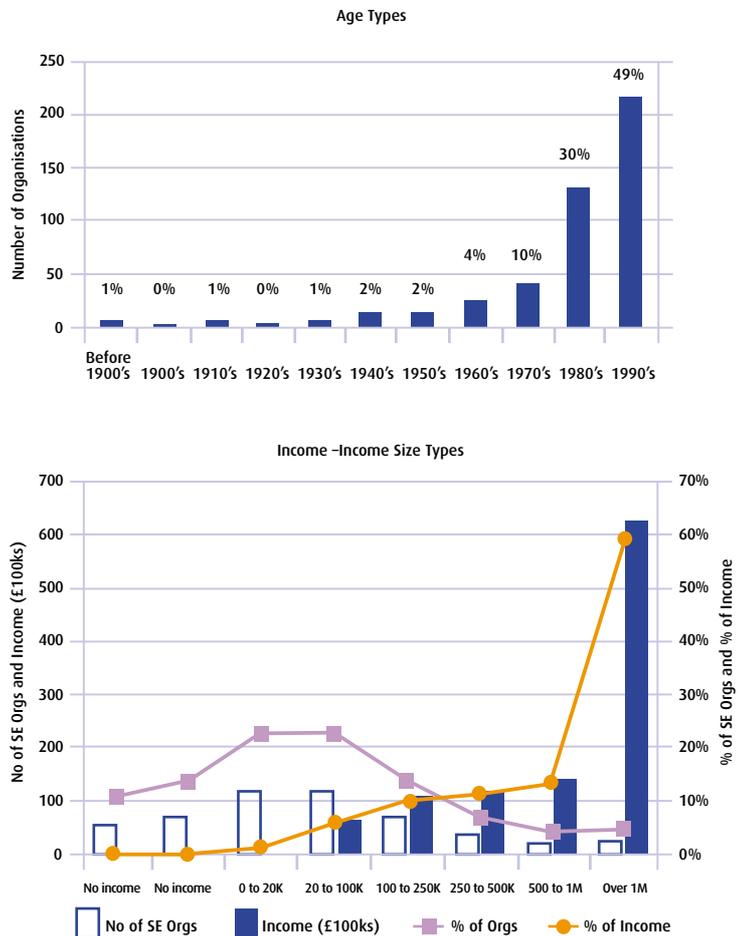
The third sector in the European Union has been growing rapidly since the 1970s. A study of 12 countries identified that in 1990 the sector had a combined turnover of more than £1,000 billion, it employed 5.3 million people and that there were 1.3 million co-operatives, mutuals and voluntary organisations involved in trading activities. Recent estimates suggest that there are now more than 6.4 million jobs in the sector, representing 4.4% of total employment.

There has been no survey of social economy sector dimensions nationally. Organisations such as the National Council of Voluntary Organisations estimate a turnover of about 5% of GDP in the UK, confirmed by local area surveys undertaken by a variety of different techniques. This research has taken place where the sector's presence is highly visible and it has corroborated the Bristol experience. Estimates for the number of jobs in the social economy vary between 1.5% and 5% of total UK employment. The range of estimates result from differing definitions of the sector. Charities alone account for an income of £30 billion and approximately 2% of the workforce.

Research by the New Economics Foundation has identified increased levels of growth across the sector. Since last year social enterprises have grown by 9%, intermediate labour markets have doubled in size, time banks (or Local Exchange Trading Schemes) have increased by 80% and fair trade has experienced a 50% growth in sales. Within this national context, the performance of the social economy sector in Bristol can be seen as highly innovative and dynamic, achieving exponential growth since the 1960s. Today it is well established and made up of more than 1,100 organisations with an annual turnover of approximately £223 million representing 4.3% of local GDP, it employs around 9,400 people that represents 4.6% of the total workforce in the city.

Social Economy organisations in Bristol have attracted the support of 21,600 volunteers, an impressive 10.6% of the total workforce or 5.4% of the total population in the city. Basing the calculation upon the average age for the South West region of £7.50 per hour, the value of volunteering identified in the Bristol audit is £67 million, this represents 1.3% of local GDP.

The combination of the total income of the social economy sector added to the in-kind value of volunteering in the sector, based on conservative estimates, is between £268 million and £291 million that represents between 5% and 5.6% of Bristol's GDP. As the majority of organisations in the sector have an income of less than £100,000 per annum, less than 10 members of staff and more than 20 volunteers, the social economy is clearly generating a substantial amount of wealth for Bristol with limited resources augmented by a massive in-kind contribution of voluntary time and expertise from local people.





Investing in people and social enterprise

The social economy has been recognised as having a central role in local economic development and regeneration within the UK. The Social Exclusion Unit PAT on 'Enterprise and Social Exclusion' identified:

"Social Enterprises can strengthen the social and economic fabric of deprived communities, not least by providing services that are not profitable enough to attract private sector firms. They can also act as a bridge between a deprived community and the mainstream economy, for example by providing training and experience to people who might otherwise be unemployed."

The returns from the Bristol Audit confirm that social economy has made a significant contribution towards economic regeneration in the city by reducing unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The sector has shown itself to be a powerful force in providing training and employment for local people, both inspiring and supporting them to be enterprising about improving their lives.

An inherent benefit of the social economy is that it helps to achieve greater social cohesion by giving people of all ages, races and abilities an opportunity for an enhanced sense of social purpose, access to fulfilling work and training, greater economic independence and a positive sense of worth. While these enterprises are financially viable, profit is reinvested into supporting individuals and communities to be enterprising and creative in realising their potential. Many of these organisations are self-governing and commonly owned so that people are encouraged to become involved in running the business and surplus money is re-invested for the benefit of members and the community.

Social Enterprises are at the heart of partnerships aimed at regenerating Bristol's excluded communities. For example, the Kuumba project provides cultural development, training and enterprise services to inner city residents in the heart of Bristol's black community. The Southmead Development trust is adding value to older public assets by capitalising them for community benefit in a declining outer suburb. Both Aspire and Sofa Project are providing training and employment to homeless and unemployed people.

The Social Firms movement in Bristol has been very successful at offering new gateways for people with physical and learning disabilities to have access to meaningful work and training in environments that combine the best of business practice with social support. For example, Clean Sweep, Banana Split Café and United Gardening Services have all been established as supported co-operatives by people with learning difficulties. These organisations have created jobs for 25 people, and contributed to reducing the high level of unemployment (90%) experienced by disabled people.

