

Aileen Campbell MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Communities & Local Government
The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
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6 May 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary

As we enter week 7 of the COVID 19 lockdown, we are all aware of and appreciate how busy you and your staff team are in managing the national response to the pandemic.

COVID 19 has brought about a new appreciation of what is important and valued in society and the reliance we all have on our local communities. The response to the virus has demonstrated the true value of 'localism in action' with community-based social enterprises providing crucial services and a lifeline in their communities.

As the national focus moves into the next phase of looking towards recovery and developing the road map that can lead us towards a more normal way of life, our sector has also begun to reflect on how best we can support communities and contribute to what will inevitably be a very difficult journey towards national recovery.

There has never been a more critical time to ensure that the central goal of economic recovery and the various strategies that will deliver it, also deliver collective wellbeing and greater community resilience which are essential in tackling the deep-rooted inequalities that this crisis has not just laid bare but exacerbated.

As outlined in Scottish Government's COVID-19 – A Framework for Decision Making, one thing that is certain is that the transition back to normality will be a gradual process. Once the lockdown period is relaxed, in a safe and phased manner, we need to rebuild and strengthen civil society. Community-based social enterprises will be even more important than ever in order to ameliorate the long term socio-economic impacts of the pandemic that have affected communities all across Scotland.

The transformed economic climate, new norms and behaviours and no doubt increasing service delivery pressures highlights the importance of community-based social enterprises to the economic and social recovery at the neighbourhood level. Our sector has proven to be resilient in crisis and agile in responding to the needs of Scotland's most vulnerable groups and communities. Much of this has been as a result of Scottish Government's swift action to ensure that substantial resources were made available at the outset of the COVID crisis.

Community-based social enterprises will make a significant contribution to our nation's recovery – stimulating economic, social and community action that can help drive that recovery. These organisations are important because their explicit goal of strengthening communities is not a mere by-product of their enterprising activity but their *raison d'être*.

Planning for the immediate future for the Scottish social and community-based enterprise sector is currently outlined in the new 3 year SE Action Plan for the period 2020 – 2023. Drafted and developed prior to March, we believe its purpose in shaping the sector for the next 3 years should now be revisited in light of Coronavirus. What we need now is a Plan focused on recovery.

Between us, we seek to represent the interests of 1000's of community-based social enterprises across Scotland. We directly tap into their experience of working in the frontline and can reflect

what they need in terms of support when developing the content of this refocused Plan. Indeed, this engagement and feedback process has already started with the 'SE -Reset' project. This is a planned series of conversations with community-based social enterprises to determine their support and funding requirements over the medium to longer term.

We propose to continue this engagement and to work with sector partners and Scottish Government, to develop our contribution to the national resurgence in the post COVID era via this recovery plan.

- A recovery plan that recognises the importance of localism and the critical role that community led responses have played in local responses to the pandemic.
- A recovery plan that puts in place the necessary support infrastructure to assist communities to respond to the changed environment they will operate in.
- A recovery plan that recognises that community-based social enterprises trading income has been and will continue to be negatively affected by the virus (from cafes to crèche facilities and from soft play areas to leisure centres) and the impact that their weakened viability will have on communities.
- A recovery plan that ensures resources are targeted at frontline community organisations to ensure successful delivery of the Plan's ambition.

We recognise that we must all show leadership going forward if we want our communities to emerge stronger and more resilient in facing an uncertain future. We can do that with a new 3 year Plan that focuses on recovery. One that is bold in vision and realistic in scope. A plan that community-based social enterprises recognise as meeting their needs and the needs of the people and communities they support.

We, the undersigned, are calling for a new recovery focused Action Plan and we commit to working with the Scottish Government, support organisations and others to shape the long term strength of our sector and ultimately the communities it serves.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the membership organisations listed below.



Pauline Gordon
Chief Executive Officer
Social Firms Scotland



Ailsa Clarke
Development Manager
Inspiralba

Community Transport Association
Community Woodlands Association
Community Land Scotland
Community Resource Network Scotland
Development Trusts Association Scotland
Nourish Scotland
Planning Democracy
School for Social Entrepreneurs Scotland
Scottish Communities Climate Action Network
Scottish Communities for Health and
Wellbeing Scottish Community Re: Investment
Trust Scottish Islands Federation
Scottish Community Alliance
Scottish League of Credit Unions
Scottish Men's Sheds Association
Scottish Rural Action
Senscot
Social Enterprise Networks/Senscot
Social Farms and Gardens
Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland
TSI Scotland Network