Perceptions of the Social Economy in Scotland

Two years on

Final Report

February 2008

ODS Consulting
2 Myrtle Park
Glasgow
G42 8UQ

Tel. 0141 424 3765
Fax. 0141 423 9997
Email: admin@odsconsulting.co.uk

Contents

Page

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Study

ODS Consulting was appointed by SCVO in December 2007 to undertake research into people's perceptions of the social economy in Scotland. This follows baseline research conducted by ODS for Communities Scotland in 2005. As in 2005 the research focussed on the views of the public and voluntary sectors.

The study examined perceptions of the 'social economy' and related terms. It develops a picture of how the social economy is currently viewed and how this compares with the earlier research.

1.2 Methodology

As in 2005, we gathered information in three ways:

- We issued an email questionnaire to a wide range of individuals from the public and voluntary sectors with an interest in the social economy.
- We conducted twelve telephone interviews with individuals involved in the Local Social Economy Partnerships (LSEPs) in four different geographical areas in Scotland. These were Dunbartonshire, the Borders, the Highlands and Dundee.
- We conducted four telephone interviews with policy makers involved in the social economy at a strategic level in Scotland.

The methodology and approach was agreed with the research steering group.

1.3 Analysis

In this report we provide an in-depth analysis of our findings in 2008.

In analysing the email survey data we also looked at differences in perceptions of the three main groups:

- voluntary sector respondents;
- public sector procurement respondents; and
- wider public sector respondents.

To avoid repetition we have only highlighted differences between sectors where this was significant and of interest.

It is worth emphasising that the small number of public sector procurement responses makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about this group. However, we found some interesting perceptions when we looked at these alongside responses from the other two groups. Where perceptions varied significantly between the three groups we have highlighted this.

In the email survey we mostly asked the same questions as in 2005. This allowed us to examine whether perceptions had changed. On most issues we saw very little or no change. To avoid repetition we have tried to only highlight those areas where the 2005 and 2008 results were significantly different. The report follows a similar structure to the 2005 structure which allows easy comparison if needed.

Where percentages are used these have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

1.4 Inception Meeting

An inception meeting was held on 13 December 2007. This meeting ensured there was a shared understanding of the study brief and proposed research methods.

1.5 Email Survey

We conducted a targeted email survey of stakeholders based on the initial survey we conducted in 2005. The survey was issued on 7 January 2008. We requested that the survey was completed by 14 January. 435 surveys were issued to individuals with an interest in the social economy including:

- Local authority procurement officers;
- Voluntary sector representatives;
- Economic and regeneration officers;
- NHS procurement officers;
- Intermediary organisations;
- Scottish Enterprise / Highlands and Islands Enterprise;
- Scottish Government officials;
- Communities Scotland;
- Community Planning Partnership contacts; and
- Local Social Economy Partnership (LSEP) chairs.

We asked people to forward the questionnaire to colleagues who may also be interested. The survey was also promoted through the Social Economy Scotland e-bulletin on 9 January with a reminder a week later. This approach meant we were able to increase the size of the pool and reach more people with a key interest in the social economy.

A total of 158 responses were received. Figure 1 shows responses by sector.

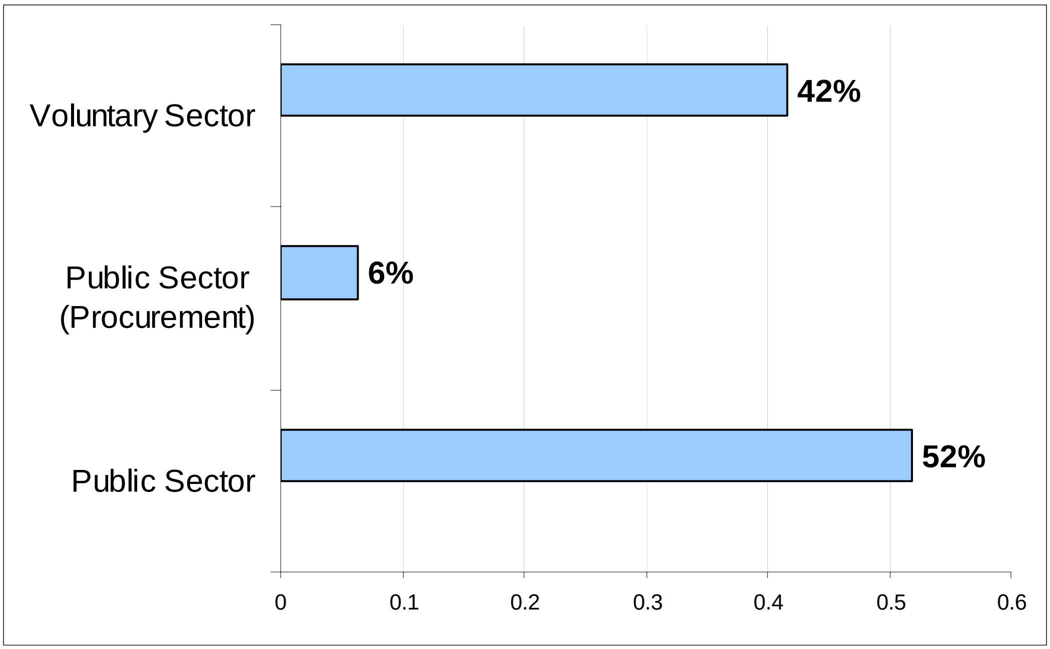


Figure 1: Responses by Sector. This chart shows the breakdown of answers to Question 1, *Which sector are you from?*

1.6 Interviews with LSEPs

In 2005 we agreed four areas of Scotland where we would conduct structured telephone interviews with members of the Local Social Economy Partnerships (LSEPs). At that time Highland, Dundee, Dunbartonshire and the Scottish Borders were chosen because they provide a good geographical coverage of Scotland and a mixture of rural and urban areas. They also have a range of experience in the development of the social economy. In 2008 we revisited these areas. In the first instance we interviewed the Communities Scotland contact on the LSEP and identified other members we should speak with.

Interviews were conducted with LSEP partners with a range of interests in the social economy:

- Communities Scotland Area Offices;
- Scottish Enterprise Highlands and Islands;
- Local authorities;
- Social economy organisations;
- Councils for the Voluntary Sector (CVS); and
- Members of other networks such as Social Enterprise Networks.

Discussion focussed on six key areas:

- The national profile of the social economy. This included:
    - awareness;
    - work done to date; and
    - areas for further development.
- Key strengths and areas for development within the sector as a whole.
- Perceptions of the social economy at a local level.
- LSEP activity over the past two years and plans for the future.
- Sectors with the biggest potential for growth and barriers to growth in their area.
- Engagement with equalities groups by the social economy.

1.7 Interviews with Policy Makers

As in 2005, interviews were conducted with key policy makers in Scottish Enterprise, Communities Scotland, COSLA, and SCVO.

These interviews covered similar issues to those we discussed with LSEPs. With the policy makers we focused on strategic approaches to the social economy and raising the profile of the sector. We also asked interviewees to comment on some of the findings emerging from the survey and the LSEP interviews.

1.8 Presentation to Social Economy Scotland EQUAL Partnership

We presented our draft findings to the partnership and the discussion that followed has informed the final report.

2. Perceptions of the Social Economy – Email Survey

2.1 About the Email Survey

The email questionnaire aimed to capture the broad perceptions of individuals across Scotland with some connection to the social economy.

The questionnaire was based on the one used last time. This enables some comparison with the benchmarks established in 2005.

The questions focussed on:

- awareness and understanding of the social economy in Scotland;
- future areas for growth; and
- issues facing the social economy in Scotland.

We designed, delivered and collated responses to the survey using Surveymonkey.com.

The questionnaire used a tick box format. For some questions respondents were asked to choose from a list of words and phrases and decide which phrases were most or least accurate. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Annex 1.

2.2 Awareness of the Social Economy in Scotland

We asked two questions about awareness of the social economy in Scotland. One asked about the level of awareness of social economy organisations. The other asked whether there was more awareness than two years ago.

An overwhelming majority – 96% - believe that the activities of social economy organisations are not well enough known. This figure is unchanged since 2005.

There is a perception that awareness of the social economy has increased over the past two years - 70% of participants believed the activities of social economy organisations are better known than two years ago. Views on awareness were fairly consistent across all three sectors we examined. Comments on the profile of the social economy reflect a view that more needs to be done:

'I think it still needs to work on its profile, I am not sure that it is always seen as a serious player in the economy'.

(Enterprise Agency)

'The Social Economy needs to be put more in the spotlight particularly the good practice that is achieved. Private businesses have the wrong perception of this sector which can be detrimental when trading - as private businesses think they get additional help when trading'.

(Local Government)

We also asked about awareness of the Social Economy Scotland EQUAL Partnership (question 15). 73% of respondents were aware of its work. We examined responses according to sector and found there was a much higher awareness within the wider public sector (71%) and voluntary sector (79%). Those involved in public sector procurement were much less aware – only 40% know about the activities of EQUAL.

2.3 Social Economy Organisations

Question three asked about what kinds of organisations respondents would include in the social economy sector. Figure 2 shows the results.

