



**Transition Group Meeting Six
24 October 2022**

**Paper One
Summary of Themes raised in the Transition Group
Consultation Events**

Voice for the Sector

There was strong support for SES growing a very strong and credible voice for all the sectors. There was a strong sense that SES should be the “glue” that holds the sector together. It was recognised that there was a need for simplicity and some connection between the intermediaries. The SEI needs to be an opportunity to connect things at a national level, in terms of business gateway, SCVO, etc.

Speaking truth to power is vital, as is independence. It was recognised that doing so sometimes has repercussions, so it is a delicate balance. It was acknowledged that there is such diversity in the sector, and so representation would be a key challenge for SES. The SEI needs to have something to say on the current issues that is vexing the membership and the sector.

Network Support

There was agreement that network support should continue, this support should not be prescriptive but be tailored to local need “having an ear to the ground”. There were areas where SENS do not exist or had disappeared, and there should be parity of support irrespective of location. This was also evident in the equal access to advice on business models – in some areas, business gateway and TSI’s were not necessarily equipped to give the right/ consistent advice on legal structures – some need for consistent messaging and approaches.

There was support for SES growing networks in niche areas to respond to need. For example, BAME social entrepreneurs (SSE is doing work in this area).

There was support for a national event to bring all the networks and sector together. Social enterprises are busy and don’t have much time for engagement events / webinars, and any activity must be time effective.

There was support for an MoU with the TSI’s. It is hoped this will enable the connection with grassroots and help SES to hear what people locally have to say.

Rural and Local Connections

Strong sense that in rural areas, social enterprises are not as well served, and support was sometimes absent. There was a desire to have the same level of engagement as other areas. A view was expressed that some TSI’s were not as active as others and were not always best placed to support social enterprise, it had been added into their remit without the infrastructure in places.

Support was variable and examples were given of SEN’s not surviving in some areas, and some members felt isolated. Funding and support to connect local networks was also seen as important.

There are significant issues facing rural Scotland and SES should be arguing on these issues. Depopulation, infrastructure, and fuel poverty were current. The

implementation of the Islands Act was a broken promise by Scottish Government and SES could be a voice for change on that. Similarly, the Circular Economy Bill, contingency funds were needed, and rural voices were being ignored.

Role as Strategic Incubator

There was some disappointment that there was little mention of social enterprises in the latest Programme for Government. There was a strong view that SES should be supporting the development of new social enterprises in areas like criminal justice, childcare, forest schools; areas where social enterprise has a competitive advantage in response to the SG agenda. The idea of SES as a strategic incubator on key issues was as important as support to individuals to grow – SES could help create the strategic conditions for this and articulate the value of the contribution of social enterprises. Participants were waiting to see what would be covered in the new tender for Just Enterprise.

One suggestion was a legitimate role for SES in being a property owner and letting spaces to other social enterprises. This could generate income and allow social enterprises to share services. There was support for the idea that SES should not distribute grants.

The role of the Voluntary Code and Benefits of Membership

The views on this were mixed, with some suggesting it was important and key to the asset lock. However, a review of the Code was welcomed. Some suggested however that the code was too restrictive and blocked access to certain types of investment. Mission led was the most important thing and consumers being clear that they were buying from a mission driven organisation.

People need to see tangible benefits to join, and this will vary for different organisations and places, but a clear description of member benefits was needed – and that included, being visible locally and nationally. The level of support and presence will drive membership as its seen as tangible.

Governance

The matter of Board membership was considered a matter for the SES Board.

There was support for the idea of not using the term “SEI”.

Note of Final Transition Group digital consultation - 13th October 2022

There were over 20 participants

Ian went through the presentation slides and recommendations and asked for comments:

- Lack of reference to working with SENS and TSIs (will be covered in guidance section of final report);
- Clarification on composition of SES Board (IW referred to slides);
- Need for development funding, especially for volunteers to keep going. (Case will be made, but SES won't administer this);
- SES needs to understand local landscape better;
- Good to see 'no competition' recommendation;
- SENS are variable, SES needs to look at how best to bring up overall quality;
- Can guidance be given to public sector agencies on how best to engage and involve social enterprises?
- Worry about being too dependent on SG for funds;
- Need to give small social enterprises a bigger voice;
- Impact of loss of SENS Scot to grass roots organisations;
- SG does recognise the need to engage with, and build trust of, grass roots enterprises. This is a big task for SES in the future.

AG 13/10/22