

## Third Sector Partnership Structure Discussion Document

This document proposes two actions which we hope will then be informed by the findings of the A&B Third Sector Mapping exercise being undertaken by ODS consultants and due at the end of October :

1. A proposal that the 'job' of being a Third Sector Representative for each of the 4 Local Area Community Planning Groups be tendered out on an annual contract. *(These groups hereafter referred to in this document as Area Planning Groups - APG's)*
2. A DRAFT structure for the Third Sector Partnership and suggested methodology (terms of reference previously circulated and appended)

Argyll & Bute has a Scottish Government deadline of March 2010 to have in place a 'Single Interface' for the third sector. Whilst we recognise that the **Third Sector Partnership as it currently stands is not the Interface**, this proposal has the potential to provide the nucleus for the formation of the Interface over the coming months, given that it is founded on the enthusiasm and commitment of some forty or so third sector partners across the region. It also enables fair and equitable involvement of the third sector from island communities - an issue which has so far proved problematic; and partners with national organisations – an element for which Argyll and Bute Council has indicated its preference.

### Background

The last three years have seen significant changes in third sector issues across Scotland and nowhere less than in Argyll & Bute:

- The introduction of the Single Outcome Agreement for the local authority and an increase in 'contracting out' of services from public agencies.
- The restructuring of the Scottish Government Third Sector team and the drive towards Single Interfaces for the Third Sector at CPP level.
- The rise of social enterprise as an acceptable and ethical business model for regeneration.
- The success of a number of Argyll & Bute's development trusts and community companies in enhancing infrastructure and services in their communities.
- The growth of the Argyll & Bute Volunteer Centre as a training provider and simultaneous restructure of Argyll CVS
- The recent publication of the Joint Statement on Relationships between local government and the third sector underpins the vital role the third sector plays in Community Planning and public service delivery. (24<sup>th</sup> Sept 09 / COSLA / SOLACE/Scottish Government / SCVO)

### Current Developments

Central Government funding for third sector infrastructure will change at the end of March 2011.

This has prompted the three CVS's and the Volunteer Centre to review their activities and outputs as their core funding will end in its current form at this time. Bute Community Links and Islay & Jura CVS are co-joining, and, Argyll & Bute Volunteer Centre and Argyll CVS will form one organisation by January 2010 as Argyll Voluntary Action, retaining the same remits and geographical functions as the two existing organisations. ABSEN (functioning primarily as network to share good practice and facilitate specialist training) will, with a minimum of staff, continue to function at least until March 2011 as it has secured funding and contracts until then.

### **Third Sector Partnership – TSP**

To date approximately 40 organisations have signed up to participate in what is currently an informal but collaborative partnership as yet undefined but already showing positive results through working together and by delivering the TSP training programme, funded by LEADER and FAB. The TSP which currently has Argyll & Bute Volunteer Centre, Argyll CVS and ABSEN as core partners, includes 40 groups who have all voluntarily come forward as a result of the Voluntary Sector Fora now operating across mainland Argyll. (As recently as 7th October 2009, attending the joint conference of CVS and VC networks, the Finance Minister John Swinney MSP reaffirmed the governments position that these intermediaries should lead the Interfaces.

“You are the interfaces; the SEN’s, CVS’s and VC’s “

Within Argyll and Bute’s Third Sector Partnership, local groups have been joined by national organisations who see the merit in linking into Argyll and Bute and its third sector through the Third Sector Partnership. Groups both local and national thus have a conduit to strategic partnerships operating in Argyll and can be kept informed, consulted and in touch. The local fora and the Partnership is currently being serviced by ABVC & ACVS staff.

Some groups wish to take a very active role in policy development and representation, others less so but wish to be kept informed of discussions emanating from CPP, LACPGs etc.

***ABVC/ACVS and ABSEN, as the original signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding which underpins the Partnership, wish to expand the Partnership*** to ensure involvement of a wider cross sector of interests as well as other national third sector organisations who can assist with strengthening the sector in Argyll & Bute.

### **Proposal One**

#### **Links to Local Area Community Planning and Performance Groups. (APG’s)**

The Partnership has considered options to ensure equitable representation at the emerging APGs and, given the geographic constraints coupled with the need to ensure that all communities, through their local voluntary and social enterprise sector fora , can link in to the APG’s makes the following recommendations.

- a) That a job or tender ‘specification’ approach seems the clearest and fairest way to ensure effective engagement – up and down the communication ladder. This should ensure that any person appointed to be the Third Sector ‘rep’ on an APG clearly understands their role and others understand what they can expect them.
- b) That part of the Fairer Scotland Funding to the Third Sector Partnership is utilised to develop and fund a tender, along social enterprise best practice principles.