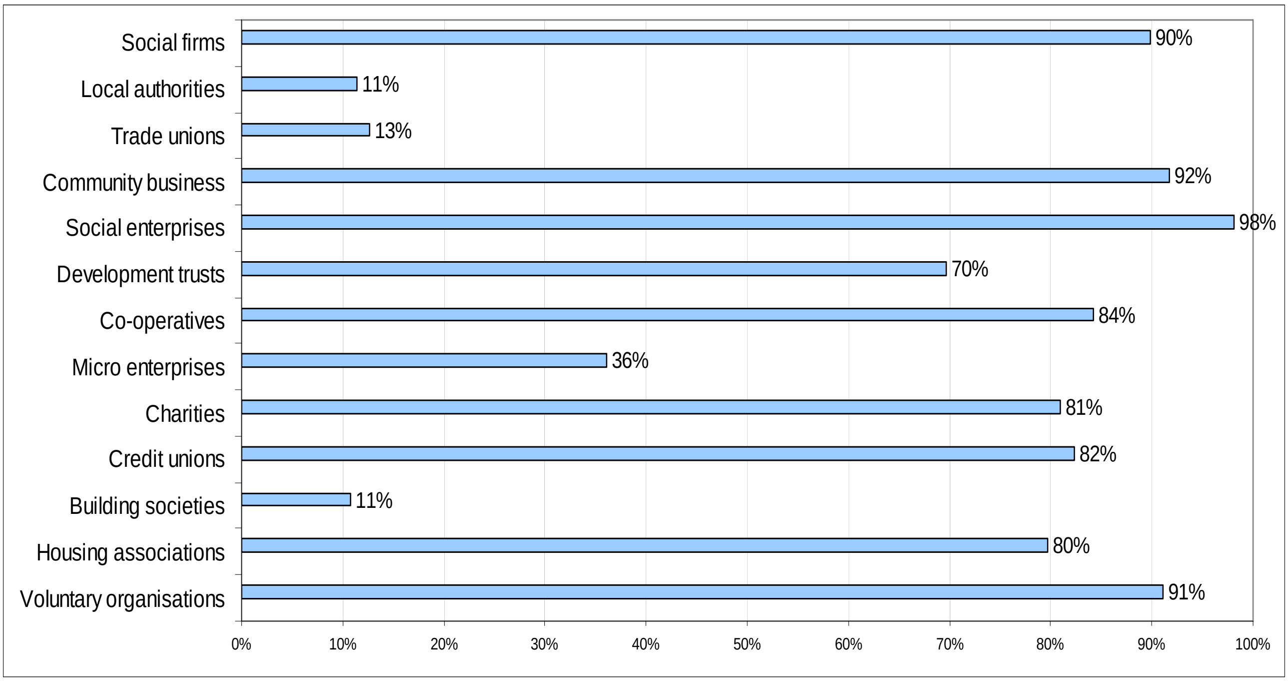


Figure 2 shows responses to Question 3: *Which of the following organisations would you include in the social economy sector?* .Respondents were asked to select any organisations that they would include.

The evidence suggests there is generally a good understanding of what is and isn't a social economy organisation and the results are broadly similar to those in 2005. In 2005 more than 90% of respondents agreed social enterprises, community businesses, voluntary organisations and social firms are part of the social economy. Less than 13% of respondents included trade unions, local authorities and building societies in their selection.

As in 2005, the number of respondents who thought local authorities and trade unions were part of the social economy was small but significant. Only 80% of individuals believed housing associations were part of the sector. Again, this was similar to the results in the 2005 survey.

2.4 Differences in Perception between Sectors

The chart below summarises the responses broken down by sector.

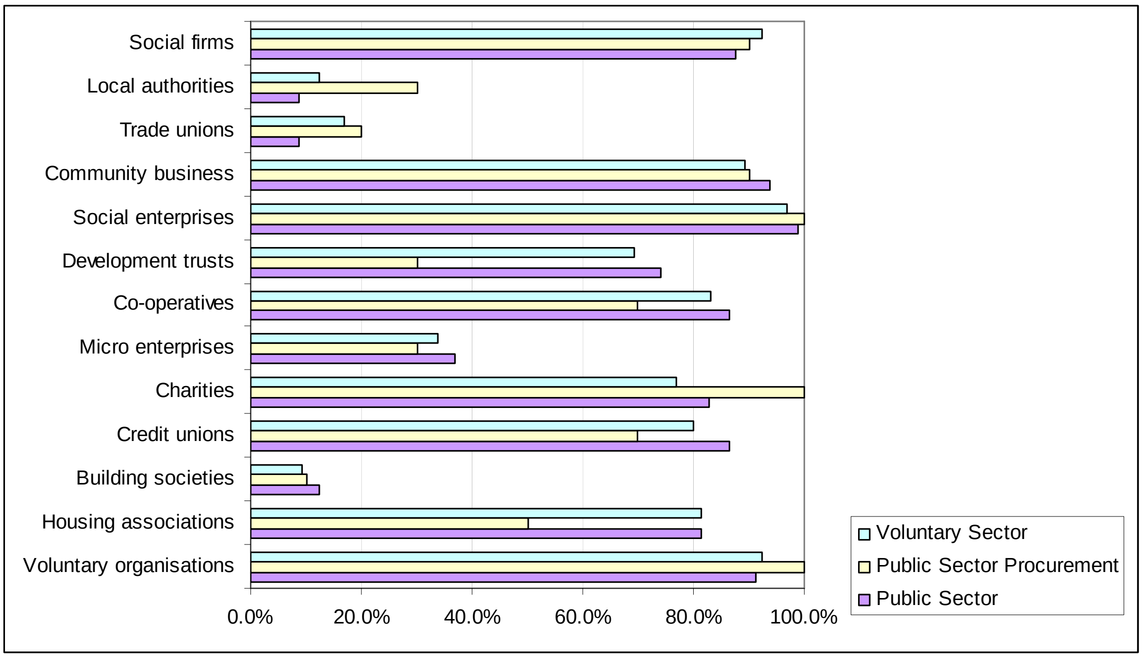


Figure 3 shows sector responses to Question 3: *Which of the following organisations would you include in the social economy sector?*

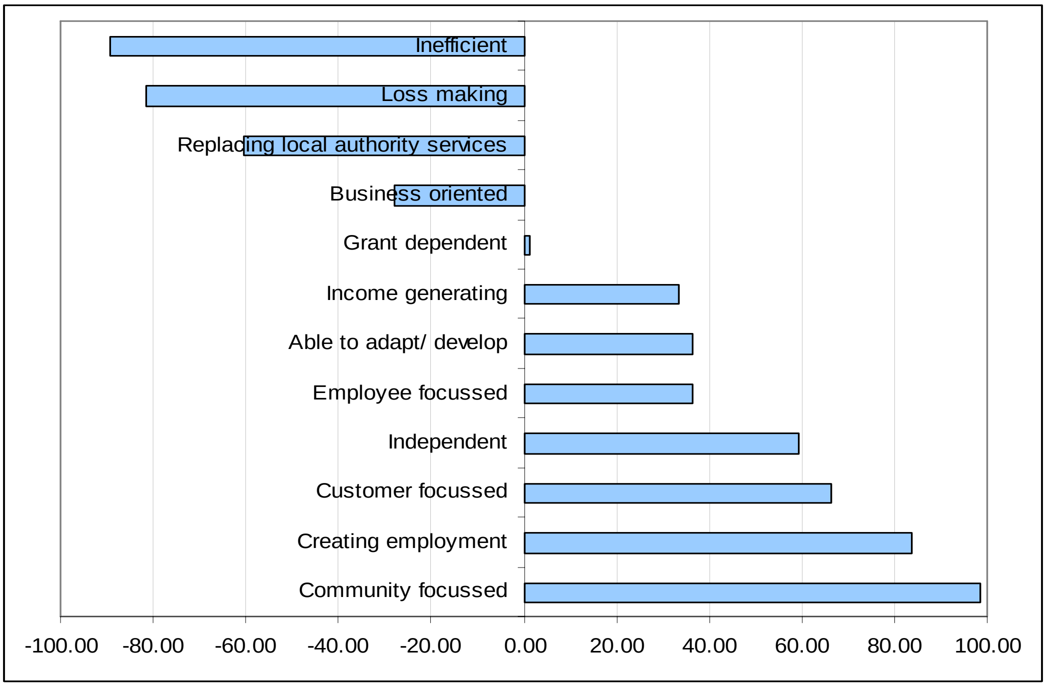
The diagram highlights many areas of common understanding between voluntary sector, public sector procurement and wider public sector respondents. But there are a few differences that stand out:

- Only 50% of public sector procurement respondents believed housing associations were part of the social economy. In comparison, 82% of wider public sector and voluntary sector respondents included housing associations.
- Only 30% of public sector procurement respondents believed development trusts were part of the sector. This compared with 74% of wider public sector and 69% of voluntary sector respondents.
- 30% of public sector procurement officers believed local authorities were part of the social economy sector. This compared with 9% of wider public sector and 13% of voluntary sector respondents.
- 100% of procurement officers included charities in the social economy. This compared with 82% of wider public sector respondents and 77% voluntary sector respondents.

Even with the relatively small pool of public sector procurement officers that responded, this suggests this group sees the social economy in quite a different way.

2.5 Describing Social Economy Organisations

We asked which words best and least described social economy organisations. The chart below shows the findings.



Least Accurate **Most Accurate**

Figure 4 shows the response to *Question 4: Which phrases from the following list do you think most or least describe social economy organisations?*

Respondents were asked to tick three boxes for the phrases (from a list) that best described social economy organisations and the phrases that least accurately described them. The average of the positive and negative votes have been calculated and used here. On the left you see those phrases that are seen to be least accurate. On the right you see those that are seen to best describe social economy organisations. The size of the bars indicates strength of feeling.

The results are broadly similar to those in 2005. An overall positive view of the sector can be seen. *'Community focussed'*, *'creating employment'* and *'customer focussed'* were seen to be the most accurate phrases. *'Inefficient'*, *'loss making'* and *'replacing local authority services'* were the terms that were seen to describe them least accurately.

