**West Lothian Social Enterprise Forum**

**Note for Wednesday 24th September 2025: 1pm – 3pm at Broxburn United Sports Club**

Chair: Raymond Branton (VSGWL) Note taker: Victoria Isbister (VSGWL)

Present: Gareth McKenna (Broxburn Utd Sports Club), Leigh Lauder (Winchburgh CDT), Simon (Play Works / Simply Play), June Dickson (Environmental Health CIC), Tracy Murdoch (Kidzeco), Kerry Hutchison (S.M.I.L.E. Counselling), Helen Davis (WLYAP)

Apologies: Tracy Kerr (VSGWL), Jane (Play Works), Amanda Macdonald (The Bridge)

1. **Welcome, apologies and introductions:**

Raymond opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

1. **Guest speaker, Clare Stewart, Community Wealth Building (CWB) Manager, WLC**

Clare said she is excited about the Network and would like to come back, with more time, another day, apologising for needing to leave early this afternoon. Scottish Government (SG) are driving legislation which will be approved in Feb ‘26 stating that CWB will be required to be delivered by statutory bodies. Purpose is strengthening local economies and keeping any wealth generated within local areas.

Five pillars:

* Inclusive Ownership - how to develop mixed economy
* Procurement - maximise social economic benefits
* Fair Employment - good practice, retaining workforce, being a good employer
* Financial powers - how to use and redirect wealth
* Maximise resources - ensure targeting right group and using powers you have for good use, how to get the best value from of land and property: collectively using land and assets we have. **Action: Clare will share relevant PDSP report**

It is a huge process to pass legislation. Local Action Plans - some bodies will need to have this as part of their Corporate Plans and will need to report on it. Council will need to develop and publish a plan. Partners include: NHS, WL College and Sustrans. Guiding principles will be published by SG.

This could lead to massive opportunities for the third sector.

WLC have made changes, which include Quick Quotes procurement process (1 bidder now must be based in WL) and Community Benefits (which allows orgs to ask for items). Recent Community Choices exercise enabled the community to choose where resources were allocated. Asset transfer process is complex, however advice available anytime. 13 locality plans have been reviewed, with a focus on local areas of deprivation. Community engagement toolkit was developed in partnership with Community Councils and CDT’s. [Community\_Engagement\_Toolkit\_2024\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/63417/Engaging-Communities-Toolkit/pdf/Community_Engagement_Toolkit_2024_FINAL.pdf)

SEs could bid for contracts under procurement. This becomes all the more important as pots of funding are disappearing. How can SEs bid for contracts and deliver services? How do they find out what the needs are? There is national support for cooperatives. Funding into cooperatives – case study available. **Action: Clare**

Raymond thanked Clare for the helpful overview and will be in touch to make arrangements to meet. Clare said her job is to support the sector and help where possible. The team are passionate about the third sector and received good feedback on Sector Annual Report when presented at Policy Development Scrutiny Panels (PDSPs). Officers can help Org’s to register with Scotland Xcel (which would then allow them to bid for contracts). WLC employability service supports employment progression which supports people to become employed.

Partnership and Consortia – SE Forum keen to support this trajectory. Raymond mentioned that SE Scotland spoke at last meeting and that they were trying to make contact within WLC in relation to Buy Local pledge and the new dynamic purchasing system: Clare suggested contacting Tom Henderson to progress. **Action: Raymond**. Consortia stronger big for bigger pots of money. Clare recommended being honest about costs – the lead organisation often doesn’t put in their costs.

1. **Broxburn Utd**

Gareth said the focus there is on bringing community together through tools such as sport and education. Working with a lot of schools – various supports in place for pupils struggling with attainment and attendance such as providing alternative curriculum.

150 people attend 10 different classes inc. disability programme. Monthly football membership is 450 kids, male and female. Altogether BUSC host 120 sessions a week / reaching around 2,000 people. Looking to develop a stronger base for sustaining funding. Currently getting support from VSGWL to review policies, procedures and governance. Community Panels direct what’s happening: Young Leaders sports, disability panel and over 60’s. This ensures what is being delivered is what people want. Lots of change in the last 18 months and building of local partnerships - Robotics and STEM programmes with first step robotics. Looking to create variety of opportunities to support young people with their positive pathways. There’s a wider remit now than football. Lots of plans and aspirations however need multiyear funding commitment.

Currently generate income through facilities e.g. social functions. 60% of income last year was grant funding. Building and services would struggle without grant funding. Some grants have conditions i.e. need to spend money within 12 months. Partners fed into strategy session which was launched in March and created clarity.

1. **Previous minutes and matters arising**

Minutes from Aug 13th were agreed.

A few people have used the self-assessment organisational Health Check tool, which is available to all [HERE](https://salesforce.123formbuilder.com/form-6821758/org-health-check)

The new Data Tracker is currently out for testing and Raymond reminded testers to complete and give feedback.

**Social Enterprise Scotland are about to refresh their *Buy Social directory* of social enterprises. You can register for free** [**here**](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fforms.zohopublic.eu%2Fsocialenterprisescotland%2Fform%2FCatalogueNovRefresh%2Fformperma%2Fet11HhEjvozGrG4EbN_vT-GWDhXXM3Np6GtzjKxhJSY&data=05%7C02%7CVictoria.Isbister%40vsgwl.org%7Cf799df62ad994b61837a08ddf44032b7%7Cbe05086275a44dfdbe60e3f75dea411c%7C0%7C0%7C638935278753134030%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=srhiVq%2F4yIzxWB1Qi%2BwZokuuxkjswpRgCqyPkFEeWoo%3D&reserved=0) **by October 6th.**

Teams channel – this was asked for, but doesn’t seem to be used. Will be deleted if not practical/useful.

