

CONSORTIA DEVELOPMENT FUND

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008-2014

Consortia Name: Island Infrastructure group

Geographical area: Isle of Wight

Lead Body: Isle of Wight Rural Community Council

Contact Details:

3 Langley Court, Pyle Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1LA

Consortium Vision / Mission Statement:

Vision

- The IIG believes that the voluntary and community sector (VCS) on the Isle of Wight makes a significant and often underestimated contribution to the quality of life on the Island, to supporting and empowering communities, to addressing inequalities and disadvantage and exists to support its on-going success.

Mission

- To provide an effective response to the needs of voluntary and community organisations on the Isle of Wight so as to enable them to play their fullest possible role in supporting the communities they serve.

Consortium Objectives:

The IIG's objectives are:

That Island voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) have access to the information, advice and guidance they need to effectively deliver their own objectives.
(Governance/finance/legal/business/policy and more)

That Island VCOs are supported to greater influence local strategic decisions, including commissioning processes.

That Island VCOs are supported to successfully adjust to changing approaches to the procurement of public services and to extensively deliver public services under contract.

That Island VCOs have access to the support services of a local volunteer centre.

That greater mutual understanding and trust is developed to enable the public and VCO sectors to successfully follow Compact principles.

That Island VCOs are supported to deliver high quality services and support using well trained and valued staff and volunteers.

That Island VCOs are supported to pursue opportunities to share buildings, staff and other resources and to buy services from each other.

That the value and breadth of the work of the VCO sector be more widely recognised and understood.

That the principles of equality, diversity and community empowerment are ingrained within all that the sector does.

What are the key changes that the Consortium aims to make over the next 6 years? / Outcomes

- 1) Improved communication of news and information within the voluntary and community sector and with the public sector.
- 2) An improved understanding by local trustees of their role and responsibilities.
- 3) An increased number of sector representatives formally invited to sit on key strategic/commissioning/decision making bodies.
- 4) An increased level of opportunity for service users and/or providers to influence the design of services and allocation of resources.
- 5) An increased number of Island voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) delivering public sector services under 3 year (minimum) contracts.
- 6) An increased level of quality accreditation by Island VCOs.
- 7) A more skilled voluntary sector workforce.
- 8) A significant number of new volunteers being recruited and supported

- 9) A significant increase in the number of VCOs actively using volunteers
- 10) An increase in the quality of volunteer management within the local VCS.
- 11) An increased number and greater diversity of people volunteering to become trustees of VCOs.
- 12) An increased recognition of the financial contribution made to the Island's economy and service delivery by the VCS.
- 13) An improvement in the level of mutual understanding between the public and VCO sectors with the local Compact being recognised as an important guiding document.
- 14) An increased number of VCOs engaged in strong partnership working, sharing building, staff, systems, joint procurement or purchasing from each other.
- 15) An increased level of local support made available to help VCOs address equality, disability and community empowerment issues.

Please state why you feel these aims / outcomes are the right ones: (please reference any research, consultation or other data you feel is relevant)

National

Many of the intended outcomes reflect the national picture of Voluntary and Community Organisations needing to adjust to the changing environment in which they work. Many VCOs are financially vulnerable, many are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and manage volunteers, some want to deliver contracted public services but are faced with a changing and more demanding approach by public sector bodies.

Cross referencing to the large number of national studies and documents that are available on the current issues facing the sector would serve little purpose and such an approach will not therefore be pursued in any detail here but the following papers flag up some of the key issues:

Treasury / Cabinet Office – 'The future role of the third sector in economic and social regeneration' (2007) states 'The Third Sector Review has identified four major areas of common interest between the sector and the government: enabling greater voice and campaigning, strengthening communities, transforming public services, and encouraging social enterprise.'

Audit Commission – 'Hearts and Minds: Commissioning from the voluntary sector' (2007) notes 'Central government aspires to develop the voluntary sector's role in delivering public services....and the voluntary sector's role is steadily expanding.'

Workforce Hub / Skills for Health – 'Voluntary sector skills survey 2007' notes, 'Skill gaps are apparent across the sector....particularly with specialist skills...[and] a lack of time and funding for training and development are evident.' This study identified the top 6 skill gaps in percentage terms by function as:

- Marketing
- Fundraising
- HR / Personnel
- IT Support
- Campaigning
- Volunteer Management

Many other references could be made but the above points make clear the diverse roles that frontline organisations perform, the fact that the public service delivery agenda is pivotal to some and the fact that the sector as a whole has skills gaps it needs to address, especially in specialist areas.