2.6 Differences between Sectors

We examined the perceptions between sectors. The following emerged:

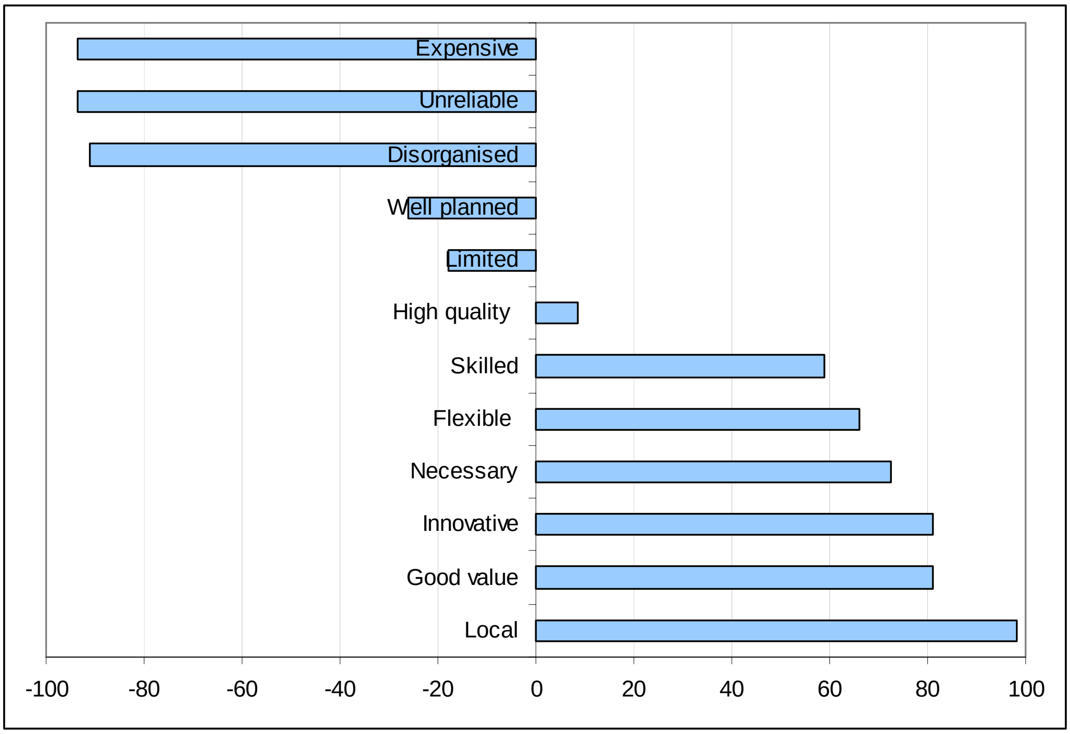
- Although strength of feeling varied, there was broad agreement that social economy organisations:
  - create employment;
  - are employee focussed;
  - are community focussed; and
  - are customer focussed;
- There was disagreement about adaptability. The voluntary sector felt strongly that social economy organisations are adaptable. The wider public sector respondents did believe they were adaptable on the whole, but felt less strongly. The public sector procurement officers were unsure.
- As in 2005, there were significant differences between the views from the public sector (wider public sector and public sector procurement respondents) and the voluntary sector about grant dependence. The public sector respondents demonstrated a belief that social economy organisations are grant dependent. This was particularly true for procurement officers. The voluntary sector did not agree with this view and felt the term *'grant dependent'* was inaccurate.
- As in 2005, views differed between the three groups about business orientation. The wider public sector respondents and procurement officers believed that organisations are not business orientated but are efficient. The

voluntary sector felt strongly that social economy organisations are business oriented.

- Independence was a key issue, as in 2005. There was broad agreement that this was an accurate term to apply to social economy organisations, but the voluntary sector respondents saw this as being much more accurate than the public sector (wider public sector and public sector procurement) respondents.

2.7 Perceptions of Service Delivery

We asked respondents for their views on the services delivered by the social economy. The overall responses are shown in figure 5.



Least Accurate **Most Accurate**

Figure 5 shows the overall responses to *Question 5: Which 3 phrases from the following list do you think most accurately and least accurately describe the services provided by social economy organisations?*

Respondents were asked to tick three boxes (from a list) for the phrases that best describe social economy organisations and the phrases that least describe it. The differences between the positive and negative votes have been calculated and used here. On the left of the chart you see those figures that least accurately describe social economy organisations. On the right you see those that most accurately describe them. The bars indicate strength of feeling.

The overall perception of social economy services is a positive one. The pattern and strength of feeling are broadly the same as those in 2005. The top three phrases used to describe services were *'local'*, *'good value' and innovative'.* Interestingly, *'innovative'* has moved up one place as a choice since 2005. The three terms respondents felt were most inaccurate were *'expensive'*, *'unreliable'* and *'disorganised'*. Although on the whole services were seen as *'high quality'* feelings were more mixed on this issue.

As in 2005, there was some disagreement about the quality of social economy organisations. The voluntary sector respondents felt that *'high quality*' did accurately describe services although the feeling was not particularly strong. More public sector respondents (wider public sector and public sector procurement) considered *'high quality'* least accurate than believed it was most accurate. Voluntary sector feelings were mixed on the issue of planning – *'well planned'* received ten votes for being most accurate but nine votes for being least accurate. The public sector felt more strongly that services were not well planned.

2.8 The Size of the Sector

We asked about the size of the social economy sector. As in 2005, the majority of respondents – fifty four per cent in 2008 – feel the social economy sector is too small. 6% believed it to be the right size and 1% felt that it is too big. Overall, 38% of respondents didn't know. This was a particular issue for public sector procurement respondents – 60% of them didn't know. The voluntary sector respondents were most likely to offer a view. The voluntary sector also felt most strongly about the sector being too small. Figure 6 shows the overall responses.

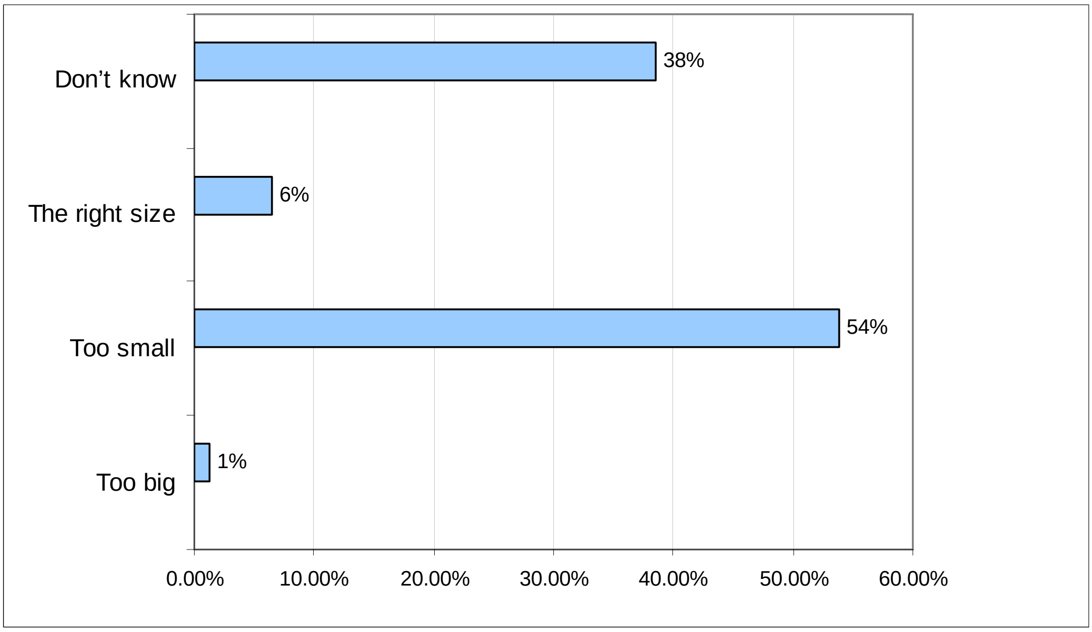


Figure 6 shows the overall responses to Question 6: *Do you think that the social economy sector in Scotland is?* Respondents were asked to tick one of 4 boxes.

2.9 Language

We asked about the language associated with the social economy sector. Figure 7 shows the overall responses to this question.

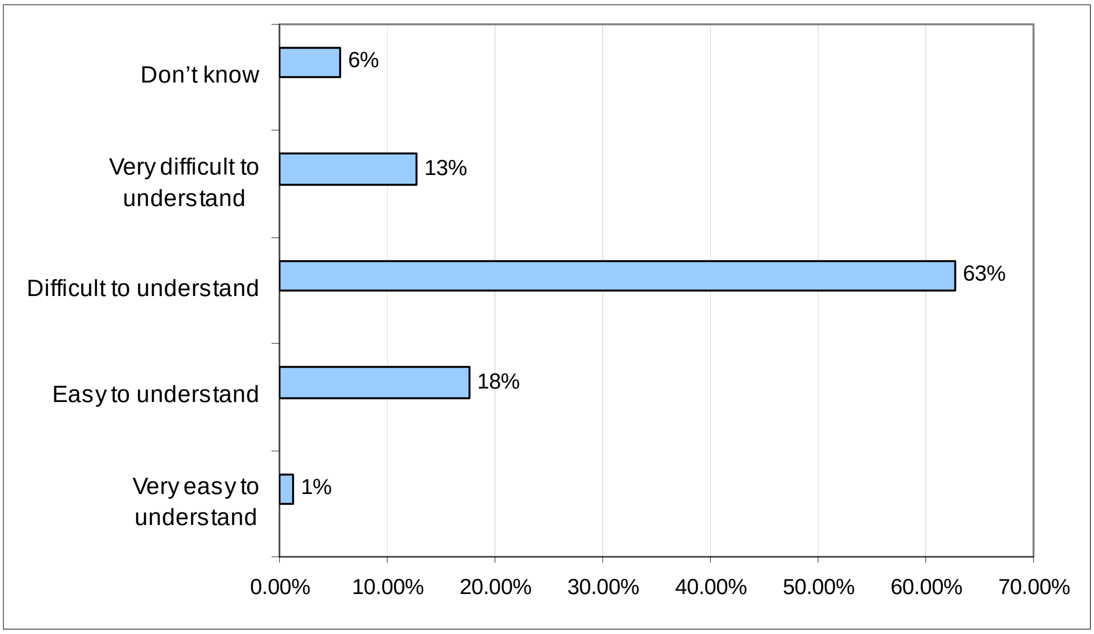


Figure 7 shows the overall responses to Question 7: *Do you think the terminology used to describe to describe the social economy is (please tick box)*

As in 2005, a high percentage of people (76%) believed the language is very difficult or difficult to understand. This is slightly lower than in 2005 when 80% of respondents agreed with this. On the other hand, a slightly larger number - 6% compared with 2% in 2005 - did not know. Given that there has been little change in the number of people that found the language easy or very easy to understand, there does not appear to be a significant change since 2005. The evidence also suggests that voluntary sector respondents are more likely to find the language difficult.

