

## **Social Enterprise in Oxfordshire – context and proposed developments.**

A social enterprise is a venture that is set up to trade for a social and/or environmental purpose. It will have a clear sense of its 'social mission': which means it will know what difference it is trying to make, who it aims to help, how it plans to do it and how it will operate in a sustainable way. In contrast with a charity it will bring in most or all of its income through selling goods or services. Social Enterprises are set up to specifically make a difference and aim to reinvest the profits they make in their social mission in order to be sustainable.

The best government data (the Annual Survey of Small Businesses UK 2012) estimates that there are approximately 70,000 social enterprises according to their "very good fit" criteria which is 6% of all SME employers in the UK, contributing at least £18.5 bn GVA to the economy. Social enterprises are estimated to employ 970,000 people in the UK. Some are household names such as the Eden project, The Big Issue, Cafedirect or Jamie Oliver's "15" restaurant but most are micro businesses. Currently they are the fastest growing business type in the UK and the sector is identified as having a key role to play in the Government's Localism and Communities agenda. At European level the EU announced in March, 90 billion Euros in total for social enterprise funding between 2014-2020 with the UK share largely be administered through the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The key findings of the 2012 report were:

- The number of Social Enterprise start-ups is very high, particularly in health, social care and education with nearly 1/3rd social enterprises being younger than three years old.
- In the previous 12 months 38% of social enterprises saw a growth in turnover, compared with 29% of SMEs
- 56% of social enterprises developed a new product or service in the previous 12 months compared with 43% of SMEs.
- 63% of respondents to the survey expected their turnover to increase in the next 2-3 years, compared to 37% among SMEs generally
- 11% of social Enterprises export or licence abroad – with export growth being mainly among newer social enterprises

While most social enterprises are micro or small businesses, with an employment profile similar to SMEs generally, they are more likely to be BME-led and more likely to have women in leadership positions. They are also more likely to provide employment in rural areas and to provide employment for disadvantaged groups such as long-term unemployed, NEETs, older people, people with disabilities and ex-offenders. Social Enterprises are also more likely than SMEs generally to re-invest profits in the local economy and to use a network of local suppliers and partners.

### Social Enterprise in Oxfordshire

Estimating the number and size of social enterprises in Oxfordshire is difficult, as social enterprises exist across a wide range of business sectors, have a great many different business structures and do not always classify themselves as social enterprises. However, the county includes a number of well-established social Enterprises including:

- **The Phone Co-op** <http://www.thephone.coop> an independent consumer co-operative based in Chipping Norton, with offices in London and Manchester, set up in 1998 as a way for non-profit organisations such as charities and community groups to bulk-buy their telecommunications
- **Ethical Property Company** <http://www.ethicalproperty.co.uk> , founded in 1998, which provides managed desk space, office space and meeting space to charities, voluntary groups and social change organisations.

- **Ethex** <https://www.ethex.org.uk> , a positive investment company set up in 2012 (based on a Tridos Bank initiative dating from 2003), to bring ethical investors and businesses together onto one platform that makes ethical investment easy to understand and easy to do. Ethex has raised over £1 million in positive investment since launching in January 2013.
- **Oxford Wood Recycling** <http://www.oxfordwoodrecycling.org.uk> , based on Milton Park, Dicot, an ethical wood recycling and re-use company which also offers employment and volunteer work opportunities to people who find it hard to get work, including working in partnership with other social enterprises and organisations in Oxfordshire who share these aims. In 2012 OWR featured in the RBS SE100 fastest growing social enterprises for the second year running the company's turnover showed a 25% increase from 2011-2012.
- **Aspire** , established in 2001, offering professional facilities management services to local councils, blue-chip corporates, academic institutions and private customers. Aspire creates work placements and employment opportunities for local people who face barriers to securing meaningful employment. This delivers big savings for the Oxfordshire taxpayer of over £1m a year. Aspire's success at getting people into work, and their trainee's low re-offending and relapse figures, are market-leading.
- **Turl St Kitchen** – An award winning restaurant based in central Oxford focuses on locally sourced ingredients - some supplied by other social enterprises such as Cultivate. Surpluses support Student Hubs a student focussed volunteer/ social action charity.

A mapping exercise will be carried out over the Summer and Autumn period by one of the LEP Network Navigators looking at the SE landscape, support agencies and inter -relationships to get a more detailed picture of what exists.

#### **University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University involvement in Social Entrepreneurship projects.**

Since 2012, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford have run social Enterprise awards schemes, in collaboration with Student Hubs, as part of a programme funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and managed by UnLtd, the UK foundation for social entrepreneurs. The mission of both Universities has been to find fund and support existing and aspiring social entrepreneurs from its students staff and recent graduates. Enterprises include:

- **Hog Roast Cafe**, based in a disused sports pavilion, supported by and supporting, the community allotment in South Oxford
- **Sustainabus**, a start-up social enterprise in the hospitality industry which involves the conversion of decommissioned city buses into renewably powered guest houses operating on low carbon and low impact sites.
- **Clean S18** – a business which recycles unused soap from Oxford hotels and sells the rescued soap at charity fairs and through its own networks
- **Picito** – a social enterprise developing an affordable system for monitoring babies health at home.
- **Magic Beans** – an enterprise that provides entertainment for children in hospital
- **Neighbourhood return** – an enterprise to mobilise a volunteer network to search for Dementia patients who disappear from home
- **Streetview Oxford** – a business that trains homeless people to act as tour guides for tours of East Oxford
- **Zumba4Bump** – a community Zumba class targeting pregnant women in relatively deprived areas of Oxford which teaches them antenatal care
- **Bramble Verbiage** – a music festival aimed at being more inclusive by being user friendly for marginalised groups such as people with disability and mental health issues.