Regional

Regional analysis of the infrastructure needs of frontline VCOs at a local level in the south east, by the Big Lottery Fund, suggested the following priorities;

- Training and advice in funding
- Training and support in financial management
- Training and support in cross sector partnership working
- Ensuring generic infrastructure can address the specific needs and issues of 'equalities and diversity'
- Specialist black and minority ethnic infrastructure'

This regional analysis shows some commonality between the local infrastructure needs in the south east and the national sector skills gaps.

Local

Locally, the themes covered by the current voluntary sector national hubs have been the broad themes around which the original Isle of Wight Infrastructure Development Plan was based.

This focus was supported by local consultations specific to the development of the plan and related to a few specific pieces of research such as 'Skills Build 2' report by the Ryde Development Trust in March 2006 and 'A report of the Additional Support Programme – Towards an infrastructure Development Plan for Diverse Communities on the Isle of Wight' undertaken by North Harbour Consulting in March 2006, which will be touched on again later.

Many of the broad issues identified through the national hubs focus have not changed and the struggles recently faced by a number of high profile Island VCOs, including the closure of the Island's volunteer bureau suggest that the past 2 years have been a very difficult time for the sector locally.

Whilst some of the elements contained within the original Island Infrastructure Plan seemed to be obvious elements to include again, a consultation was undertaken focusing on the value to VCOs of 8 identified support services:

Representation of the sector

General information, advice and signposting

Workforce development and training

Volunteering

Developing joint working opportunities

Information and communication technology

Bidding for funding and tendering for services

Business planning/development/social enterprise

In addition consultees were invited to suggest other areas of support.

Over 100 local groups were invited via e-mail to identify each of the support services as either; Critical, Secondary or Less important and additional comments invited.

19 responses were received and while not everyone responded to each section, the following responses were provided:

Representation of the sector

14 (88%) Critical 1 (6%) Secondary 1 (6%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Ensure that 3rd sector involvement is taken seriously and that we play a significant role in public services.'

'Representation on strategic partnership and anything that raises our profile as a sector.'

'A voice for the sector to be heard and understood by local Government, involvement in key strategic and operational discussions, with the follow-up being inclusion in strategies and plans, and money to deliver.'

'It is most important that the Voluntary Sector Cabinet is represented at key meetings to ensure that the views of the Sector are registered.'

General information, advice and signposting

16 (85%) Critical 2 (10%) Secondary 1 (5%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Information about training and funding possibilities to be made as widely available as possible.'

'A web site full of information and signposting would be excellent and we would know that it was there all the time. It could also link the sector by showing their websites, contact details etc'

'Ensure more info gets to smaller groups (how you do it is a different question!).'

Workforce development and training

9 (47.5%) Critical 9 (47.5%) Secondary 1 (5%) Less important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'The other area is to train/educate our administration in how to deal with the increasing complexity of laws and official requirements being placed on the voluntary sector. Even knowing what is important would be a help'

'A section on the website specifically for training so that providers can post opportunities on there.'

'I would like to see both statutory and VSO's offer out their training provision/trainers/ places in the form of a training calendar, with 10% of placements available to others as a matter of course. For VSO's the problems can be affording a trainer, so to encourage partnership through VSO's to enable them to access training is useful. Most of us are unaware of each others strengths in this area.'

Volunteering

14 (74%) Critical 3 (16%) Secondary 2 (10%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

The issue we struggle with is finding volunteers to lead projects. Any work to identify how such individuals can be recruited would be helpful.

'This facility (Volunteer Centre) is needed urgently on the IW. Even before the demise of the old Vol. Bureau there has been a distinct lack of cohesion in coordination of volunteer recruitment and management.'

'Would love to see a Volunteer Bureau as mentioned above with the Development Officer knowing what each Organisation really needs or wants from their volunteers.'

Developing joint working opportunities

2 (14.5%) Critical 10 (71%) Secondary 2 (14.5%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Not sure here: interested in hearing what possibilities the working party comes up with'

'Is this really something the RCC can do? Or is it a change in the mindset of vol orgs? I personally would say it's the latter and individual orgs need to take responsibility for this.'

'Whilst joint work is a good way forward, the capacity of very little groups to do this is limited by resources and capacity.'

Information and communication technology

6 (33%) Critical 5 (28%) Secondary 7 (39%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Time is resolving this issue. While some people will not want to engage in ICT whatever happens. Within a community, there will usually be enough skills to resolve any local issues.'