'I think the term social economy is still very confused, and that this lack of clarity hinders understanding.'

(Social Care provider)

'The Social Economy has become unclear and unfocused as a term and as a sector'.

(Community Planning Partnership)

2.10 Describing the Social Economy

We asked respondents to examine a number of descriptions and choose which best describes social economy organisations. The overall responses are shown in Table 1.

Of particular interest here:

- As in 2005, the most popular answer was statement number 4 – *'a social economy organisation is a not-for-profit business with social objectives'*.
- The most striking thing about the responses is the spread across the five definitions.
- Most people – 75% - chose a definition which referred to social objectives.
- There is no evidence for a substantial change in perception since 2005. Only two statements changed significantly in popularity. Statement 2 was chosen less in 2008 than in 2005. (23% chose it in 2005 and only 16% in 2008). Statement 4 increased in popularity. (30% chose this statement in 2005 compared with 39% in 2008).

Option	% of respondents
1. 'A social economy organisation is a non profit distributing business with social objectives'	20%
2. 'Social economy organisations are non profit distributing organisations with social objectives. They are managed by voluntary management committees and independent from Government'	16%
3. 'Social economy organisations are non profit distributing businesses which are managed by members of the communities that they seek to benefit'	15%
4. 'A social economy organisation is a not-for-profit business with social objectives'	39%
5. 'Social economy organisations are the economic dimension of the voluntary sector'	10%

Table 1 shows the responses to Question 8: *Which of the following statements do you think best describes social economy organisations?*

2.11 Contribution of the Social Economy

In the survey we provided a list of contributions the social economy could make. We asked respondents to choose the three they believed are most significant. The choices in order of popularity (the most popular listed first) were:

- Meeting needs unmet by the public and private sector
- Developing local economies
- Building social capital
- User and community involvement/ control
- Increasing skills levels
- Making neighbourhoods better places to live
- Increasing the number of local projects and programmes
- Campaigning for new services and approaches
- Developing the national economy.

These responses reflect similar perceptions to those in 2005. Meeting unmet need was perceived as the most significant contribution. It was identified by 61% of respondents. Developing the national economy was only supported by 8% of respondents.

When we considered the responses by sector there were no major differences. The one interesting difference was found with public sector procurement respondents. They ranked *'developing local economies'* as the main contribution rather than *'meeting needs unmet by the public or private sector'.*

2.12 Specific Sectors and their Size

We asked respondents about which sectors are currently the most important for social economy organisations. We also asked which sectors they think will be important in the future. The results of both are shown in Figure 8.

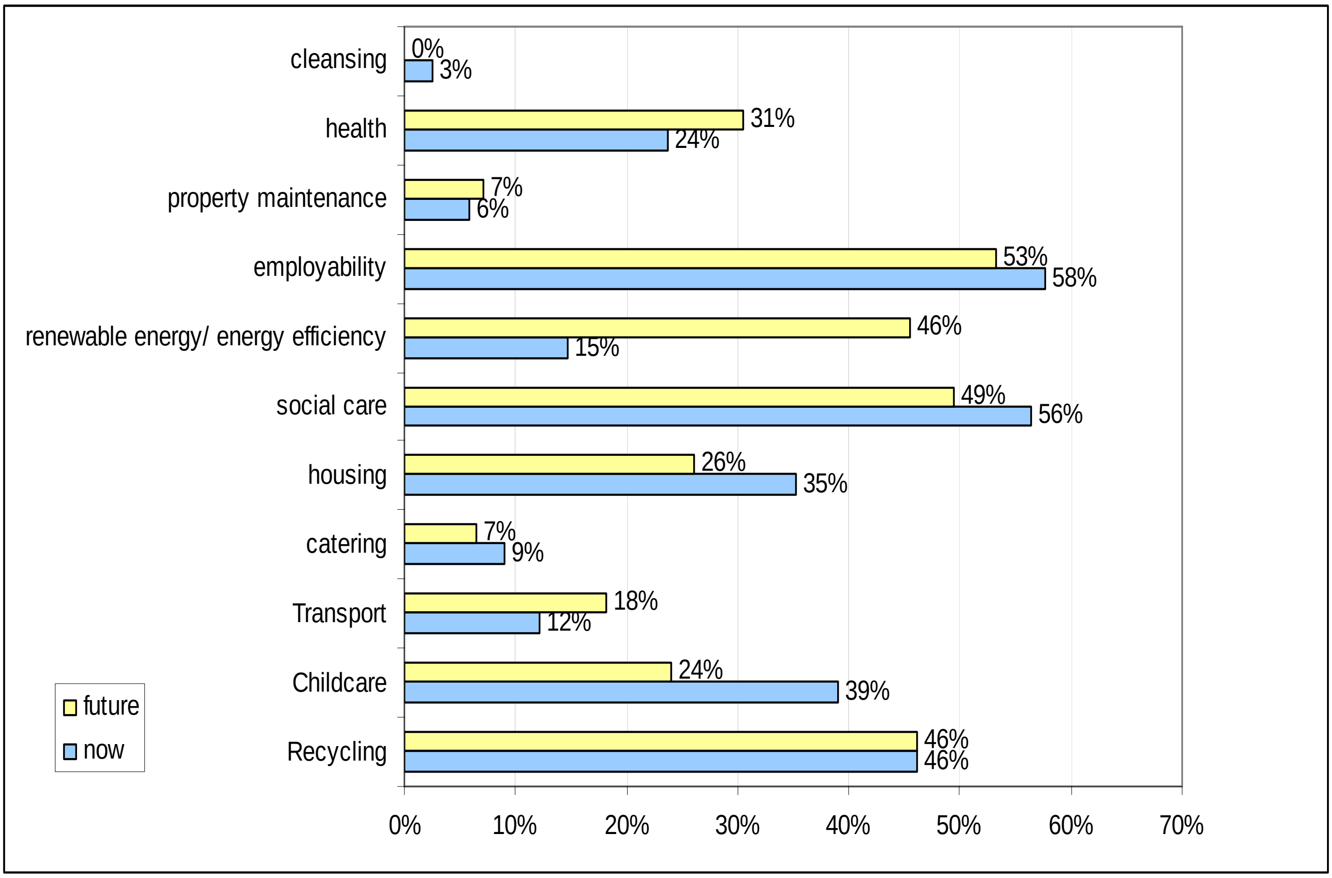


Figure 8 shows the response to Question 12: *Which 3 of the following sectors do you think are currently the most important for social economy organisations?* And Question 13: *Which 3 of the following sectors do you think are likely to be the most important for social economy organisations in the future?*

Key features of the current picture include:

- Employability was ranked as the most important current sector - 58% of people selected it.
- The figure for social care was very similar, with 56% believing this was one of the most important sectors.
- 46% included recycling and 39% included housing in their selection.
- At the other end of the scale only 2.6% of respondents saw cleansing as one of the most important sectors. 5.8% included property maintenance.

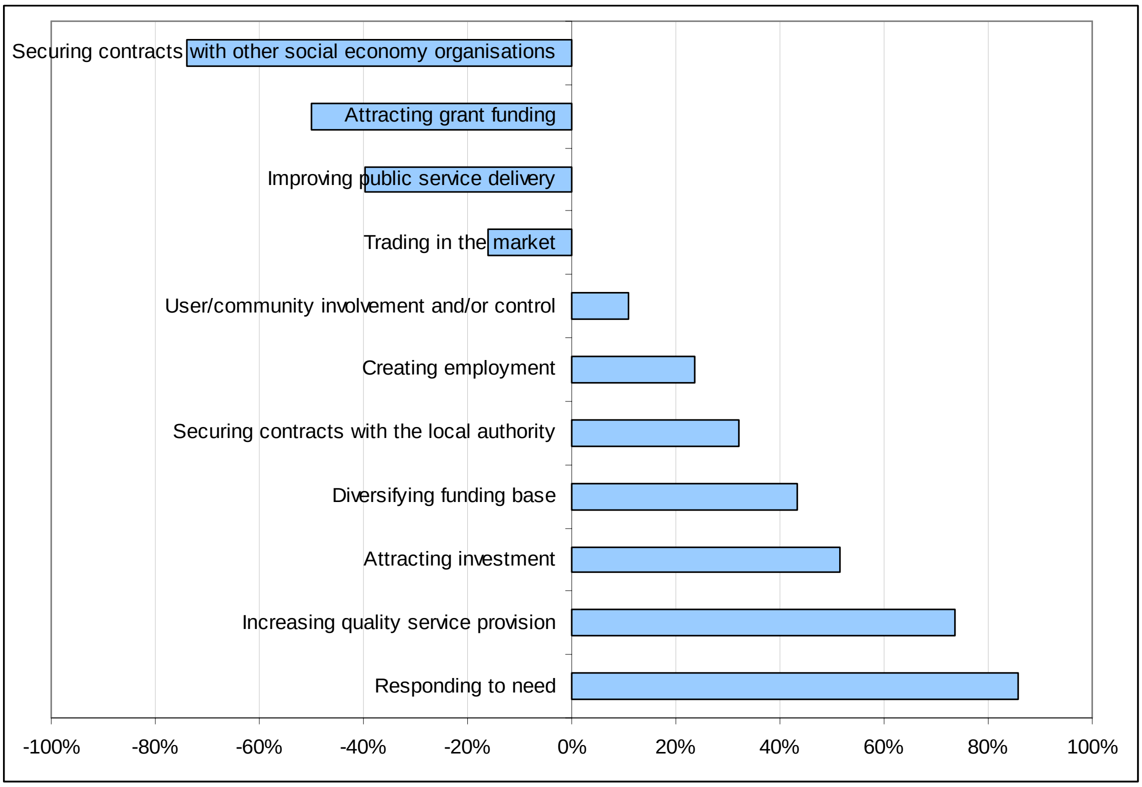
Looking to the future the expected changes include:

- A decrease in the importance of childcare to the social economy.
- Although less pronounced, there appears to be an expectation that employability, social care and housing will become less important.
- There is a belief that health and transport will increase in importance.
- The expected growth in importance of renewable energy/ energy efficiency was the most pronounced by far. Only 15% of respondents selected it as an area of importance at the moment. But 46% believed it was a key sector for the future.

2.13 Issues for the Sector

As in 2005 we asked about the most and least important issues for the sector. The results are shown in Figure 9.

Respondents were asked to tick three boxes for the issues that are most important to organisations. They were also asked to select the three issues that are least important. The average of the positive and negative votes have been calculated and used here. On the top left are the issues of least importance. On the right and at the bottom of the chart are the issues of most importance. The bars indicate strength of feeling.



Least important **Most important**

Figure 9 shows the overall responses to *Question 14: Which of the following do you think are the most important and least important issues for social economy organisations?*

Key features to note include:

- As in 2005, the top two issues are *'responding to need'* and *'increasing quality service provision'.*
- *'Attracting investment'* has moved up the agenda significantly since 2005. Then it only received an overall percentage under 10% - now it is more than 50%.
- *'User/ community involvement / control'* has dropped significantly in importance since 2005. Then it was the third most important issue, now it is seventh.
- *'The need to secure contracts with local authorities'* has risen as a priority quite significantly. In 2005 this was one of the least important issues. It is now in the most important issues category.

When we examined the differences between sectors there were very few differences of interest. For public sector procurement respondents *'diversifying the funding base'* and *'attracting investment'* were lower priorities than for the wider public and voluntary sectors.

Then and now

- Since 2005 there have been few significant changes in the perception of the social economy in Scotland.
- Some of the perceived issues for the sector have changed and new areas for growth are emerging. This suggests that whilst awareness may not have increased substantially, the sector itself has developed and changed in the past few years.
- When we examined the responses according to three categories –the voluntary sector, public sector procurement and the wider public sector – we saw some differences of perception. Whilst the sample of public procurement officers was quite small there are indications of misconceptions and a lack of understanding of the social economy within this group.
- Many of the barriers for the sector and raising its profile are the same as in 2005. In particular, the terminology is still an issue.

3. Perceptions of the Social Economy – LSEP Members

Telephone interviews were conducted with LSEP partners in the Borders, Dundee, Dunbartonshire and the Highlands. The people we spoke to gave their personal views on the social economy in their area, the activities of the partnership and perceptions of the social economy at a national level. Several of these people were interviewed in 2005 and the others were identified by the Communities Scotland contact in each LSEP. The interviews did not constitute an evaluation of the work of LSEPs. Instead, this was an opportunity to explore key issues with those involved in the local development and delivery of the social economy.

The Role of LSEPs

The overall goal of LSEPs is to support the development of a stronger social economy sector by:

- improving co-ordination across partners;
- facilitating networking;
- strengthening the range of locally available support, and
- unlocking market opportunities for new and existing social economy organisations.

Communities Scotland recommend (in their Local Social Economy Partnerships Guidance, July 2005) that the remit of LSEPs should include:

- defining the sector through mapping of local social economy organisations and the public services that they can deliver;
- developing a strategy or action plan to outline how the activities of the partnership can develop to support the growth of the sector, and
- the development of a protocol clarifying the roles of the existing support agencies and facilitating co-ordination between them.

3.1 The Profile of the Social Economy at a National Level

We asked people whether the profile of the social economy in Scotland had changed over the past two years and how any change had been achieved. We also asked what, if anything, now needed to be done to raise the profile.

There was general agreement that the profile had increased. But several people felt the change had been small or awareness had only increased with particular groups, sectors or audiences. There was an emerging sense that the profile has increased most with those closest to the social economy, such as policy makers, the voluntary sector and organisations delivering services within the social economy.

Views were mixed on the extent and focus of any change. But interviewees agreed that a lot of work had been done to raise the profile, including:

- **A strategic drive** - organisations such as Communities Scotland and Scottish Enterprise have developed strategies, provided support and funding such as that provided through Futurebuilders.
- **Network activity** - LSEPs and other social economy and social enterprise networks have been established and have worked to raise the profile locally and nationally. The role of Communities Scotland co-ordinators was highlighted.
- **Targeted events** - (often delivered at a local level) have been supported and funded. *'Meet the buyer events'* have been a popular means of raising the profile at a local authority level and building relationships between local social enterprises and procurement officers.
- **Communities Scotland** has developed newsworthy stories about the sector and has been successful in placing these in the national press.
- **Publicity** materials have been developed.
- **The Social Economy Academy** has been established.

One person highlighted that, for those heavily involved with the social economy, it may feel as though there has been more of an increase in profile than there actually has, because there is more discussion about it in certain circles. Another interviewee highlighted that perceptions of the social economy will only change slowly over time and awareness is heading in the right direction, although incrementally.

Several people we spoke to believed the profile had increased substantially at a political level. For them, this change was a direct result of the new administration in central Government. One person that believed it is *'moving up the agenda'* with central government. The (expected) higher budget allocation to the social economy, estimated a 30% increase, was seen as evidence of a political commitment to the sector.

'There has been a significant step change with the new government. It has changed in that Ministers have an awareness (although not necessarily and understanding) of the sector. They are enthusiastic.'

(LSEP member)

For some there was a sense that this increased political profile and commitment is a big opportunity for the sector.

Several people felt it was difficult to say whether the profile had been raised because there are different understandings of what the *'social economy'* actually is. A lack of clarity about the language associated with the social economy emerged throughout our discussions. Confusion about terms such as *'voluntary sector'*, *'social economy'*, *'social enterprise'* and *'third sector'* have made it difficult to raise the profile of the sector.

'The term [social economy] has as degree of mystique. When people hear it they don't know what it means. Those that think they do often mean different things and there are people working in the social economy that don't realise they do.'

(LSEP member)

When asked if there is enough awareness of the social economy in Scotland most felt there was not. But this varied with different audiences. A few people highlighted that there is:

- a lot of support at a central government level;
- more to be done with some local authorities; and
- virtually no public awareness of the social economy.

Almost all those we spoke to believed more could be done to raise the profile. In identifying what needed to change, however, there was a degree of uncertainty about what might happen next with the social economy. As one interviewee put it *'it might all be about to happen'*. One person believed that future work depended on the Government position:

'whether they are going to really push the social economy and use it as a weapon to improve the Scottish Economy. Or are they just going to treat it as an aside?'

(LSEP member)

Suggested priorities for future work to raise the profile included:

- Strengthening the existing networks involved with the social economy.
- Lobbying at a Parliamentary level to increase the profile with decision makers.
- Encouraging the social economy to *'develop muscle'* and do more to promote itself.
- More marketing of the social economy – both by social economy organisations themselves and through the development of news stories.
- Awareness raising with statutory agencies, especially local authorities and Health Boards.
- A brand or kitemark for the social economy or social enterprise organisations.
- Better definitions and agreement of a common language to describe the Social Economy. This would help address confusion and enable more effective marketing.

3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Social Economy in Scotland

We asked all those interviewed what they thought social economy organisations are particularly good at, and what needs to be developed within the sector.

There was a sense that social economy organisations are flexible, innovative and able to respond to local and individual needs effectively. Some individuals highlighted that this is because of their size – bigger organisations may have more extensive procedures and processes which make change more difficult.

Several interviewees highlighted that social economy organisations often have extensive local knowledge and they are good at using this in the development and delivery of services.

Several respondents felt that the social economy is good at delivering services for vulnerable or marginal groups and in providing services for unmet needs. One interviewee highlighted that they seem to deliver services that the local authority should be delivering but simply is not.

The value for money the social economy provides was a key theme. Many of those we spoke to felt the social economy makes good use of very few resources, and can make funding go a long way. In addition, interviewees highlighted the added value social economy organisations provide to their communities through the delivery of social objectives, or as good employers willing to develop a local workforce.

Key sectors that were mentioned were social care, community regeneration and environmental services. One interviewee felt that social enterprises can be good at anything because they are passionate about what they do.

A lot of people we spoke to emphasised the need for social economy organisations to develop practical business skills. Identified weaknesses included business planning, accounting, finance and the development of business structures. Marketing was highlighted by one interviewee as an important skill to develop internally as it is expensive to buy in expertise. Another person highlighted the need to develop business and leadership skills at a Board level, as this would enable organisations to better realise new ideas.