#### **Pro’s & con’s**

- I. The tender would be open to all voluntary and social enterprise organisations across Argyll and Bute regardless of size, location (island or mainland) or thematic interest
- II. The tendered contract offered would initially be for a year as a pilot as the APG’s are new as well.
- III. The four contracts would be overseen and awarded through the Third Sector Partnership in conjunction with Council representatives to ensure equity within the decision making process.
- IV. The contracts would link payment for expenses incurred and fees with outputs (reports on the web, communication with ‘constituent groups’ etc.) Where a Rep fails to deliver they can expect no payment and ultimately contract termination.

- V. A contractual approach is much neater than the subjective nomination of individuals working or volunteering in the third sector.
- VI. Tendering this work out would help meet Single Outcome Agreement targets of helping grow the social enterprise sector, and is in line with the aspirations of the Demonstration Project and the ethos of the Third Sector Partnership.
- VII. Payment for time and expenses enables those on low incomes or volunteers to apply, instead of staff from existing larger or better funded third sector bodies, broadening involvement in the Community Planning Process.

#### **Representation Brief**

The representative would be required to:

- Attend Local Area Planning Group meetings (X per year)
- Participate (by videoconference or in person) the relevant Voluntary Sector For a for their specified Area. (This may be more than one and the contract would allow for this – see below # )
- Publish a report to voluntary/social enterprise local forum following APG meetings.
- Feedback with a report to lead Third Sector Partnership organisation for wider distribution
- Acquaint themselves with needs and issues relevant to local voluntary and social enterprise organisations, and be a recipient for representations from their area.
- Take up local issues pertinent to area committees on behalf of voluntary and social enterprise sector organisations.
- Ensure documents are circulated for consultation
- Ensure Third Sector Web Portal Manager receives all information to be uploaded onto website
- Liaise with Third Sector Partnership on regular basis.

#### ***# Note on Voluntary Sector Fora***

Historically the third sector on Islay, Bute and Mull have received support services from their respective CVS's & the Development Trust with varying levels of service dependent on skills available, funding and demand. The same was true of mainland Argyll initially through ACVS and then also the Volunteer Centre, (although VC has delivered specialist support countywide)

Additional funding for CVS's from Scottish Government administered through SCVO (with substantial funding for administration) has focussed on the Thrive and Connect agenda. This agenda has set the proportion of resources for each strand of Thrive and Connect. For some CVS additional funding has been available under a bidding process via the Supporting Voluntary Action projects, although Argyll and Bute has not been successful in this respect with funding being awarded to larger and urban CVS. VC's have benefitted in the past from funding through the Dynamic, Inclusive Communities programme albeit that this project funding whilst allowing growth is no longer available through Big Lottery Fund.

Most notably over the last 12-18months Argyll CVS and Argyll & Bute Volunteer Centre have put additional resources in '**Voluntary Sector Fora**' which see a wide variety of third sector organisations coming together to periodically share information, raise issues and look at local service needs.

With the collaboration of all the infrastructure organisation across Argyll and Bute, there would potentially be voluntary/social enterprise fora in up to eight areas, expanding on the existing five, i.e.

<b><i>Oban &amp; Lorn</i></b>	<b><i>Lochgilphead</i></b>	<b><i>Campbeltown</i></b>	<b><i>Dunoon</i></b>
<b><i>Helensburgh</i></b>	<b><i>Islay</i></b>	<b><i>Bute</i></b>	<b><i>Mull</i></b>

Rather than invent new wheels, it is logical that these areas form the 'broad constituencies' which feed into the 4 APG's. Recognising these geographical barriers, where the APG fails to provide video conferencing facilities an extra allowance will need to be budgeted to connect with or from the islands and for involvement / attendance in voluntary sector fora on the mainland for MAKI, OLI and Bute.

By this means all voluntary and social enterprise organisations should be enabled equal access across the county and thereby link into Third Sector Partnership and thence to thematic groups, area committees and strategic groups.

A clearer picture of the Third Sector Partnership is therefore required. (below)

## **Proposal Two**

### **Proposed Third Sector Partnership (TSP) Structure**

The recently published *Joint Statement* (see appendix), has been helpful in clarifying the relationship expected between the sector and local government and the TSP welcomes this guiding document.