LETS schemes are also a valuable part of Bristol's social economy. There are currently around 400 households participating in Bristol's LETS schemes and the majority of members are women. These schemes have been successful at building community networks and strengthening existing social relationships. They are now working on addressing social exclusion by establishing specialist LETS schemes and developing Community Time Banks.

Bristol's economic growth has been enhanced by the social economy's ability to attract and sustain inward investment. The Bristol audit identified that more than 20% of revenue income (£40 million) has come from non Bristol sources. With more work to be done a consortium of organisations from all sectors, led by Business Link West, is channelling European funding to support new enterprise in Bristol's deprived communities. The Social Economy Bristol Development Project is supporting strategic investment opportunities through ESF and UK Government funding, as well as developing community and private finance initiatives that invest directly into sector initiatives. The 'added value' of this approach can be seen in the amount of new enterprise and employment it generates.





Defining the social economy

The term Social Economy refers to the whole of the 'not for personal profit' and mutual aid sector. It includes community owned businesses, local self help organisations engaged in trading activities with social, economic or environmental benefit on a 'not for private profit' basis, 'public good' purpose trusts, co-operatives, mutual societies and non-trading organisations aimed at supporting local development. The term is used to link in with economic regeneration thinking rather than referring to any particular values or expertise that an organisation may bring. There is an intentional link with the international term 'économie sociale'. which is preferred to the term 'Third Sector'.

Policy research has identified the need for a broader interpretation of 'entrepreneurial behaviour' that goes beyond profit-seeking and encompasses 'the ability to spot opportunities, identify needs and bring resources, skills and finance together'. Social entrepreneurship of this type is becoming recognised as a 'catalyst to find new and innovative solutions to social issues' (Westall 2001). Within this context a social enterprise is any initiative within the social economy sector that is regarded as entrepreneurial rather than just as a community service, public campaign, trust or association. This is often demonstrated by the development of revenue sources that are independent of grant funding or donations, for example trading income, service level agreements or output related grants.

- A recent EU statement on the social economy defined some basic features of the sector:
- social economy activities start as a means of satisfying the needs of members and users which have been ignored or inadequately fulfilled by the market or the state
- the social economy gives people the opportunity to organise their production and consumption patterns through independent, democratic forms of expression
- by targeting people's outstanding or inadequately met needs, the social economy can come up with innovative, forward looking solutions.

As a community led economic development project the working definition of the social economy for the Bristol audit did not include employee owned businesses, regional or national mutual societies, co-operative retail and wholesale societies, ethical companies or private sector providers of community services. This does have an effect on comparability with some European findings that include, for instance, some major financial mutual societies. Work continues to establish the basis for a common working definition of the social economy across the European Union.

Innovative Solutions to Social Issues

While some social economy initiatives are set up with a conscious purpose to meet 'moral' failure, many occur simply because the need for a voice, service or initiative has been identified by local people and turned into action.

For economic development and regeneration purposes an important signifier is the presence in these bodies of personal and strategic risk taking, such as the development of new services, or the investment of personal time and money. This allows economic development and the accumulation of resources often in areas where the market or government has not taken up the challenge, or where neither is seen as providing the most effective way forward. Sometimes opportunities and services developed within the social economy are subsequently taken up by private enterprises after the market has been developed, the reverse also happens where companies become co-operatives, or public services are externalised to social enterprises.

The sector clearly operates in a competitive and entrepreneurial manner within the mainstream economy. In many cases social economy organisations not only provide services but also offer ways of working that have been adopted by the mainstream, for example the range of communication techniques and operational models that promote social inclusion and partnership working. The sector also demonstrates a high gearing of outputs to investment, largely due to the commitment of individuals and the development of social capital.

As the cabinet office has recognised Social Economy organisations merit support in the same way as any other businesses. They are working in a highly competitive and business-like arena and face all the classic challenges of financial management and marketing just like other enterprise. However, in addition to the challenges faced by mainstream business they also have to work with complex legal forms and mixes of funding that are specific to the social economy.

Although the Government recognises that social enterprises have particular needs, the current approach is to emphasise the degree of commonality with other business. Therefore issues surrounding the quality, accessibility and appropriateness of the spectrum of support services available to the sector has been a priority throughout the development project in Bristol. For example, market development, risk finance, product quality, stakeholder, employee and volunteer development have been identified as critical issues for social enterprises.



Examples of social economy organisations

Aspire

Aspire's catalogue service offers a range of high quality Fairly Traded and British gifts. As a community enterprise with charitable aims Aspire was established to provide a long-term solution to homelessness by providing jobs, support and training for homeless people. Since 1999 Aspire has helped 40 people move on into new careers and lives. The project has been so successful that new projects have been launched in five other cities. Aspire is sponsored by many organizations including Bristol City Council, First Bus, Shell, many churches and individuals.

'Being offered a job with Aspire helped me reorganize my life after I lost my home. Their understanding and flexible attitude made it possible to work from the insecure position of being homeless. It wasn't long before I had a place to sleep, wash, cook and call my own. They have since given me encouragement with careers options so that I am now thinking of going back to college.'

Jonathan (24)

Essential Trading

Essential Trading has pioneered the development of the vegetarian, organic and fair trade markets with the independent retail sector in the UK. It carries over 6,000 different products and has more than 1,500 customers. It has developed a market leading Essential brand including a range of organic herbal teabags from fair trade growers in Egypt and a range of organic tomato products from an Italian farmers co-operative. The success of the co-operative has provided new routes into fulfilling work for more than 100 people in Bristol including people with learning difficulties and work placements for prisoners from Leyhill Open Prison. As a well established and large co-operative Essential Trading actively supports the local Social Economy by providing skilled Directors and their paid time for Avon and Bristol Co-operative Finance Ltd, Avon CDA and Easton Community Association.

Sector Organisations In their Own Words

Art + Power -

community arts projects co-ordinated by disabled people ...

"We use arts to express the realities of peoples lives, to challenge and inspire, to express our meanings and thoughts and to get more power and respect for disabled people and other oppressed groups."

Avon Co-operative Development Agency

Avon CDA has helped hundreds of people who have worked together in the past or who share complementary skills to set up co-operative or employee-owned businesses, business structures that enable them to 'go it alone'.

Biashara -

worker controlled fair trading co-operative

"Our trading policy positively discriminates towards suppliers who have a clear ethical policy towards workers, for example supporting disadvantaged, disabled or groups that have a social dimension to their trading."