'Circuit Riders - mobile technology development and support workers, each of whom supports a caseload of organizations. Could this not be an ideal social enterprise, with diff costs for diff sizes of VCO's – could be a lesser charge for smaller orgs – ie with a longer waiting time for repair work'

'ICT can free up capacity of small groups but needs investment and ongoing support – this is a real area to develop, eg a network for the Island with some specialist support'

Bidding for funding and tendering for services

12 (63%) Critical 5 (26%) Secondary 2 (11%) Less Important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Ensure the new website has everything on it so people can look things up whenever they need to.'

'Information on new funding streams, knowing who we can ask for help and again perhaps Organisations could help each other with information'

Business planning/development/social enterprise

4 (22%) Critical 8 (45%) Secondary 6 (33%) Less important

In addition some of the comments made were as follows:

'Very important but with a truly volunteer organisation these courses can sometimes seem to be far too complicated.'

'Re social enterprise, courses aren't enough – practical set-up help with real man hours is vital if people are to get s.e's off the ground.'

'For little organisations this would need to be a longer term aspiration.'

Other comments included;

'Talk to voluntary groups in easy to understand language, devoid of jargon.'

'List of available meeting, training and function rooms (to complement list of village halls) with some idea of quality, cost & contact details. Not only useful for those in the sector but could be sent to businesses etc. looking to hire a room.'

As can be seen from these figures the infrastructure support functions that generated more than 50% of critical responses were:

- Representation of the sector
- General Information, advice and signposting
- Volunteering
- Bidding for funding / tendering for services

Workforce development and training was close with 47.5%.

The two biggest surprises were perhaps the fact that ICT and Business planning/development/social enterprise were regarded as 'Less important' by 39% and 33% respectively.

A couple of other specific pieces of local evidence should also be noted in more detail.

With regard to the need for more infrastructure support for minority ethnic groups, the 2004 study by Faith Regen UK, 'A guide to BME and faith Communities on the Isle of Wight', noted the isolation of BME individuals.

The March 2006 North Harbour Consulting study 'Towards an infrastructure Development Plan for diverse communities' offers a considerable level of detailed information and a range of proposals to take forward some of which will form the basis of the Outreach Plus bid to Capacitybuilders in January 2008.

Issues such as the need for a programme of community capacitybuilding, the need to improve access to front-line VCS services, the need for better representation are just some of many needs identified.

With regard to the Children Workforce Development project, the successful bid to the Children Workforce Development Council was informed by a Training Needs Research Report (May 2007) which identified the need for a 'Standardised monitoring and evaluation framework across Children's Trust arrangements'.

The need and potential of taking a train the trainer approach was also identified and features in the Children, Young People and Families VCS Workforce Action Plan.

Clearly the content of this Business Plan will inevitably change over time due to sector, organisational and funding changes and this document will be the subject of on-going consultation with the sector locally, both through the consortia and the Voluntary Sector Cabinet.

What are the main implications of this Infrastructure Development Strategy for the consortium (e.g. finance, staff, volunteers, geography, skills and knowledge)?

The situation on the Isle of Wight is very different from other areas where consortia have a number of specific infrastructure bodies working together to deliver an improved partnership approach to building infrastructure capacity. On the Island the only specific VCS infrastructure body is the Rural Community Council and the bulk of the implications of this strategy will fall to it.

Much of the content of both the Infrastructure Strategy and Business Plan will become part of the RCC's organisational business plan and some elements are already contained within its draft Council for Voluntary Service Partnering Contract with the Isle of Wight Council

Other consortium members will be focused on specific elements within the strategy, for example supporting training and supporting development of specific services/initiatives.

The other point to make is that all consortia members will likely be trying to achieve many of the identified outcomes on behalf of their own organisation and will be as much beneficiaries as delivery bodies.

It is too early to say with any certainty the extent to which there will be a specific consortium approach to any specific issue. More likely is an increase in partnership working between some members of the consortium on certain issues and between other members on other issues.

For example 3 consortium members already share a Treasurer and there is scope for this to be developed into a sector finance service. Other members already share a building and there is potential for the amount of sharing to be increased through a Futurebuilders investment, which has already been provided with a Futurebuilders development grant.

RESOURCES NEEDED TO ACHIEVE AIM

The key financial issue for the delivery of the overall strategy is the funding accessed by the RCC through its CVS Partnering Contract with the Isle of Wight Council. Without this the strategy will not be delivered in its current form. Some additional funding will come from Capacitybuilders but it will be very limited. Beyond this grant funding may be sought either by the RCC alone or through partnership bids, as appropriate.