Attitude and confidence also emerged as areas for development. Several interviewees felt that social economy organisations needed to develop more "business like" attitudes. One person said the flexibility and value for money that are the key strengths of the organisations could also be a weakness, and suggested organisations needed to be tougher and more confident in business negotiations.

Leadership was also mentioned in this discussion. One interviewee spoke of a *'leadership deficit'* within the social economy. They felt that this is a weakness in the sector compared with the private sector and probably due to the *'democratic'* voluntary sector backgrounds of social economy organisations.

3.3 The Profile of the Social Economy Locally

We asked people whether the profile of the social economy was high enough at a local level. We also asked about the perspectives of the public sector, voluntary sector and community in their area.

There were mixed views on whether the profile was high enough locally, and views differed even within each area. Some people felt it was high enough and increasing.

Others believed it was not. Several believed there was mixed understanding, and that awareness varied between and within sectors.

3.3.1 Public Sector Attitudes to the Social Economy

The people we spoke to described variable attitudes from the public sector. Many of the comments focused on local authorities. Some spoke of a growing positive perception of the social economy. As one person put it:

'In the past [the public sector] has seen it as softer and not an efficient way of delivering services. This is changing. They are now seeing the payback of the local social economy.'

(LSEP member)

There was certainly a sense that commitment is growing in some local authorities where there is now a drive to develop and engage the social economy locally. Others felt there was a lack of awareness at different levels within local authorities and described barriers in terms of organisational processes, such as procurement, as well as negative attitudes and misconceptions of the social economy. One person said *'the Council always wants to do things themselves because they think they are better at it.'* Another felt there was concern within local authorities that existing services might be displaced. The small size of social economy organisations was seen as a problem for local authorities because their systems and approach to *'best value'* means bigger organisations are better placed to win contracts. One interviewee believed there was sometimes a negative perception because of an association with the voluntary sector and (therefore) grant funding.

There was a limited amount of discussion about other public sector organisations which reflects the belief of most people that local authorities are a key audience for awareness raising. One person highlighted that their importance will only grow with the introduction of Single Outcome Agreements, and several people highlighted local authorities as the key focus for future awareness raising activities at a national and local level. One person highlighted that the attitude of Scottish Enterprise was very positive. A need to engage more with the NHS – another potential buyer for the social economy – was emphasised by some interviewees.

3.3.2 Voluntary Sector attitudes to the Social Economy

The attitude of the voluntary sector was seen as more positive although, as with local authorities, it was variable. There was a sense that those involved with the social economy are very aware of what it is and its benefits. On the other hand, some people in the voluntary sector are confused about what it actually is and its potential. Several people we spoke to felt there was growing awareness within the sector but negative attitudes do exist. One person believed the social economy was seen as a way of getting the voluntary sector to do more for less money. Another thought that there was sometimes a negative attitude towards using an enterprise model because *'business is seen as a dirty word'".* Another interviewee, however, believed it was seen positively as a sustainable approach enabling less reliance on grant funding.

3.3.3 Community attitudes to the Social Economy

There was general agreement that when it came to the community, there was virtually no awareness of the **social economy** as a term. On the other hand, many people highlighted that communities would recognise the individual services provided by the social economy and see these positively. One respondent talked about the significant press and community interest after the closure of a local social enterprise project. It was explained that although no one within the community talked about the *'social economy'* or *'social enterprise'* they were well aware of the actual service being provided. Another respondent suggested that the community in their area was beginning to see the potential of the social economy.

3.4 Activities of the Local Social Economy Partnerships – Local Snapshots

We spoke to people about the activities of the partnership over the past two years and future plans. We also asked about the level of awareness of their activity.

It was clear that the work of the partnerships varied between areas, both in terms of the type and level of activity. This might reflect different local needs but also the operation and relationship with other networks, organisations and partnerships. In the Borders, for example there is a Social Enterprise Chamber which undertakes a lot of awareness raising. In the Highlands there is the Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ). The Board of this organisation is made up of many of the members of the LSEP in the area and delivers a lot of the work to promote and support the development of the social enterprises in the area. In Dundee there is also the Tayside Social Enterprise Network (TSEN) which operates across three

LSEP areas. Here we have included local snapshots - brief descriptions of the key activities underway in each area.

3.4.1 LSEP Activity in the Borders

The LSEP in the Borders has worked closely with the local Social Enterprise Chamber and has supported its establishment and development. The local Social Enterprise Chamber has done a lot of work to raise the profile on the ground.

LSEP work in the Borders over the past two years has included:

- support and funding of the Social Enterprise Chamber;
- a *'Social Enterprise in the Borders'* event (funded by Communities Scotland and EQUAL);
- other events for the sector and for procurement officers which have raised awareness of the social economy;
- an initial mapping exercise;
- a procurement guide has been developed with the local authority;
- press activity; and
- work to ensure the social economy has been effectively integrated into community planning.

Planned activities or work underway includes:

- continued funding of the Social Enterprise Chamber until March 2008;
- delivery of a new mapping exercise;
- identification of good practice outside the Borders which the area can learn from;
- the development of a promotional DVD; and
- making new links and building on existing links with procurement officers.

The people we spoke to agreed there is not enough awareness of the partnership and its activities. One person did highlight that a lot has been achieved with some groups - the social economy is now recognised in local strategies, but future work should focus on the *'middle tier'* of the Council.

3.4.2 LSEP Activity in Dundee

In Dundee, a lot of the work has been developed by the Tayside Social Enterprise Network (TSEN) which involves Perth and Angus LSEPs as well. There was a feeling that there was duplication or confusion about the remits of the LSEP and the

TSEN - and that the LSEP has been relatively inactive. The work of the TSEN and the Dundee LSEP has included:

- themed events, including *'meet the buyer events'*;
- publicity materials, including an information pack, and a website have been developed;
- a baseline survey has been commissioned;
- a specific post has been established within the economic development section of the Council; and
- a local development fund has been established to allow social enterprises in the Tayside area to bid for small amounts of funding. This fund, the information pack and website are all outcomes of a joint (LSEPs and TSEN) bid to Communities Scotland.

In Dundee there was sense of uncertainty about what will happen in the future and no specific plans have been made by the LSEP for the future. There was also optimism - one person hoped that awareness could be raised at a political and parliamentary level.

There was agreement that there was not enough awareness of the LSEP and its activity. There is a need to agree how its work fits with that of the TSEN.

3.4.3 LSEP Activity in the Highlands

In the Highlands much of the work to raise awareness has been taken forward by the Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ). The Board of the HISEZ is made up of many of the same people that sit on the LSEP. This has meant the LSEP may have been relatively inactive. But the HISEZ, which represents similar people, has driven forward a social enterprise agenda.

Activities of the LSEP and HISEZ have included:

- procurement events which have opened possibilities for social enterprises, especially with local authorities;
- networking events which have increased awareness of financial and other support available for the social economy and have increased confidence; and
- work to increase awareness nationally.

There was a mixed response when we asked about awareness of the partnership and its activities. Some people felt that the partnership was not well known but that

HISEZ was. One person said that there is a feeling that the partnership has been too strategic and needs a more local focus. Research is currently underway to look at the future of the LSEP.

Aside from the research there do not seem to be plans for future work by the LSEP. One person was of the view that the LSEP would not continue, given the incorporation of Communities Scotland into the Scottish Government.

3.4.4 LSEP Activity in Dunbartonshire

The LSEP in Dunbartonshire operates across East and West Dunbartonshire. Key activities to raise the profile of the social economy over the past two years include:

- In East Dunbartonshire the LSEP has supported the Social Economy Network (SEN). Membership of the SEN has increased from 0 to 16 in three years and a business plan has been developed. The joint work of the LSEP and SEN has meant closer links between actual social economy organisations and supporting agencies.
- In West Dunbartonshire promotional literature has been developed and used.
- A *'Meet the Buyer'* event is being organised which involves the local Chamber of Commerce.
- There has been proactive work with local authorities, the CHP and CPP to explore procurement issues.
- Work on the Regeneration Outcome Agreement to ensure social economy issues are included. One interviewee said this had led to most ROA funding being invested in social enterprises.

There was uncertainty about the future of the partnership. The hope is that future work will build on this activity but this will depend on clarity from government about the social enterprise and the social economy.

In terms of awareness of the partnership, people agreed this was low. One person said a recent survey showed only 25% of social economy organisations were aware of the partnership. One person highlighted that a lot of work had been done but perhaps the LSEP hadn't promoted itself well. Another felt there would only be awareness with certain groups, such as local authorities.

3.5 The Future of the Local Social Economy – Opportunities and Barriers

We asked the LSEP partners what they saw as the key areas with most potential for growth in the local social economy. We also asked about the main barriers to growth. The same growth areas were identified across the four locations and consistent themes emerged when we asked about barriers – this suggests that the opportunities and barriers were seldom unique to a local setting.

Across all four areas and in keeping with the survey results the key areas for growth were:

- Care - and especially social care. Child care was also mentioned;
- Recycling, conservation and the environment;
- Training and employability.

Manufacturing, farming, cleaning and social housing were mentioned in the Dundee area and arts and culture was seen as a key area for future development in the Highlands. Advocacy was mentioned by one of the people we spoke to in Dunbartonshire.

Key barriers focussed on four themes across the areas:

- **Procurement** emerged a key theme. Several people highlighted that local authority processes and attitudes make it difficult for small social enterprises to win contracts.
- There was a real sense that the organisations themselves did not always have the **confidence** to grow their business or, as one person described it, '*take the next steps*'. One person suggested that bigger social enterprises, such as housing associations, could support smaller organisations to develop. One person spoke of the difficulties in making sense of the business information and resources available.
- A **lack of cooperation** between social economy organisations was a consistent theme. One partner felt that hidden agendas and local politics are key barriers and another thought that there just wasn't enough joint working between small organisations.
- In the Highlands, the **high cost of 'doing business'** was highlighted as a particular issue for the area that impacts on the private sector and the social economy. One person suggested that other kinds of value added by the social economy should be considered. This might include a social

contribution, building a local workforce or delivering benefits for vulnerable or marginalised groups.