Black Pyramid -

film and video resource for black people in the South West

"The project was established to provide a means of access and participation for groups traditionally under represented within the media."

Bridging the Gap -

employment initiative

"To assist long term unemployed and disadvantaged people into sustainable employment."

BACEN -

Community Enterprise

"Our aim is to convert the untapped potential of individuals and community groups into successful businesses and organisations, working in partnership to improve the lives and environment of the local community."

Banana Split Café -

social firm

"The café is a co-operative run by adults with learning difficulties. It is a commercial business that provides employment and training for those that work within it."

Bristol South Mental Health Users Forum

"We offer a forum for people with mental health needs to express their views and work collectively towards bringing about changes they identify as necessary in the community around mental health users."



SOFA Project

The SOFA Project is effective recycling at its best. The charity collects unwanted furniture and electrical appliances from the Bristol community free of charge and redistributes them to people on low incomes to help alleviate poverty. More than 30,000 items donated by the public pass through the SOFA workshop and showroom every year on their way to more than 5,000 low-income households around the city. Without SOFA many families on low incomes would not have had basic home comforts. For only £200 a family can equip and furnish a home. Looking to the future, they are in the process of establishing extended workshop facilities and developing training links with local colleges to offer work experience and training for people excluded from the job market. SOFA already provides New Deal work placements as a stepping stone back into full time work for the unemployed.

"That sort of money would go nowhere in an ordinary shop. I've been coming here all week, buying stuff to get me started. I think its marvelous." (David from Easton

Bristol East Side Traders (BEST)

Behind many local success stories is Bristol East Side Traders (BEST), a not-for-profit company that services the development of the small business sector in the inner city communities of Easton and Ashley. They provide information, advisory and training services for local entrepreneurs and small enterprise. In partnership with the City Council they are channelling £250,000 of regeneration funding into an improvement programme for business facades and shop fronts as well as encouraging the development of new community markets and local business networks. BEST maintains a database of over 700 small enterprises and have published a business directory that is distributed to 15,000 households. They recently completed a business training needs survey with local small enterprises to support the development of a business training programme for new entrepreneurs. Future plans highlight encouraging business start-ups among minority groups as well as providing more 'incubator' premises.

Bristol Community Transport

"BCT is a community based organisation providing efficient and accessible services with minimum fuss and expense for communities in Bristol. We are dedicated to high safety standards in transport provision, and are essential in enabling hundreds of organisations and initiatives to be more effective and to flourish."

CEED – community enterprise

"To improve the economic well-being of those currently disadvantaged in the labour market and in business."

Easton Community Nursery

"We provide high quality childcare and education to children living in the Easton area aged 0-5 years. This enables parents to work, train or study, to come off benefits and to get out of the poverty trap."

Hartcliffe & Withywood Ventures – development trust

"To work alongside local people so that their vision for their community is achieved."

Home Tuition Service

"The project provides English home tuition for minority ethnic women who cannot access mainstream English classes. The aim

is to encourage women who are isolated and marginalized in the community to develop English language skills and confidence so that they can access mainstream services including education and health provision."

Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust

"To support and encourage local initiatives that enable local people to develop their abilities and self confidence, also to identify community needs and to work with the local community to address those needs."

Solon Housing Association

"Our prime objective is the development and management of good quality rented housing for people in housing need, at rents they can afford."

St Werburghs Community Centre

"The association exists to stimulate community development by promoting and managing the centre as a provider of good quality facilities that meet the identified needs of the people it serves."

Recycling Consortium

"The Consortium works to encourage action from within the community to deal with local waste problems at a local level."



Mapping the social economy in bristol

Type of Organisation

Almost half (44%) of the participating organisations described themselves as charities. In contrast only 9% described their organisations as co-operatives, 5% as community enterprises, almost 2% as development trusts and 1% as credit unions. Further research identified there were two other significant types of organisation that contributed to the audit and these were identified as unincorporated community groups (12%) and companies limited by guarantee (8%). Smaller groups of organisations that were identified within this group included housing associations (3%), after school clubs and play schemes (3%), marketing co-operatives (3%) and social firms (2%).

Age of organisation

Almost half of the organisations in the sample were established in the 1990s (49%), followed by 30% in the 1980s and 10% in the 1970s. Almost two thirds of the participants (63%) replied that their organisations had existed for seven years or more. In contrast only 17% of respondents identified themselves as 'early years' organisations established for 2 to six years (between 1994 and 1996) and 10% of respondents identified themselves as 'new start' organisations established for one to two years. The majority of organizations were established after 1973 with exponential growth following in the 1980s and 1990s. There were particularly high peaks of activity in 1973, 1980, 1987, 1990 and 1998 when above average numbers of new organisations were established, possibly in response to major funding programmes.

Geographical distribution, deprivation and funding

The majority of organisations in the audit sample were located in the inner city wards of Ashley (14%), Cabot (13%) Lawrence Hill (11%), Southville (6%) and Easton (5%). A strong correlation was identified between the number of organisations in a ward and the level of deprivation in the area. Most of the wards with high levels of social economy activity are amongst the most deprived areas in Bristol featuring high levels of social exclusion in terms of unemployment, low incomes, high levels of need for training and care services. The striking exception is the ward of Cabot that includes the city centre and the main business district of Bristol. An explanation for the presence of social economy organisations in the commercial district of the city is the availability of office premises.

Many of the organisations in the audit receive funding from urban regeneration programmes. Of the organisations within the study the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy provides funding to 38% of organisations, Objective 2 provides funding to

34% of organisations, while URBAN and URBAN II provide funding to 30% and 13% of organisations respectively.

Service delivery and customer location

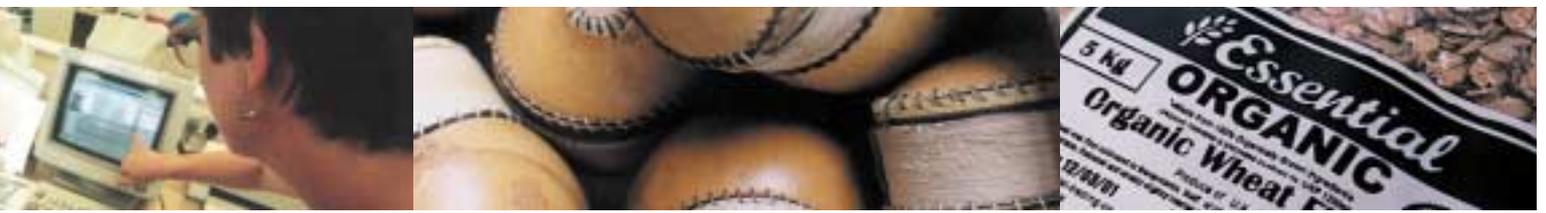
More than half of the organisations in the sample (56%) deliver their services within the Bristol area, with 25% of organisations indicating they provide services to customers city-wide. In contrast only 13% of organisations in the sample deliver their services to customers in the South West region while a minority of organisations provide services to markets throughout the UK (10%) or to Europe (2%).