The consortium is effectively staffed by the RCC using a mixture of Capacitybuilders and CVS monies and increasing the skills of RCC staff is a key part of the strategy. Ultimately the CVS contract offers the most secure long term funding for infrastructure delivery and it is the RCC that must deliver.

The creation of a Volunteer Centre forms a crucial part of the strategy. This will be hosted by the RCC and its on-going sustainability is again dependent upon the RCC securing adequate funding. A 'minimum' web-based service will definitely be supported through the CVS monies but additional funding will be needed for it to really achieve its potential.

Other funding has already been provisionally secured from the Island Strategic Partnership and a number of funding bids will be submitted in 2008.

Clearly setting a long term strategy is a good thing but the extent to which this can be delivered will be totally dependent upon securing funding.

In very simple terms it is anticipated that the RCC will be able to provide around £400,000 to delivery of this agenda over the next 3 years. This will fund an average of 4 fte staff who will be responsible for delivery of most elements of the strategy.

As mentioned external funding will be sought to increase these staffing levels.

Please outline the roles of key people/organisations in delivering the Infrastructure Development Strategy:

Organisation / Person	Role
Michael Bulpitt Chief Executive Isle of Wight Rural Community Council	Overall operational lead for consortium
Estelle Thomas CVS Advice and guidance role Isle of Wight Rural Community Council	Lead on general information, advice and guidance for VCOs
Jon Howard, CVS Development Officer Isle of Wight Rural Community Council	Lead on Volunteer Centre, support to IIG, focus on joint working/procurement
Nigel Parrish Information and Communication Officer Isle of Wight Rural Community Council	Lead on web support, newsletters, Merlin database and support to Voluntary Sector Cabinet and its networks
Kathy Marriot VCS Development Officer for Children and Young People's Trust	Lead on childrens' VCO workforce development
Richard Priest Chief Executive, Riverside Centre	IIG Chair and current lead on Futurebuilders development

What are the timescales, key steps and process for reviewing the Infrastructure Development Strategy? / Monitoring and Evaluation

- Who should be doing what;
- How they should be doing it; and
- When it should be being done.

Who	Process	Key Step	Timescale
RCC CEO	Annual progress report prepared	Report to consortium	April 2009 and annually thereafter It should be noted that the Business Plan will be subject to quarterly reporting to the consortium and the Voluntary Sector Cabinet



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Name of Consortium: Island Infrastructure Group

Lead body signature:

Date signed:

Date signed off by Consortium:

ANNEX 1

Consortium membership and Terms of Reference:

Members

It's active members are:

- IOW Rural Community Council
- IOW Citizens Advice Bureau
- IOW Age Concern
- IOW St John's Ambulance
- IOW Anchor Staying Put
- Learning Links
- Osel
- Riverside Centre
- Equals
- Real World Trust
- Footprint Trust
- Hampton Trust
- North Medina Development Trust
- Isle of Wight Council
- Isle of Wight Economic Partnership

Other partners who receive meeting details and papers are:

- Island 2000
- Medina Housing Association
- South East England Development Agency

Terms of reference

Island Infrastructure Group (IIG)

The Isle of Wight Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Organisations' Consortium.

Vision

To provide an effective response to the needs of voluntary and community organisations on the Isle of Wight, through a collaborative approach both within the consortia and with other partners.

Terms of Reference

The Island Infrastructure Group (IIG) for the Voluntary and Community sector (VCS) on the Isle of Wight will support and influence the strategic development and direction

of the Island's VCS by working through the Voluntary Sector Cabinet and other relevant bodies to ensure that there is a consistent and high quality approach to infrastructure support service delivery across the sector.

Members of the IIG will:

1. Work collectively to ensure that all VCS organisations adopt the key principles of community development: participation, independence, working and learning together, social justice, self determination, sustainable communities, reflections and consideration for the environment
2. Share and disseminate information on policy development, training provision, funding, best practice and other appropriate information relevant to the sector.
3. Facilitate the development of the sector by supporting the activities of IIG Working Groups focusing on key infrastructure issues.
4. Share resources wherever possible.
5. Make representation to the Voluntary Sector Cabinet and other networks as appropriate
6. Make representation as appropriate to key public sector agencies and funding bodies including Central Government where necessary

Meetings will:

1. Be held regularly at a time and venue suitable to most members of the group
2. Be minuted with actions

Roles and Responsibilities

1. All members of the IIG have an equal status
2. Any decisions made by the group will be as a result of consensus
3. Actions taken on behalf of the group will be as a result of consensus
4. The Isle of Wight Rural Community Council will act as the financial accountable body for the group, all financial transactions to be referred through the RCC