Social Enterprise Forum

Wednesday May 7th, 10am

Present: Raymond Branton (WSGWL), Leigh Lauder (Winchburgh CDT), Gareth McKenna (Broxburn Utd), Jane Masters (Play Works), Eloho Eufemia (Adelphi and Radio station), Tracy Kerr & Alan McCloskey (VSGWL), Celeste Blaize-Gibson (Woman of Colour Network), Eunice Simpson (WL African Women’s Network), Struan Gard (WL Leisure), Declan Harrigan (S.M.I.L.E.), Mark Vance (WLDAS), Adele Prendergast (Polbeth Hub), Martin Thomson (Business Gateway), Helen Davis (WLYAP), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco)

Minutes: Victoria Isbister

Apologies: Ally Graham (Beechbrae), David MacDonald (Whitburn CDT), Susan Flynn (Acredale House), Judith Eele (Community Enterprise), Julie Smith (Fauldhouse CDT)

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

Raymond welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining his role as Social Enterprise lead for The Gateway, part of his brief being to bring together members to form a forum. Those present introduced themselves.

1. **Background and Overview**

The Gateway CEO, Alan, spoke about the delight of hosting social enterprise activities going forward, recognising the creativity of this sector. Existing partnerships can aid help and support available from The Gateway.

West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSEN) was part funded by Council and part by The Gateway. In the face of administrative challenges, it has not been functioning, and has been unable to provide support needed to the sector. This gap led to discussions with Council about how can we provide support? The Gateway already host and facilitate forums, improving connections and supporting leaders across West Lothian. It was felt The Gateway needed a dedicated resource to drive this forward and are delighted to have engaged Civitas Consultancy, led by Raymond, to find lead our social enterprise support.

[Working Together - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/working-together/)

Raymond has also been working with WLSEN’s directors to help them tie up formally and reminded everyone of their EGM on 14th May. After the EGM everything is expected to transition to this forum.

1. **Survey results**

100% of respondents wanted The Gateway to provide a forum for Social Enterprises in the recent Gateway stakeholder survey. Raymond also received positive responses to his recent social enterprise survey. Time is right, need is there. We want to support the sector, to help you help each other and yourselves.

1. **Discussion on purpose, focus, structure and activities of the forum**

Raymond thanked everyone for attending and to everyone who has expressed interest. It was great to see a wide range of representation and new faces. Raymond opened up for participants’ thoughts and suggestions, on what is needed and how to deliver, what would be the role of the forum, and what did people want from The Gateway? Initial comments were that partnership is crucial, and exploring/facilitating opportunities for joint work/funding bids would be useful.

Mark spoke about WLDAS (West Lothian Drug Alcohol Service) who are leading a wraparound project, funded by Corra for 5 years. Partnership working with Circle (who provide outreach, whole family approach) and WLYAP (Youth Action Project) (diversionary activities). They have an employed specialist link worker who provides counselling and also trains other people to upskill them: sharing knowledge and skills. It is a PSP (Public Social Partnership). Helen gave background as to how this PSP came about: gaps identified then services identified for partnership working. Corra favourable to partnership bids.

Alan spoke about the local employability partnership – commissioned through The Larder initially - which has been running successfully for 18 months with different partners. It was set up very quickly and data sharing was a huge challenge. Alan suggested there were benefits of having infrastructure set up as much as possible ahead of any joint funding bids.

Mark then spoke about an example of group who could use support: a new project, booze free banter (alcohol free space with entertainment), who meet last Friday of each month at The Larder in Blackburn. Partnered with CGL and Public Health Scotland. Running on goodwill but will need cash to keep it going. Brings folk from community together. How can we expand this?

Helen talked about Almond Housing as an example of a bigger lead partner recognising smaller projects and investing in communities. They pulled together local resources and knowledge, groups who have different approaches to do the work.

These examples show there are orgs of different sizes who are at differing stages.

Raymond asked if we should segment and focus on different factors, to ensure right supports at right time? Declan agreed that size of orgs affects capacity for engagement. If it’s segmented, can it still be open attendance, as big org might be starting something new, therefore it would be appropriate to attend?

It was agreed that it would be good to share funding opportunities, however this shouldn’t be the sole focus. Social enterprises are a business, so big conversation needed around generating revenue. What skills do we have? What can we sell? Funding status can affect applications (not all have charitable status).

Martin (Business Gateway) agreed that forum should have a clear definition of what is a social enterprise, as there is no legal definition. It was agreed to keep this simple and self-identified: an org trading and with an asset lock. Martin also suggested a closed digital platform to accommodate instant feedback and information sharing, which was agreed.

There was discussion on whether the forum should only be for established Social Enterprises, rather than start-ups? Raymond clarified that The Gateway provides other supports to whole sector, including start-ups and another part of Raymond’s role will be to encourage new social enterprise start-ups. It was agreed that it made sense for orgs to self-select whether agendas/focus was relevant to them.

There was a request for the forum to be open and not competitive, asking members not to be precious about ideas or assets.

There was also a suggestion that we could campaign/educate the public on choosing social enterprises, e.g. Buy Social.

All members agreed to email addresses being shared within the group.

Raymond highlighted that quarterly meetings take place between The Gateway, Business Gateway and Community Enterprise, to co-ordinate work.

1. **Terms of Reference**

Draft approved in principle with some amendments suggested: definition of social enterprise.

1. **Ideas.**

* Thematic meetings, segmentation – open to attendance
* Meet the Buyer
* Guest speakers: Invite Claire Stewart with regards to Community Wealth building agenda (40% to be spent locally, create opportunities?)
* Have dedicated Social Enterprise rep on PDSP (Corporate?)
* Coffee break and networking built into Agenda

Themes

* Exploring business opportunities – whomever wants to attend.
* Assessing ability: Sustainability (in absence of funding and donations)
* How to generate income
* Environment
* Influencing policy? Procurement.

[Membership - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/organisation-support/our-members/)

get in touch! tracy.kerr@vsgwl.org

[Homepage - VSGWL Locator](https://westlothianlocator.org/) – currently only members included.

Free training by SMILE, 2-day suicide intervention, June and November.

[Training - S.M.I.L.E - Mental Health Training](https://smilecounselling.org.uk/training/)

**Actions**

1. Update TOR based on feedback Raymond
2. WLSEN AGM 24th online All members
3. Share Health check tool Raymond
4. Quarterly survey Raymond / all members
5. Martins’s data Raymond & Martin
6. Theme meetings Raymond
7. Set up Teams channel Gateway