Almost 2 out of 3 organisations (62%) indicated that they were 'locally-led' compared to 1 in 3 organisations (31%) that indicated that they were 'customer-led' confirming a strong trend towards local community participation and responsiveness to specific local needs as opposed to general market demand. Confirmation of this trend was provided by mapping the location of organisations' customers. The majority of their customers live in the most deprived neighbourhoods of Bristol within the main urban regeneration areas including Easton (27%), Ashley (25%), Hartcliffe (21%), East Bristol (19%), Lawrence Hill (18%) and Knowle West (16%) supporting the conclusion that there is indeed a strong link between local needs and service provision.

Activities

The majority of organisations in the audit were working in the fields of advice (33%), community development (27%), employment and training (22%). The second tier of high scoring fields of activity relate directly to social welfare rather than enterprise and employment including youth (19%), arts (18%), health (17%), mental health (16%), women (15%), recreation (15%), environment (14%), play (14%), physical disability (13%) and childcare (13%). It is clear that the organisations in the sample are providing a very broad spectrum of enterprise and care services to communities within Bristol.

The majority of organisations in the audit (81%) were providing a range of services. More than half of the organisations (53%) were providing a combination of up to 5 different types of service or activity to their customers. This pattern indicates that complex social needs are being met in many cases with a 'one stop shop' approach to provision. It suggests that organisations servicing local communities are being prompted to offer combinations of integrated services for example, adult education, childcare, advice, IT resources and training to address the inter-related causes of deprivation in order to unlock local potential.



Distribution of income

The social economy sector in Bristol has an annual turnover of £223 million. Analysis of the distribution of income identified that less than 5% of the organisations within the sample group earn more than £1 million per annum. This group receive 60% of the total income of the sample group, which represents approximately £140 million in financial terms. This confirms that there is a small number of large well established organisations, for example the Soil Association and Essential Trading, that have been thriving and expanding within the sector in Bristol for several decades. The majority of organisations in the sample (50%) receive between £0-£100k per annum, the 'norm' is around £10,000, while at least 10% of organisations receive no financial income of any kind. These results confirm that the majority of activity and service provision within the sector is being provided by a large number of small under resourced organisations.

Further analysis identified that within the 5% of organisations that earn more than £1 million, the most significant group is charities with trading income, followed by housing associations, charities with no trading income, co-operatives and IPSs. These organisations display higher levels of income compared to expenditure, in many cases based on the trading of goods and services. It is significant that in comparison community groups and community enterprises that represent 17% of the sample receive minimal levels of income.

The length of time an organisation has been established often dictates the level of income it receives. Organisations established for seven years or more, representing 63% of the sample, receive 70% of the income for the sector. In contrast the 'early years' organisations representing 17% of the sample receive approximately 28% of the income, leaving the 'new start' organisations representing 10% of the sample in receipt of 2% of the income. When the distribution of income is analysed by geographical area, it also becomes apparent that it is not evenly distributed across regeneration areas. The inner city area receiving URBAN funding has 36% of income and 30% of the sample, whereas the South Bristol area receiving URBAN II funding has 9% of income and 13% of the sample. Significantly, the Hartcliffe area receiving SRB5 funding has 2% of income and 8% of the sample. This may reflect the fact that the inner city URBAN project has now completed its 3 year life span, whereas the other two projects are either in their initial phase or yet to run.

Sources of income

The majority of organisations (42%) in the sample display a mixed income from a combination of both trading activities and grant funding, compared to smaller proportions of the sample that generate income from grant funding (20%) or trading activities (6%) alone. An examination of the main sources of income in terms of capital, revenue and in-kind income for the sample group identified that in order of precedence income was received from charitable trusts and foundations (45%), trading activity (44%), the local authority (43%), public donations (40%), membership charges (31%), business donations (26%) the National Lottery (22%) and SRB programmes (19%).

The income received was mainly described as being for revenue purposes. Income for capital projects came mainly from charitable trusts (13%), local authority funding (9%), the National Lottery (8%) and voluntary contributions from the general public (8%). In-kind Income came mainly from voluntary contributions from the general public (7%) and business donations (6%).

Evaluation of the total monetary value of the main sources of income for the sample group revealed a striking result as the sale of goods and services and public donations represent 52% and 14% of monetary value respectively, compared to National Lottery funding 7%, local authority funding 6% and business donations 2%. These findings combined with the level of volunteering in the sector and the fact that almost half of the sample confirmed receiving in-kind income, confirm that this is a sector that is thriving on a combination of local enterprise and community participation more than government or private investment.

A closer examination of the group of organisations that indicated receiving Local Authority funding established that only 24% of the income for the group as a whole came from Local Authority programmes compared to 31% that was generated from the sale of goods and services or property letting. Clearly social economy organisations are a good investment in terms of their ability to use public money to pump prime local enterprise and trading activities. In addition, 44% of the organisations in the sample reported that their activities attracted in-kind income in the form of voluntary donations of time, expertise and resources. The economic value of this 'hidden capital' and the sector's ability to attract this type of 'investment' is another example of the 'value for money' delivered by this sector in response to public investment.



Employment, equal opportunities and volunteering

The Social Economy in Bristol employs approximately 9,400 staff and 21,600 volunteers. In relation to staff 66% are women and 34% men, 54% of these staff posts are full-time, 11% part-time (22-29 hrs per week), 24% part-time (8-21 hrs per week) and 11% part-time (0-7 hrs per week). Part-time working is predominantly undertaken by women with 53% of women working part-time compared with only 32% of men working part-time. In total, 80% of the part-time working (8-21 hrs per week) is done by women.