Raymond asked if anyone attended the partnership and consortia training on Sept 3rd, but it didn’t look like anyone took up the opportunity.

1. **WLSEN update and resource allocation**

Trustees have had ongoing challenges with accessing bank account and online banking. Once this is resolved the monies will transfer to The Gateway.

1. **Study visits suggestions**

Following interest in study visits to successful partnerships/consortia, Raymond suggested the following:

* [GECCO](https://www.gecco.scot/), who provide community support and wellbeing across Glasgow
* [BRAG](https://brag.co.uk/) in Fife, an established and successful employability and training consortium

Members expressed an interest in both. **Action:** **Raymond to make approaches**

1. **Members’ catch up**

S.M.I.L.E.: Private lease is up June 2026. Been to view a couple of potential properties. This is priority moving forward.

Play Works: East Calder building is experiencing multiple repair issues, so exploring asset transfer and how to make the land work better.

Winchburgh CDT: Set up in 2016 and still on journey to become SE. DTAS fund will open in Oct for 2-3yrs funding. This would make the development trust resilient. Excited for the future however know need to get it right. Mission statement and aims refreshed. Winchburgh is a developing village / town. Need income as well as grants.

WLYAP: Was temporarily based in Almond Housing for 18 months. Had a move in date at Stadium of September 3rd however this is now on hold indefinitely. Team unable to deliver new programmes and working in various office spaces, which is unsettling for both team and young people as well as having an impact on travel budget. Discussion around Pavillion space next to Craigsfarm. Craigshill Community Garden work remains very positive. Need Livingston base, central and one which is suitable for working with [sometimes] challenging young people they are working with. Gareth offered Helen a hot desk space here, which was appreciated.

Kidzeco CIC: New SCIO approved. Shops and café generate income. This allows services to run for free or reduced cost. Hosting open day in community space, launching family platform to showcase all the services provided. October 9th 3.30pm – 5pm.

Environmental Health CIC: Regularly running First Aid for Mental Health course. Has money from Awards For All to run a befriending pilot. June explained there was a register of over 600 trained people which is an amazing resource. Looking to match volunteers with people who have mild to moderate mental health challenges for 3-6months. Intended to work with Craigsfarm active listening service, however most of the people they deal with are in crisis, which wouldn’t be right for volunteers, so is going back to Awards For All to discuss. June is considering a scoring system for referrals. Befrienders will encourage people to take control of self-care and self-help.

June then referred to frustrations which she shared at recent Third Sector Strategy Group (TSSG) around the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), which reported that there had been 17 trainers in First Aid for Mental Health from Social Policy and Regeneration teams, as part of a community health partnership. They have trained 19 people in 3 years at a cost of £17,000. Environmental Health CIC – a small team of 3 trainers and 2 admin, have trained over 600 people in WL alone over 3yrs, and 1,600 people across Scotland over last 3 yrs. June expressed heartfelt disappointment at this waste of money and lack of communication from Council. Raymond agreed this clearly shows lack of understanding and engagement with the Third Sector. June would like to see her figures included in local outcomes improvement plans – **Action:** **Raymond will feed this back to Alan (CEO, VSGWL)**

Tracy added that she was in a mental health early years meeting recently, which spoke about Triple P being delivered online offering parents’ access to a webinar via email. Tracy wondered how and why this had been commissioned and whether an online resource was appropriate for isolated parents. Tracy would like to ask Alan how does a SE or org. get involved in high level commissioning of services?

Helen asked, how can we properly work together? Rather than scrabbling over little pockets here and there. Raymond has already spoken to Alan about taking the lead on writing the next Third Sector Annual Report with a SE focus, with a view to making it clear what a SE is and highlight services available. Will be approaching people for case studies and will create a template.

STATS local outcome improvement plan – very little Third Sector, “we don’t get the information”. This isn’t true. Collecting our data and summarising. Insular. We aren’t part of Council systems. Data collection differently.

1. **AOCB**

* Raymond spoke about organising some Masterclass events on the themes of Resilience; Entrepreneurship; and Success in Business, with some high-profile contributors. He asked if people/org’s would be interested, which they would. **Action: Raymond to investigate.**

1. **Next meeting :**

Nov 5th 10am The Gateway

**Actions**

1. Contact Clare and team for a chat / support anytime – all members
2. Share cooperative case studies – Clare
3. PDSP report – Clare
4. Approach Council Procurement re SES’s Buy Social Pledge - Raymond
5. Consider Buy Social directory registration – all members
6. Look into setting up study visits - Raymond
7. Follow up with Alan about June and Tracy’s concerns - Raymond
8. Organising Masterclass events - Raymond

**Useful links**

[Home | West Lothian 4 Community](https://funding.idoxopen4community.co.uk/westlothian)

[Community Benefit Wishlist - West Lothian Council](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/84313/Community-Benefit-Wishlist)

[Room Hire - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/room-hire/)

[Sign up to our e-bulletin - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/sign-up-to-our-e-bulletin/)

[West Lothian Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults - Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian](https://www.voluntarysectorgateway.org/organisation-support/funding/west-lothian-communities-mental-health-wellbeing-fund-for-adults-published-september-8-2025/)