3.6 Engaging Equalities Groups

We asked partners a broad question about whether the local social economy engages equalities groups. The mixed responses we received may have been due to the differences in the make up of each local area. On the other hand, it may have been because of different interpretations or understanding of what *'engaging equalities groups'* might mean.

Most people did not think the LSEP had engaged equalities groups, and several people felt this was more of an issue for specific social economy organisations. Several people felt specific social economy organisations did engage equalities groups although there was recognition by some that this did not necessarily happen in a planned way. There was a view that engagement was mixed, and one person suggested this depended on the restrictions placed on organisations by funders - those that receive grants from the Community Regeneration Fund would have to engage equalities groups as a great emphasis is placed on equalities. One interviewee presented a different perspective, which might suggest that the social economy engages equalities groups without necessarily articulating it:

'By their very nature social economy agencies will engage equalities groups. The good will is there.'

(LSEP member)

Then and now

- We found mixed feelings about whether awareness of the social economy had increased since 2005. There was a real sense that the climate and operating environment for the social economy has changed significantly. This is related to an increased awareness and commitment to the social economy at central Government level. We found evidence of two elements:

    - Firstly, since 2005 a number of strategies and funding sources have been developed by Central Government which appear to have gone some way to address the strategic support gap identified by LSEP partners in 2005. In 2005 the need to develop clear definitions and commitment at a senior level within local authorities was also identified. Definitions have not been developed at a strategic level and this emerged again as an area requiring further work. We found some evidence of progress in generating commitment at a senior level in some Local Authorities but this was not the case everywhere.

    - Secondly, the impact of the new SNP Government was highlighted as an important step forward for the social economy. We found a feeling from LSEP partners that there is more commitment and enthusiasm for the social economy and the role it can play in delivering a range of social and economic objectives. The significant funding allocation was seen as a demonstration of this commitment. For some this has brought optimism. Others believed there was uncertainty.

- When we spoke to LSEP partners in 2005 they were still at an early stage of their development. Our research has demonstrated variable levels of LSEP activity across the four areas. This may be due to differing local needs or the local diversity of networks, organisations and partnerships operating in each area.

- We have seen evidence of novel approaches to awareness raising – the Social Enterprise Chamber in the Borders is one example. On the other hand, LSEPs have adopted similar vehicles in many cases - such as *‘meet the buyer’* events.

- Despite a lot of activity, similar challenges exist now as in 2005. Key barriers include:

    - Language, terminology and definitions – there is a lot of confusion about what is meant by the **social economy**, **social enterprise** and **third sector**. Some people felt this needed to be clarified. Others just identified it as a barrier. There was a real sense that this confusion made it difficult to market and raise awareness of the social economy.

    - Procurement processes and attitudes of potential buyers – as in 2005 a need has been identified to address this issue. Some LSEP partners spoke of successes in building relationships with public sector agencies that has enabled contracts to be developed, barriers identified and awareness raised.

- As in 2005, we found little evidence that LSEPs are identifying or attempting to effectively engage specific equalities groups. The people we spoke to were not always aware of the extent to which individual social economy organisations were engaging equalities groups. As in 2005, some people highlighted that by their very nature, social economy organisations are often working with and delivering service to vulnerable and marginal groups - it may be the case that this is not being articulated.

4. Perceptions of the Social Economy – Policy Makers

As in 2005, we spoke to four policy makers involved in the social economy. We asked them to give their views on:

- the profile of the social economy in Scotland;
- how it has changed since 2005;
- the language and terminology associated with the social economy;
- growth of the social economy; and
- engaging equalities groups in the social economy.

We discussed some of the survey results and asked about the work of their organisation.

4.1 The Profile of the Social Economy in Scotland

Everyone agreed that the profile of the social economy was still too low and that more needed to be done to raise it. However, everyone also agreed that the profile had increased since 2005 and that it was *'moving in the right direction'*. One interviewee highlighted the significant political focus there has been recently. This began under the last administration but the new SNP administration has really demonstrated a commitment:

'The sector is punching above its weight. It's getting a profile in Government you wouldn't expect.'

(Policy maker)

There is evidence that people are beginning to understand the sector more and beginning to realise its role and benefits. But they may not use the term 'social economy sector' or think about its profile.

Another interviewee thought that the sector does not market itself well enough. This is because people involved focus on outputs when they describe what they do. The interviewee felt that the wider impact and knock-on benefits of the social economy are what sets it apart from other sectors. This is what should be used to promote, market and describe the sector.

'It's a bit like selling a car – you wouldn't just say it has four wheels. The buyer already knows that. You wouldn't buy a car for that – you buy it for other reasons.'

(Policy maker)

Another person believed some work to raise the profile has involved *'preaching to the converted*'. In the future the sector needs to focus on audiences that are harder to reach.

4.2 Work to Raise the Profile

We asked for examples of work the policy makers or their organisations had undertaken to raise the profile of the social economy in Scotland. The following areas of work emerged:

- Promoting the social economy at a strategic level with Local Authorities and the Scottish Government. One person described the impact of this kind of work as *'improving the operating environment for the social economy'*. Three people highlighted the recent recognition of the social economy at a political level.
- Developing and promoting publications.
- Developing and publicising evidence which supports the promotion of the social economy. For example, statistics that show the social economy employs about the same number of people as the NHS. This demonstrates the important role it plays.
- Sponsorship of events, activities and programmes. According to one of the people we spoke to, the most successful examples are those that have been developed locally. The programmes and activities target various audiences or provide support services to the social economy to improve its own marketing.

4.3 The Strategic Profile of the Social Economy

We asked the policy makers about the importance of the social economy to their organisation. There was a sense that the social economy is either a high priority or is moving up the agenda. One person suggested its importance would depend on the priorities set for the sector. Another person explained that the social economy is something which contributes significantly to the strategic objectives of the Scottish Government – *'it ticks all five of the boxes'.*

4.4 Language

We explained that an overwhelming number of respondents to the survey believed the language associated with the social economy was difficult or very difficult to understand. All of the policy makers we interviewed agreed with this. The policy makers believed that a lot of the language associated with the social economy and social enterprises is being used differently by different people. This was consistent with other areas of our research. Another person felt that *'social enterprise'* should only be seen as a model rather than a sector or type of business. One person thought that there is added confusion because the social economy sector isn't really one sector – the organisations actually work across a range of sectors. Another person believed materials targeted at the social economy needed to be more straightforward and less technical.

We asked the policy makers what they thought could be done about this. Views were mixed. One person thought the sector itself needed to address this issue:

'The sector needs to be clear about what it is saying and careful about the language.'

(Policy maker)

Another interviewee thought terms needed to be **'pinned down'** at a strategic level. This could be done in a future policy document. On the other hand, one person felt that nothing could be done about it – the sector is diverse so the language will not be used in a consistent way. This interviewee believed that bringing more definition to the language would endanger the diversity of the sector:

'We don't want to get everyone into a box with one label on it. If [not doing] that creates uncertainty that is a price worth paying for diversity. It has an upside and a downside.'

(*Policy maker)*

4.5 Potential for Growth

All four policy makers agreed the social economy was too small. Everyone also agreed it has considerable potential to grow. One person didn't believe that growing the sector should be the aim. Instead, developing more business oriented models should be the focus of activity. The interviewees identified four things that could enable growth:

- Developing an awareness that *'you can be part of it'*. Organisations that could move towards being part of the social economy or become social enterprises need to be aware of the benefits and be in a position to change.
- Organisations developing the ability to identify gaps in the market.
- An ambitious target. One person felt there is a perception by some that the sector *'sets its sights too low'*. Two interviewees mentioned that Finland's social economy makes up more than 20% of its GDP. In Scotland the figure is 4%.
- Work is underway to support growth in the sector. This includes supporting skills development, strategic direction and funding of projects on the ground.

4.6 Equalities

We asked the four interviewees whether they believed equalities groups were being engaged by social economy organisations. One person did not know and another thought performance was patchy. Two people believed that by their very nature social economy organisations engage equalities groups – they often work with vulnerable people or marginalised communities. One person highlighted that the heightened emphasis on equalities at a strategic level may not have *'worked its way through the system*'. One policy maker believes we need to look at equalities in a slightly different way. Currently the approach is passive – support services for the social economy are made available to everyone. On the other hand, the barriers for certain groups engaging with those services have not been properly explored.

4.7 Responsibility

We asked who should be responsible for the social economy. On the whole there was agreement that no one body or sector was responsible. A role was identified for Government. There was a belief that Government should provide support and improve the landscape for the social economy. In addition, the role of the Government as a buyer was highlighted. On the other hand, interviewees identified the need for the sector itself to take responsibility - organisations need to operate effectively. One person believed changes in funding would be a key driver as organisations would have to look at other means.

4.8 What the Social Economy is Good At

We asked policy makers what they thought the social economy is particularly good at. Similar themes emerged as in the rest of the research:

- The social economy works well with marginalised or vulnerable groups and meeting unmet need.
- In terms of smaller organisations, care, advocacy and environmental work were all mentioned as strong areas. Child care was identified as something that could be better developed.
- Adaptability and ability to innovate. One person believed this was a result of the fragile funding landscape for the social economy.
- One person mentioned that the social objectives and independence of the organisations means that people trust the social economy.