Of the 21,600 volunteers in the sector 63% are women and 37% are men. The main trends for volunteering are on a part-time basis of 8 to 21 hours per week (83%) and up to 7 hours per week (16%). Significantly, the majority of volunteering (8 to 21 hours per week) is undertaken by women. The ratio between income, staff and volunteers indicates the importance of volunteering as the 'hidden capital' available to the sector. In organisations where income and staffing levels are low, the trend is for lack of resources to be compensated for with high levels of volunteers.

Volunteers represents an impressive 10.6% of the total workforce in the city. The economic value of volunteers to the social economy in terms of the contribution of time and skills becomes apparent on consideration of the monetary value of this in-kind contribution to the local economy as a proportion of the total income of the sector and local GDP. Based on the assumption that the majority of volunteers in the sector are working part-time (8 hours a week) calculated on the basis of the minimum local wage of £5 per hour, this results in a value of £44 million and represents 20% of the total income of the sector. Basing the calculation on the average wage for the South West region of £7.50 per hour, the value of volunteering

in relation to the income of the sector rises to £67 million that represents 1.3% of local GDP.

When it is taken into account that the majority of organisations in the sector have an income of less than £100,000 per annum, less than 10 members of staff and more than 20 volunteers, it is obvious that the social economy is generating a substantial amount of wealth for Bristol with limited resources. The 'hidden capital' in the equation is the massive contribution made by local people in the form of voluntary work.

Equal Opportunities-Led

Organisations were asked to identify if they were "Equal Opportunities Led" in terms of being owned and controlled by selected groups (representing more than 51% of their membership and 75% of their Management Committee). Based on participants self-definitions and responses, 18% of the audit sample were Women-Led, 9% Disabled-Led, 7% Black-Led and 1% Gay/Lesbian-Led. In total 35% of the sample described themselves as Equal Opportunities Led.

Employment and Volunteering for Black, Disabled and Older People

Statistics reveal that people with a disability or from ethnic minority groups are twice as likely to be unemployed as their counterparts. Older people also have difficulties finding work and a significant proportion of the long-term unemployed are over 50. Additional research was undertaken on the numbers of black, disabled and older employees and volunteers within the Social Economy, to gauge the extent to which the Social Economy in Bristol provides employment and volunteering opportunities for these groups. It also identified some of the barriers faced by organisations in recruiting and retaining



black, disabled and older staff and volunteers and highlighted ways to diversify the workforce and volunteers.

Black staff constituted 15% of the total number of staff employed by the survey organisations, while 7% of staff in non-black led agencies were black. Only 44% of black employees were full timers with 25% working less than 7 hours per week. Black people in Bristol form 4.5% of the population and 4% of public, private and voluntary sector employees nationally. Disabled staff constituted only 3.8% of the total number of staff, and only 3.2% of the staff in non-disabled led organisations. In relation to working hours 52% of disabled employees worked full time, but 25% worked less than 7 hours a week. Nationally, disabled people form 16% of private sector, 18% of public sector and 20% of voluntary sector employees. Older staff constituted 25% of the total number of employees and 49% worked full time, with only 17% working under 7 hours. Nationally, 34% of economically active employees are between 50 and 64 years old.

In relation to volunteering, 12% of all volunteers engaged by the participating organisations were black. Only 8.4% of volunteers in non black-led organisations were black and only 7.8% being disabled people. That is 3.7% of volunteers in non-disabled led organisations. Significantly, 70% of the total number of volunteers are over 50, an extremely high proportion, but to put this in context 35% of the South West population is over 50.

Positive Action and Equal Opportunities

The practice of using positive action to proactively encourage applications from disabled and older staff and volunteers is not widespread. Although 94% of Bristol Social Economy employers had an equal opportunities policy only 11% of organisations

had an implementation plans. The most common forms of policy implementation included monitoring staff and providing equalities training. Few organisations used their monitoring statistics to redress under representation.

Black employees and volunteers were targeted by the use of the specialist publications and positive action traineeships. Many organisations were not aware of specialist media for disabled and older people. Some organisations expected underrepresented groups to approach them, as they did not perceive any barriers in their practices. There was a lack of knowledge about which agencies existed within the social economy to help with recruitment of underrepresented groups.

Barriers and Solutions

The main barriers to the recruitment of black employees were a lack of trained and qualified black staff, and the image of the organisation as white and middle class. For disabled people, the main barrier is access, so much so that organisations feared to encourage applications from disabled volunteers and staff in case they did not have the facilities to support them. Solutions identified to overcome these barriers include:

- more positive action training;
- capital funds to improve accessibility;
- outreach staff to work with communities;
- specialist marketing and brokerage of jobs and opportunities;
- more joint training or referral programmes;
- a specialist recruitment agency for the sector to promote equalities in employment and volunteering.
- recruitment advertising that welcomes all communities.



Barriers and constraints for the social economy

The major barriers and constraints for the social economy all relate to grant funding and development finance. A review of the results shows 51% of the sample reported difficulty getting grant funding and 44% reported difficulty accessing development finance. The other significant barriers identified by the sample group were lack of appropriate premises 27%, lack of sufficient volunteers 22% and lack of qualified staff 13%.

During in-depth interviews the constraints that most hindered sector organisations were confirmed as funding 21%, staffing 12%, premises 12%, management 10% and capital/finance 4%. These figures indicate that constrained levels of funding and investment cause a cascade of negative effects by limiting staff recruitment, development and growth. This conclusion is confirmed by the testimonials of individual organisations gathered from the structured interviews in response to questions on specific constraints and barriers for the sector.

Accessing and Utilising Grant funding:

"We can access funding for new projects and development but we are still struggling to make our core costs. Everyone will buy us books or pay for training courses but no one wants to help pay the phone bill. We have more work but insufficient staff."

"We are a very innovative project, so one of the biggest problems we had to overcome was trying to convince funders into believing the project was viable. We found most funders were only interested in established projects."

"We lack secure funding and have to apply for grant funding every six months so the Director spends huge amounts of time fund raising and keeping funders happy."

"Historically we have survived on short term funding and most of the work was contracts to undertake pieces of work. This has limited what the organisation can achieve."

"Funding tends to increase the workload and not fund staffing to service the activities that new grants bring in. An increase in core funding would enable our organisation to maximise offers from the private sector."

"To stand a chance with competitive funding organisations need to be working in partnership."

Information about grant funding:

"There is no overall picture of what funding is available and who it is for. It's like a maze and I know that lots of organisations are confused."

"I'm sure we are missing opportunities. We need access to better information and a directory of who's who and who does what."

"The incomprehensible nature of funding and the language that's needed to put a bid together is a real barrier, plus not knowing what they want."

