

## Chief Executive's Report – January 2012

### **Recruit a broad membership base and then constantly review the current membership and associated strategy and communicate any revisions**

- As part of our administrative processes, there is a constant review of the WSEC membership database to help provide a clear and efficient communication platform for the WSEC membership.
- The on-going process of recruiting and building a broad membership base continues as we continue to build strong links with social enterprises and regional networks across Wales.
- The existing database will, over the following weeks, be scrutinised and categorised as set out in the revised Memorandum and Articles of Association, to create a directory of our members to facilitate networking and increase opportunities for our members to win new business.
- The second and third of the 2011 focus groups were kindly hosted by Mulberry House in Abergavenny and Rhondda Life in Ferndale respectively. The Abergavenny event was an early morning gathering (7.30-9.30am) of approximately 20 individuals and organisations whilst the audience for the Ferndale group (6-8pm) was very practitioner-oriented; both events proved to be both interesting and informative.
- The first of the 2012 series of focus groups was held in Cwmbran on the 11<sup>th</sup> January. Hosted by Social Enterprise Network Torfaen (SENT), the event was facilitated by the WSEC CEO together with support from WSEC staff. A further 15 events are planned for 2012; with three taking place in February at the following locations:

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February** at Cae Post in Welshpool.

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February** in the WSEC Cardiff offices (in partnership with Cardiff Third Sector Council)

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February** at Caia Park Wrexham.

The purpose of these focus groups is to engage with the assembled audience and understand the issues as well as the successes that confront grass roots social enterprise. Much has already been learned from these early gatherings and the information gleaned will form the basis of a report that will be published and circulated widely.

- Since the last Board meeting the Chief Executive and WSEC staff have visited a number of Welsh social enterprises and support organisations.
- WSEC membership at the time of writing now totals 213 members.

## **Raise the profile of social enterprise as a vibrant business model, championing the values and benefits of social enterprise to a broad range of stakeholders**

- A publication titled *The Welsh Social Enterprise Coalition – Annual Review 2010-2011* was published in December 2011 and was circulated to members at the WSEC AGM and Replicating Success event in Carmarthen in December. This document chronicles the progress and activity of WSEC and its members over the last year, as well as providing useful information on the benefits of social enterprise to the wider public. The publication has been mailed to all WSEC members and will be distributed to the Welsh Government, local authorities, politicians and to private sector bodies.
- The WSEC issues a monthly, bi-lingual newsletter to members and interested parties, as well as providing regular updates and information on Welsh social enterprise via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- We are currently in the process of organising a Reception to be held at the National Assembly for Wales entitled “*A celebration of Social Enterprise in Wales*”. The purpose is to raise awareness of social enterprise amongst decision makers and is likely to take place as the Enterprise & Business Committee revisit the earlier inquiry into the role of social enterprise in the Welsh economy. The event will take place on Tuesday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2012 from 18.00-20.00. Invitees include Assembly Members and Ministers as well as social enterprise practitioners
- A successful event – *Replicating Success* – was held in December and attracted speaker contributions from Wales, Ireland and the USA. At the same gathering in Carmarthen, the WSEC hosted an extremely successful Christmas Fair where Welsh social enterprises displayed and sold their respective goods. The Christmas Fair is planned to be an annual event, moving around Wales.

## **Represent the needs and views of social enterprise by being a strong voice driving forward opportunities for the sector**

- The WSEC CEO met with the Minister for Business & Enterprise, Edwina Hart on the 16<sup>th</sup> January, the first of two “formal” meetings this year. A number of matters were discussed including access for Welsh social enterprises to the Wales Economic Growth Fund, social enterprise Board development, coaching and business rates.
- We have responded to a number of policy consultations including those in relation to the National Assembly Finance Committee’s inquiry into the effectiveness of European Structural Funds and the call for evidence from the Business Rates Policy Review Task & Finish Group. We engage with our members prior to submission to ensure that consultation responses from the Welsh Social Enterprise Coalition reflect the views of our members.
- There have been further opportunities to represent and raise the profile of social enterprise in a number of meetings and events WSEC staff have attended over the last month. These include a meeting of the Council for Economic Renewal, Procurement Supplier Panel and National Regeneration Panel; organising and running the Social Enterprise Wales Conference in partnership with the Wales Cooperative Centre; attending the 4 Nations CEO meeting, attending the Institute for Welsh Affairs Conference and CBI annual dinner; taking part in the Dynamo role model programme; attending a Jobs Fair at Cardiff Metropolitan University; attending the WISEA Steering Group meeting; meeting with Big Issue Invest, Big Lottery Fund Wales, PriceWaterhouseCoopers.
- The WSEC Strategy document, written with views and comments of the membership in mind, was distributed to the WSEC Board for final comment and has been submitted to the Minister for Business & Enterprise to seek her views before publication.
- The WSEC CEO and Policy and Communications Officer met with colleagues from Scotland, England and Northern Ireland in November 2011. An informative meeting and some lively discussion took place and there were updates from each national body.

## **Use existing networks, organisations and members to establish an overarching support system, including finance and resources to be available to Welsh social enterprises**

- Part of the WSEC’s remit is to facilitate and help co-ordinate support and resources that are available to the sector from the broad range of provision already available. As an example, further to our attendance at the last meeting of the Neath Port Talbot Social Enterprise Network, we have provided a summary of what specific local support was available for social enterprises in Neath Port Talbot via the WSEC website. We plan to make similar information available via the WSEC website over time.
- The WSEC website is regularly updated to provide our members with the most up to date and relevant information relating to social enterprise. Recent additions to the resources section of the website include information on the ‘Social Connections’ business mentoring programme run by Business in the Community and the Wales Cooperative Centre, Lloyds Banking Group’s ‘Social Entrepreneur Programme’ and a guide prepared by TPAS Cymru entitled “Social Enterprise as a Method of Tenant Participation”. A number of events have

also been promoted including the Social Enterprise Network Torfaen (SENT) Summit, a Learn With Grandma Information Seminar and Cylch Reuse Days.

- The existing Memorandum and Articles of Association, reviewed and endorsed by the Board, were circulated for consideration by the WSEC membership and were endorsed and accepted by a majority vote at the WSEC AGM in December 2011.
- The WSEC issues a monthly, bi-lingual newsletter and provides regular updates concerning the sector via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. These communications aim to be informative and look to signpost members to a myriad of different aspects, finance and resources for social enterprise both within Wales and beyond.