4.9 The Next Big Things

When we asked what the next big things are for the social economy the interviewees identified some needs and opportunities:

- A *'breakthrough'* with procurement is needed. This will require a shared understanding between the commissioners and contractors.
- Social enterprise start up support is required. As one person put it '*we need to turn community activists into entrepreneurs'.*
- The development of sound financial tools to support a move away from grants, where appropriate.
- The recycling and renewables sector has a lot of potential for the social economy.
- At a strategic level the development of bespoke strategies is needed. The social economy now needs to be woven through new policies on health, for example.
- Sustainable development for the sector. This is important with the recent funding injection. It is important to make best use of this, and use it in a way which strengthens the sector.
- One interviewee raised a concern that the voluntary sector would become *'side-lined'*. This is due to the current focus on business models within the social economy. Some organisations will not be able to become social enterprises and there are good reasons for this. This interviewee also highlighted the role the voluntary sector plays in initiating social economy or social enterprise growth. Another interviewee believed the current emphasis on moving away from grants can be unhelpful. In many instances these grants fund vital services that should be paid for.

Then and now

We compared this research with that undertaken in 2005. There were many consistencies in the discussion but there was also a sense that much of the discussion had moved on.

- The policy makers believe that progress had been made to raise awareness and understanding of the sector. There was agreement that it has been slow and more needs to be done.

- The strengths of the social economy are the same as in 2005 – working with vulnerable people and meeting unmet need. Many of the perceived issues and challenges are different, however, and there is a sense the sector has moved on. In 2005 there was a fair amount of discussion about lottery funding, European funding and so on. In 2008 there is more focus on procurement and securing funding that way. The need to develop business skills was also identified.

- There is a real sense that the social economy is moving up the agenda at a strategic level. This seems to be bringing opportunities. The considerable investment at a time of restrictions on public spending is one example. There are dangers as well. For example, the challenges for voluntary sector organisations within the changing landscape.

5. Lessons Learned

5.1 Views of the Social Economy

Overall, the perception of the social economy sector has not changed substantially since 2005 within the study group. The 2008 research shows a broadly positive view of the sector and its services. Throughout the research there was a sense that the social economy is valued and that it often meets needs the private and voluntary sector may not.

Business skills, confidence and cooperation between social economy organisations emerged as areas that needed development within the sector, particularly if it is to grow. Marketing was highlighted as a key business skill that could enable the sector to grow and raise its profile.

5.2 Distance Travelled in Raising the Profile

There was agreement that the profile is moving in the right direction – 70% of respondents to the survey believe the profile is higher than in 2005.

It is difficult to attribute the change in profile to any particular organisation, group or set of activities. A number of interviewees highlighted the change in profile at a national political level and the research suggests that the development of clear strategies and policies on the social economy since 2005 has helped raise the profile. Others spoke of activities at a local level driven by the LSEPs and other networks with an interest in the social economy. This seems to have helped raise the profile within the sector and with local stakeholders, such as local government. There was evidence that a wide number of activities have been undertaken at a local level but there was limited evidence about what had worked well and what had not.

5.3 Future Work to Raise the Profile

There is an overwhelming view that the profile of the sector needs to be raised – in 2008, 96% of people believe the profile is not high enough. This is the same figure as in 2005.

5.3.1 A Focus on Public Sector Procurement

It is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from the small sample of public procurement officers. But this group did demonstrate less of an understanding of the social economy than respondents from the wider public sector and the voluntary sector. Public procurement was identified as a key barrier for social economy organisations. There were issues both about the public sector processes - which are sometimes seen as biased towards larger organisations – as well as attitudinal barriers. Whilst we also found evidence of a lot of activity to develop better links with procurement officers, particularly in local government, it seems more work is needed. The research into the views of public sector procurement officers may provide a useful focus in breaking down attitudinal barriers. It may also be worth considering further work with public sector procurement at a national level, as this theme emerged throughout our discussions.

5.3.2 A Problem of Language

In the email survey we asked about the terminology associated with the social economy and found people still find it difficult to understand. The variable use of terminology, confusing language and lack of definitions were all identified in the LSEP interviews as barriers to raising the profile.

In 2005 we recommended that clearer definitions be developed to improve understanding of the social economy with a range of audiences. This research demonstrates that this is still a substantial issue. Anecdotally, in speaking with LSEP members (a group with a higher level of understanding of the social economy than most) we found variable use of language. It was clear that people often meant quite different things by terms such as “social economy”, “social enterprise” and “third sector”.

5.4 Equalities

We asked LSEP members about how equalities groups are engaged by social economy organisations. We found little evidence that equalities has been a priority for the LSEPs. Whilst some interviewees highlighted that the social economy often provides services for marginalised or hard to reach groups, they were not aware of the extent to which engagement with equalities groups was planned.

This research did not explore this issue in great depth and did not examine the activities of actual social economy organisations. But the lack of awareness about how equalities groups are being engaged by the social economy on the part of the LSEPs may be cause for concern. Given their strategic role at a local level we believe LSEPs should have a key role in ensuring equalities groups are engaged in the local social economy.

5.5 Changing Times

Throughout our interviews with LSEP members and policy makers there was a sense that this is a time of change for the social economy. There was optimism about the political interest in the social economy, the significant financial commitment in the recent spending review, and the potential of the sector. There was also a sense of uncertainty.

Whilst the Scottish Government's enthusiasm for the sector was welcomed it was unclear how this might impact on the sector. There was uncertainty about the role of LSEPs - several interviewees explained that the work of the LSEP had stopped or was on hold until more was known. There was concern about how the social economy would be supported at a local level given the structural changes within central government, including the absorption of Communities Scotland into the Scottish Government.

If these issues of uncertainty are not properly addressed there is a danger that progress will slow and capacity will be lost. It is equally as important to make the best of the opportunities on offer. Capitalising on the political interest and ensuring that funding supports sustainable development of the sector is also important.

Annex one

Exit this survey >>

Perceptions of the Social Economy

Please complete your details

1. Details of organisation

Name:

Organisation:

Role:

2. Which sector are you from? (Please tick one box)

Public Sector

Public Sector (Procurement)

Voluntary Sector

3. Which of the following organisations would you include in the social economy sector? Please tick all boxes that apply.

Voluntary organisations

Housing associations

Building societies

Credit unions

Charities

Micro enterprises

Co-operatives

Development trusts

Social enterprises

Community business

Trade unions

Local authorities

Social firms

4. Which phrases from the following lists do you think most accurately and least accurately describe social economy organisations? Please tick three boxes in each column.

	Most accurately (Tick three boxes below)	Least accurately (Tick three boxes below)
Customer focussed		
Inefficient		
Loss making		
Independent		
Employee focussed		
Business oriented		
Grant dependent		
Replacing local authority services		
Income generating		
Creating employment		
Community focussed		
Able to adapt / develop		

5. Which 3 phrases from the following list do you think most accurately and least accurately describe the services provided by social economy organisations? Please tick three boxes from each column.

	MOST accurately(Tick three boxes below)	LEAST accurately (Tick three boxes below)
Good value		
Unreliable		
Necessary		
Flexible		
Well planned		
High quality		
Innovative		

	MOST accurately(Tick three boxes below)	**LEAST accurately (Tick three boxes below)**
Local		
Expensive		
Skilled		
Limited		
Disorganised		

6. Do you think that the social economy sector in Scotland is: (Please only tick one box)

Too big

Too small

The right size

Don’t know

7. Do you think that the terminology used to describe the social economy is (Please only tick one box)

Very easy to understand

Easy to understand

Difficult to understand

Very difficult to understand

Don’t know

8. Which of the following descriptions do you think best describes social economy organisations? Please only tick one box.

‘A social economy organisation is a non profit distributing business with social objectives’

‘Social economy organisations are non profit distributing organisations with social objectives. They are managed by voluntary management committees and independent from Government’

‘Social economy organisations are non profit distributing businesses which are managed by members of the communities that they seek to benefit’

‘A social economy organisation is a not-for-profit business with social objectives’

‘Social economy organisations are the economic dimension of the voluntary sector’

9. Do you think that the activities of social economy organisations are sufficiently well known? Please only tick one box.

Yes

No

Don't know

10. Do you think that the activities of social economy organisations are better known than they were two years ago? Please only tick one box.

Yes

No

Don't know

11. Which 3 of the following do you think are the most significant contributions of the social economy? Please tick three boxes.

Making neighbourhoods better places to live

Increasing the number of local projects and programmes

Developing local economies

Increasing skill levels

Meeting needs unmet by public and private sector

Developing the national economy

User and community involvement / control

Building social capital

Campaigning for new services and approaches

12. Which 3 of the following sectors do you think are currently the most important for social economy organisations?

Recycling

Childcare

Transport

Catering

Housing

Social care

Renewable energy / energy efficiency

Employability

Property maintenance

Health

Cleansing

13. Which 3 of the following sectors do you think are likely to be the most important for social economy organisations in the future?

- Recycling
- Childcare
- Transport
- Catering
- Housing
- Social care
- Renewable energy / energy efficiency
- Employability
- Property maintenance
- Health
- Cleansing

14. Which of the following do you think are the most important and least important issues for social economy organisations? Please tick three boxes in each column.

	MOST important (Tick THREE boxes below	**LEAST important (Tick THREE boxes below)**
Attracting grant funding		
Securing contracts with the local authority		
Increasing quality service provision		
Trading in the market		
Responding to need		
Diversifying funding base		
User/community		

	MOST important (Tick THREE boxes below	LEAST important (Tick THREE boxes below)
involvement and/or control		
Securing contracts with other social economy organisations		
Attracting investment		
Improving public service delivery		
Creating employment		

15. Are you aware of the work of Social Economy Scotland EQUAL Partnership?

Yes

No

16. Do you have any other views on the social economy which you would like to include?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Bottom of Form