Capital and loan finance:

"This is a pilot project that could spread across the country to achieve this growth the project needs a big injection of cash to develop into a sustainable enterprise."

"We are in the business of getting jobs for people that have been socially excluded – we need better mechanisms to find and develop meaningful jobs for them. More investment is needed to deliver on the expectations of the unemployed."



"We have inadequate resources to provide access to our core services for potential users because there are transport costs, support costs, information costs."

"We are expected to provide a broad service to meet increasing demand but there is a lack of capital for new vehicles. Council funding is not enough."

"Service users often don't have the money required for the session costs and there is a lack of money available to subsidise sessions."

Staff and resource levels:

"Our main worker only does 4 days a week part-time. If there was at least one person working here full-time more could be done, for example funding applications."

"A lot of work comes our way that we have to turn down because we can't physically take the work on. We are going through a period of growth so we are dealing with our own development as well as dealing with the business in hand."

"The demand for our facilities far out-stretches our ability to deliver our services because we are a voluntary organisation so there are very few full-time or paid staff."

Management and administration:

"Although getting funding is very positive, added investment brings added pressure because we haven't been provided with extra resources to manage those growing funds. The administration and paperwork attached to funding is huge."

"The rise in the number of referrals means that we are being reactive to the situation instead of being able to do development work."

"Lack of staff time leaves no opportunity to explore or develop future plans."

"Government requires Management Committees to be professional and to invest lots of time in the organization, but charity law says they are not to be paid, so it becomes increasingly difficult to attract and retain management committee members."

"New Deal for Employment has far more paperwork than previous employment schemes. If the sector was less encumbered by paperwork it could deliver much more cost effective services to those that need them."

Commercial property and letting:

"We accommodate homeless people in temporary housing, we don't own any of the properties. We are in a desperate situation because we are facing a huge reduction in the number of properties that are provided, most of which are leased. It is difficult to grow and expand as an organisation if you don't even have the basics in place."

"Our business expansion is limited by premises and funding. The premises aren't big enough for the current staff team let alone any expansion. The cost of suitable premises is a big barrier."

"Bristol City Council regards their property as a potential source of real income. They are reluctant to give peppercorn rents even though properties are vacant and letting would generate both trade and jobs."



Support and resources for the social economy

The types of 'help' requested from participants that received the highest scores in the interviews were funding 24%, strategic information 18%, staff 16%, premises 9% and training 7%. Lower scoring types of 'help' required were information from government 5%, volunteers 4%, IT equipment 4%, marketing 3% charitable status required 3% and expansion to networks 1%. These results confirm that the major barriers and constraints for the sector are indeed the basic resources of funding, staff and premises.

Grant funding

"Accessing funding should be made easier with less paperwork. There is a lot of money out there but it is a full-time job just getting it. Money should be available for vital projects and you shouldn't have to adapt your project to meet all the different funding criteria. There are a lot of projects that have no trading income. They are essential projects that are there to meet the needs of the local community and without financial support they wouldn't exist."

"We need a financial brokerage and match funding service so that the social economy can attract more inward investment."

"We need more resources to buy the time and expertise to consolidate and expand."

"There is a shortage of long term funding, everyone is competing for 2 to 3 year funding and it's not a healthy situation to be working in."

Strategic Information

"It is difficult to be visionary if you don't receive basic information. We need a clearer picture of what the Council is doing and what the Government is planning for the voluntary sector, in particular regarding developing areas of the inner city. We need in depth knowledge about funding regimes and what funders are looking for."

"We would benefit from support in strategic planning, it tends to be forgotten when we are busy. We have potential for significant growth but we need good strategic management to realise it and to avoid the pitfalls."

"We would benefit from more political forecasting to predict and interpret the political climate and policy changes that will affect us before we head into a crisis. At the moment there is very little time to do this."

Premises

"When we were trying to identify a property, one of the properties we did identify belonged to Social Services. In the end the Council decided that they would have to offer the building to the highest bidder, so the community lost out."

Training

"We lack support in terms of training, mentoring and consultancy. Problems include the cost of training, limited training opportunities, lack of time to train people and lack of qualified trainers."

"The co-op is still not using its new computer to its full potential as members only get the chance to learn computer skills in the office one day per week or fortnight."

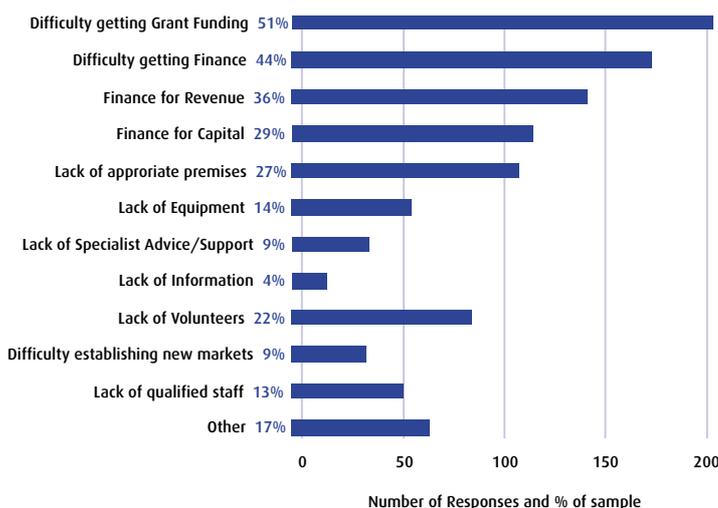
"We need support and training to establish book keeping systems, also technical advice on product manufacture, product design and marketing."

Information technology and equipment

"Lack of equipment is a major problem, we didn't have a computer for the first 3 to 4 years of the project, there is no administration worker and our members information is still in paper form only."

"We need a new computer to replace the one that was given to us that is now old and out of date. It also has a virus but we do not have the expertise or funds to put it right."

Barriers & Constraints - Multiple Choice Question





Staff

"We need more people because our biggest resource is people. We provide advice and support to our clients but they often ask for additional help with other tasks. We need people who can put a lot of time into others."

"We desperately need another development co-ordinator, someone who can help with our action plans so that we can increase the level of service to young people. It's about accessing funding for specific posts."