In all, around 50 social enterprises have been supported through the scheme to date.

The University of Oxford's Saïd Business School includes the Skoll Centre for Social Enterprise, a global leader in research in social enterprise. Since 2004, the Skoll Centre has provided a competitive scholarship for incoming MBA students who pursue entrepreneurial solutions for urgent social and environmental challenges. The Scholarship provides funding and exclusive opportunities to meet with world-renowned entrepreneurs, thought-leaders and investors. There is now a global community of 50 highly regarded social entrepreneurs, known as Skoll Skollars, centred on the Skoll Centre for Social Enterprise. The Skoll Centre also runs, Emerge, an annual international conference for social entrepreneurs – the largest of its kind in the world. According to the Skoll Centre research, along with Bristol, Cornwall and North Yorkshire, Oxford is a UK hotspot for social enterprise and ethical investment.

The Oxford University programme produced Madeleine Ellis-Peterson – The Hog Roast Eco Café who was winner of 2013 UnLtd /HEFCE Outstanding Social Entrepreneur Award. Oxford Brookes University's From Passion to Action programme won UnLtd /HEFCE 2013 Outstanding HEI Supporting Social Entrepreneurship and was runner up in The Guardian University awards in student experience category.

Over recent months both Universities and Student Hubs have recognized that there is scope for more extensive collaborative working and identified the benefits that could be gained from establishing a more formal partnership with the intention of disseminating good practice and experience. Whilst each partner would continue to retain its separate identity and provide a programme geared to the needs of their respective client groups, there would be considerable benefits from making elements of each other's programme available to all partners and also to the wider community. In short the aspiration is to make all elements available to all participants so that individual social entrepreneurs can build and develop their own support programme and network. There would also be a lot to be gained by making the partnership a one stop shop for social enterprise across Oxfordshire. This proposed venture is called Oxfordshire Social Entrepreneurship Partnership (OSEP).

OSEP's aim is to find, fund and support through training and mentoring, existing and potential social entrepreneurs across Oxfordshire. Our ambition is quite simple - to be the best regional and national community resource supporting social entrepreneurship in the UK.

We plan to bring best practice, operating in two successful Universities and Student Hubs, to provide staff students and recent graduates, along with the wider community in Oxfordshire, with a one stop shop for existing and aspiring social entrepreneurs. Here they can seek advice, support, training, networking, mentoring and finance.

Long term our vision includes the desire to develop an accessible physical environment providing office space for start-ups. This would be in addition to the facilities provided by Student Hubs and Skoll's Launchpad and be a central focus and a physical meeting place for new start-ups and established social enterprises.

OSEP plans to offer dedicated workshops, seminars and events for existing and aspiring social entrepreneurs in addition to existing programmes offered by the Universities. To a large extent the content would be determined potential customers and developed as a result of a consultation process with them. There would also be an awards pot of up to £10,000 to fund Try It (up to £500) and Do It (up to £5000 but an average of £2000) Awards for community led projects. This would come from the UnLtd funding that has been recently secured.

We have also successfully bid for funding under UnLtd's Scale and Growth awards and are about to set up a system for allocating funding to potentially viable social enterprises across Oxfordshire. Where these were University sponsored projects the relevant institution would provide a significant proportion of the funding to part match the funding from UnLtd. Combined with funding already secured from the LEP through its Innovation Support for Business programme we have up to £45,000 available exclusively for larger community sponsored social enterprise

projects. Our funding also extends to a grant to help to employ an intern to support the development of this programme.

Given the high level of social enterprise activity, the formation of OSEP and the intention to map the social enterprise landscape by one of the designated Network Navigators funded by the LEP many of the criteria required for Oxford or indeed the whole of Oxfordshire to be designated a “Social Enterprise Place” as defined by Social Enterprise UK have or are about to be met. As a Social Enterprise Place we will be joining a growing network of areas and cities such as Bristol and Plymouth around the UK who are:

- Using of the social enterprise place logo and branding
- Invitation to attend SEP network events
- Access to resources to help you promote social enterprise in your area
- Promotion of your activities through the SEP programme and SEUK.
- The chance to apply for support to host a town/ city/ regional membership.

**So what next?**

With funding, a steering group and a small operational team now in place, the Summer will see the development of a detailed operational plan and the necessary mechanisms put together to ensure delivery. A launch event will be held late Summer / early Autumn where organisations and indeed individuals will be invited to become Associate members of OSEP and help input into the development of the community based programme. If there is sufficient support we will investigate and apply to become a Social Enterprise Place.

Long term sustainability and funding will be critical issue and much of our energy will go into identifying potential resources. We will also be looking to monitor the impact of the projects we have supported. We are hopeful that we will be able to bring together the talents, experience and support of a wide spectrum of agencies to ensure that social entrepreneurs and social enterprises are supported across the whole county.

Jeff Willmore

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