To meet these challenges and achieve its ambitions for the sector the Third Sector Partnership will require the capacity to make decisions and recommendations at quarterly meetings. Whilst still in the formative stages, Members have indicated support for the Partnership to be chaired (at least initially) by one of the infrastructure organisations who would undertake servicing the quarterly meetings.

At present, the TSP remains informal with Argyll and Bute Volunteer Centre acting as lead organisation; its future development will depend on external decisions and events over the coming 12 – 18 months and upon the desires of the membership.

The Partnership is clear that it does not intend to detract funds from voluntary and social enterprise organisations and will strive to enable collaboration which can bring funds and add value to the sector in Argyll and Bute.

This proposal is wholly compatible with the aspirations of the *Community Engagement Plan*, the new *Community Plan for Argyll and Bute* and the work to be carried out through another partnership approach – that of the *Community Engagement* suite of projects, all of which are part funded by LEADER and where partners in Argyll and Bute Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Argyll and Bute Volunteer Centre are committed to working together.

We propose:

#### 1) Broad Range of Participants

To ensure strategic and thematic credibility the TSP will actively seek participating organisations who provide services in the following sectors (this list is indicative and requires further discussion):

youth	elderly care	community care,
disability	development trusts,	social enterprises
family support	environment	training and education,
advocacy,	recycling,	childcare

national partners (Princes Trust, SSAFA, CAB, VAS, Community Care Providers Scotland, Family Mediation etc)

#### 2) Quarterly Meetings

The pan-Argyll & Bute TSP should meet a minimum of 4 times per year (venues move around the region), with one of these being a full conference event.

#### 3) Strategic Representation

The Third Sector Partnership will appoint representatives to the CPP, Thematic Groups and Other Strategic Partnerships (see diagram).

#### 4) Link with Local Area Community Planning Groups (APG's)

As set out in proposal one, representatives will report into the TSP via the website and feedback will be forwarded to Area Reps from the TSP meetings.

5) Manage and maintain the Argyll and Bute **Third Sector Web Portal**.

With the development of the website for the Third Sector information can also be made available digitally allowing open, transparent and public access to issues affecting all our communities.

The TSP was awarded funds from FAB to develop a Third Sector Web Portal by March 2010. An ongoing process of gathering suggestions and information on the needs of the sector is coming together to inform the development of the web portal and we are currently looking at professional input to ensure that the product meets needs and truly reflects the varied and vibrant sector which exists in Argyll and Bute.

The Third Sector Partnership see the website development as a crucial cornerstone in this enabling access across the area and creating a place where all facets of the wide third sector can come together to share and find information, source specific expertise, and have their say in local planning.

6) Service delivery

Through the partnership and support by the infrastructure organisations, the TSP will deliver services, training and information in a range of formats and in locations across Argyll and Bute which are responsive to need, reflect the diversity and richness of the sector and can match and tailor services accordingly.

**In Conclusion**

Through the Partnership this structure will allow for a sharing of knowledge and joined up approach to ensure all organisations can be kept up to date with developments and emerging issues according to their particular thematic interest or locality. Both partners and those representing the partnership on a wide range of strategic and local groups the sector will benefit from information being communicated both from top to those on the ground and from frontline organisations and volunteers upward.

**Next Steps**

Currently £70,000 of 2009-10 FAB funding is being used to :

- A. Develop the Third Sector Web Portal
- B. Deliver the TSP Training Programme across Argyll & Bute by March 2010
- C. Develop Interface proposals (initially commissioning ODS to map the sector) *These funds held by Argyll and Bute Council.*

We propose that the residue of funds from C be used to host meetings between now and March 2010 to share the findings from ODS Report and to examine how to use them to develop this TSP Proposal into the Single Interface

We must have the Interface up and running by April 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 and now that the Councils APG structure is clearer and so many organisations have joined the TSP we have a duty to make this a priority.

Finally the budget for the Fairer Argyll & Bute Fund is being set now for 2010-11. We urge the Council to ringfence sufficient funding to enable the Third Sector Interface to deliver services along these lines and ringfence an appropriate amount as we have been discouraged from applying until the Interface is further developed. The Third Sector Partnership has already outlined service delivery plans in a bid to Fairer Scotland Funds (Argyll and Bute) and we recommend, with the support of a

wider membership and those groups from existing voluntary sector fora that sufficient funds are identified to realise the Representation proposal and interface development as proposed above.

Through these actions the voluntary and social enterprise sectors, through the Third Sector Partnership, of Argyll and Bute believe they would have the resources to deliver against the challenges laid down by Cllr Dick Walsh in May 2008 and in accord with the aspirations and ambitions of the sector to best serve the communities of our rural area.