Main Sources of Help

Information gathered on what had most helped participants' organisations' highlighted teams and members (20%), networks and peers (19%), specialist advisors (18%) and Council and NHS link workers (12%) all being perceived as the primary sources of 'help'. In contrast, the private sector (4%), statutory agencies (3%) and politicians (1%) were once again perceived as sources of minimal support. When taken together these results suggest that third sector organisations' perceive that the most reliable sources of support and advice were from the teams, local groups, volunteers, networks, specialists and link workers operating within the community of the social economy sector rather than from the public and private sectors. This is confirmed by quotes from the interviews.

Team and Members

"The people we work with are very talented and focused people, without their support the project wouldn't survive."

"We are actively involved in about 20 networks within Bristol and the region that are valuable to our work because they are a big source of information on new initiatives and opportunities and they allow us to pass information up from our groups at the grassroots level and to feedback to our members what might be helpful to them."

"Our members make sure we survive through donations in response to our SOS letters."

"The community is very supportive and many local people act as volunteers."

Private Sector

"NatWest in terms of capital funding, financial advice, as well as advice and support with developing IT."

"Support from local businesses in the form of secondments and free training."

Friendly Finance

"Access to capital finance through ABCF, the only available source of start-up finance."

"Ethical banking has opened access to funding acceptable to co-operatives."

Statutory Agencies

"The Council's community workers have provided advice, support and access to funding information."

"There are very good Link Officers from the Local Authority in Social Services, Community Development, Housing and the Sustainable Cities Team."

Networks

"Having access to local sources of expertise and models of good practice to follow within the South Bristol Community."

"VOSCUR is networking for the voluntary sector. Since I have been going to their meetings I've been meeting lots of useful people that I haven't met at any other forums."

"Being part of a national organization we have access to free help and guidance."

Specialists

"Progress is a charity that offers low cost training for voluntary organizations. Training is so essential and has really helped my staff develop."

"We have lots of support from BACEN on credit union development plus access to their voucher fund for training. BACEN and BRAVE both helped with great advice."

"Avon CDA has provided support and the Trade Union have helped with advice."



Ambitions and opportunities

Potential for Growth

A remarkable 83% of organisations in the audit stated they want to expand. However, only 40% of the sample group expect their income to grow, while 32% of the sample group expect staff levels to rise and 34% of organisations expect the number of volunteers to increase. The reasons given to justify the expectations for growth in income were due to additional grants expected (42%), additional training/support (30%) and improved internal systems (12%). Where income was expected to decrease, reasons given were mainly due to the end of a funding stream (57%). The reasons given to justify the expectations for growth in staffing were mainly due to new projects (60%) that related to new streams of funded activity. All the reasons given for decrease in staffing related to cuts or the ending of grant funding. The reasons given to justify the expectations for changes in the number of volunteers were concerned with support needed to manage volunteers (50%), administration systems (17%) and promotional activity (13%).

The results indicate a direct relationship between levels of income, staff and volunteers. Where the sample group predicted fall in income there is a strong correlation with lower expectations for reductions in volunteers, compared to the portion of the sample that predicted increased income linked to lower expectations for growth in volunteers. Clearly, volunteers are the 'hidden capital' that fulfils shortfalls in both income and staffing.

Opportunities

In response to questions on opportunities for the Social Economy sector participants identified specific projects (17%) and funding (12%) as the most significant opportunities for the sector receiving the highest numbers of comments. Other categories of opportunity that received notable numbers of comments were communications and networking (10%), training (8%) and premises (5%).

Examples of 'specific projects' that were identified as current opportunities for the sector were diverse and included: trades peoples bureau; IT training facilities; business centre and workshop spaces; IT scrapstore; Homes Zones; social enterprise fair; community architecture initiative; credit union development; LETS development; local food shops/markets; cycle tourism; legal support services; work placements service; customised book-keeping service; City Carers initiative; drugs projects; community self-build projects; business mentoring service; day servfor ethnic minorities; social economy website.





Funding

In relation to 'funding' the participants in the audit provided a broad spectrum of suggestions that refer to every aspect of funding. There was general consensus that more funding is required as well as more detailed information on the types and availability of funding. It was identified that information on funding needs to be provided in several languages including ethnic minority languages. It was also suggested that the length of funding programmes need to be extended to encourage sustainable development within the sector. Other key suggestions included:

- core funding for established organisations to promote development
- venture capital fund that allows loan finance and grant funding to be combined
- creation of a loan fund for sector organisations
- seed funding for emerging social economy activities
- variation in the terms and conditions of lending agencies so that funds can be channelled into areas of need
- an agency to administer funding for small and new-start organisations
- simplification of funding language/reduce jargon for grant application process
- simplification of monitoring and evaluation of multi-agency funded schemes

Communications and Networking

Many opportunities were identified for communications and networking that included the production of a comprehensive directory of social economy organisations listing activities and contacts, a sector website and shared contacts database. Suggestions for partnership initiatives included the establishment of a brokering agency to match entrepreneurs with social economy projects, the use of development workers to promote partnership working and the provision of news and advice on partnership working. The rationale for these suggestions was that a major barrier to the expansion of the sector was "a chronic lack of co-ordination and co-operation between groups", that increased networking would support "filling the gaps in service provision" and reduce overlaps, and most importantly that

increased networking would enable groups "to work together without feeling that they are constantly in competition with each other". Overall these suggestions were intended to promote effectiveness by increasing the level of shared information and partnership working in order to strengthen the sector's interests within the wider economy.

Premises

On the subject of premises participants highlighted the opportunities for better use of property. For example, one suggestion was for the Local Authority to transfer their derelict properties into local hands to provide both work and homes for local people. Similarly, another suggestion was for redundant factories to be recycled into premises for small businesses and workshop spaces. Another suggestion highlighted the potential for developing shared office buildings for agencies that work on related issues in order to support the provision of integrated services to clients, for example a 'one stop shop for refugees' or 'an arts/media village'.

Local Authority Contracts

When the attitudes of the sample group towards the opportunity of delivering Local Authority contracts were surveyed the results revealed an even split in terms of negative and positive responses. Out of the total number of responses to each question 26% of the sample reported that they were already delivering contracts and 28% of the sample reported interest in delivering contracts. In contrast 25% of the sample indicated no interest in delivering Local Authority contracts and 30% indicated that they regarded these contracts as restrictive or that they were not capable of winning and managing these contracts. Comments from participants illustrate the reasons behind these results:

"Historically we have survived on short term funding and most the work was contracts to undertake pieces of work. This has limited what the organisation can achieve."

"Regarding contracts from local authorities, the problem is that a change in political direction locally or nationally can influence future development."





Benefits of the development project

The social economy audit provided the opportunity to map and evaluate the contribution of the sector to the local economy in Bristol. It has also operated as a demonstration project for social auditing, featuring a unique community-based approach. The research process has benefited the organisations and individuals that carried out the work because the project approach actively promoted collaboration and the exchange of skills and information. The results provide a rich source of data and practical ideas for developing the sector in the future.

The research process was developmental for staff and organisations involved in conducting the audit because it provided opportunities to work with colleagues across the city, to establish new links and networks in their area, to develop new research skills, to promote communication skills and team development. The audit encouraged organisations to consider ways that they could contribute more effectively to community and economic development within their area and across the city. For some organisations the process enabled growth towards Development Trust status and encouraged community development organisations to become more like social entrepreneurs.

The project had the added value of promoting community development by building links between many organisations across the city. Organisations were encouraged to look beyond their area and to think of ways that their activities could match or complement those of organisations in other parts of the city. By working with colleagues from other neighbourhoods organisations were encouraged to think of their work in a

city-wide context and to develop an actively collaborative approach to working within the sector. The organisations that carried out the work are now engaged in identifying practical ways that the sector can be supported in their area based on the information collected.

The process has also contributed to the development of a marketing identity for the social economy in Bristol. Organisations have been encouraged to think of themselves as part of an important sector that provides many useful services not provided by the public and private sectors. The process has helped to break down barriers and open up channels for discussion over the support needed by the sector in Bristol.

The research has provided a clear picture of the social economy in Bristol as well as an excellent baseline of valuable information that can be used to support its development. The database offers a central list of contacts, information on plans and aspirations of organisations, support needed and barriers to growth. This information can be used by social economy organisations to inform funding bids and to build partnerships with other organisations to increase services and improve the quality of life in deprived neighbourhoods. The findings have identified sources of innovation and 'best practice' that can be used to inspire and guide the development of the sector.

[Summary of the 'Evaluation of the Audit Process' by University of the West of England](#)

Participation and Partnership - Social Economy Development Project:

Steering Group: Bristol Area Community Enterprise Network (BACEN); Avon and Bristol Co-op Loan Fund (ABCF); the Avon Co-operative Development Agency (Avon CDA); Business Link West (BLW); the Churches Council for Industrial and Social Responsibility; Triodos Bank; Voluntary Sector Standing Conference on Urban Regeneration (VOSCUR); the Bristol Enterprise Development Fund (BEDF); 'Progress' and the University of the West of England.

Audit Research and Support: Southmead Development Trust, Network South Bristol, Fishponds, Local Action Group, URBAN Capacity Building Partnership, University of the West of England, BACEN, Avon CDA, Co-opportunity, VOSCUR, Kuumba, Easton C.A., Windmill Hill City Farm, Southville Centre, Hartcliffe and

Withywood Ventures, St. Werburghs Community Centre

Specialist Research: Bristol inter-LETS, Avon CDA, Anita Kamat, WPSD, Univesity of the West of England

Specialist Support: Deborah Harrison, Binding Associates, Woodoo Design, Marc Schlossman, Nigel Currivan, Jane Coles, Dokumenta, Martin Leith, Bitenet, Recycling Consortium, Bristol East Side Traders, SOFA Project, Tony Kerr, Amanda Radix, Soil Association, Regional Social Economy Partnership, Social Enterprise London, Icon-Tact, Baker Brown Associates, Chris Wardle. Also involved at various stages have been officers for the Community Regeneration, Grants, Leisure, Arts, Sustainability and Parks teams of Bristol City Council and officers of the South West of England Regional Development Agency and the Government Office of the South West, the Small Business Service and the Department for Trade and Industry. The project team



Moving forward

The Social Economy Bristol Development Project team of strategic and local bodies has been convening workshops and focus groups within the sector to draw up their response to the initial findings of the audit and are now operating as a coalition to progress an ambitious development programme.

This programme has 4 strategic aims:

Increase employment and business activity in the social economy - improving advice and intelligence services, development in media, environment, care and social firms

Increase efficiency and competitiveness of organisations and businesses through the development of mutual services - recruitment and supply agency, ICT resource, property and asset management service, financial services centre for bidding support and higher level planning, equipment brokerage

Promote and develop the Sector - sectoral marketing plan, directory, website, intelligence support, public sector and supply chain initiatives, employment and product development, champions group for networking across sectors

Increase access to credit and finance facilities - access, enhancement and integration of grants and loans availability, plus community finance development.

Development work is underway with mainstream business including the finance sector and other agencies using the project's unique grass roots approach to help develop best practice in priority areas:

Finance - Avon and Bristol Co-operative Finance Limited has developed new service and delivery mechanisms for the wider social economy. The SEDP has produced an innovative guide to loan finance for the sector, supported work within the Credit Union sector and has initiated a wider review of community finance development in Bristol.

Recruitment - The feasibility development phases for the creation of a new staff supply and recruitment agency and an Information Technology mutual company are underway. Work on a financial brokerage service has begun.

Marketing - Projects aimed at promoting the sector have been launched including research on marketing support, linkage with mainstream initiatives, strategic promotion, supply chain, best value review, brand creation and quality issues.

Bristol is already involved in a large number of other initiatives that support the Social Economy, through the delivery of social, neighbourhood and community services and in supporting the acquisition and management of major funds, for example Single Regeneration Budget, European Objective 2 and New Deal for Communities. This work complements the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal linking with work on enterprise and social exclusion, access to financial services and the national review of the Small Business Service with their emphasis on supporting entrepreneurs in excluded communities and improving access to 'mainstream' business and financial services. The work of the project and its members has already had a direct impact on the Department of Trade and Industry and its Phoenix fund.

The new European Union EQUAL Community Initiative targets disadvantage in the labour market, both for those in employment and those seeking work. This relates clearly to social economy themes, such as job quality, new forms of working organisations, combating racism and other forms of discriminatory practice, mainstreaming opportunities and learning from social economy activity, both organisational and for the individual. All these have already been picked up as activities around the Social Economy Development Project, and its participant organisations. Accordingly the Development project has submitted a proposal to work towards creating an EQUAL Development Partnership, developing a further regional base to ensure maximum learning and value-added from putting this innovative project alongside work elsewhere.

Note: the complete findings and results of the research and development project, including the additional feasibility studies on marketing, recruitment and IT, are available from Bristol City Council in the full report and appendix. They have also been posted on the website: www.socialeconomybristol.org.uk