

Report by Kevin Molloy on Social Enterprise Network Meeting organised by the Wheel.

The meeting was held on the 25th January 2019 at Airfield Estate, Dundrum, Dublin 14 from 11am to 1pm. The background for the meeting was to feed in to the development of a National Policy on Social Enterprise. Ivan Cooper Director of Public Policy the Wheel gave an insight into what is Social Enterprise. Social enterprises differ from commercial enterprise in that they have a social mission and re-invest surpluses back into the organisation. A proportion of their income comes from trading in goods or services. Social enterprises are charities run by a voluntary Board of Directors. An example of social enterprise is the Credit Union movement and Co- Ops. With the demise of small shops in communities the setting up of social enterprise shops on a voluntary basis should have Government support. A discussion took place on what needs to change so social enterprise can develop and what steps the Wheel can take to advance these issues on behalf of its members. Some of the main issues discussed were the need for a legal structure across Government Departments. The issues around revenue Income Tax and VAT. The need for an educational programme for communities on social enterprise.

A number of Government Departments currently engage with the Social Enterprise sector and supports through a range of programmes and schemes. These include: Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme [SICAP], Leader funding, Dormant Accounts Funding, Community Services Programme, Community Employment schemes and Wage Subsidy Scheme for the employment of people with disabilities.

Grainne Kelliher, CEO, Airfield Trust on how the trust operates as a Social Enterprise and Charity without any grant aid but supported by its commercial operations.

Paul O'Sullivan a member of the European Commission Expert Group on Social Enterprise, CEO of Clann Credo & Chair of the Wheel presented on his work in Brussels

I found the meeting very informed and gave me a greater understanding of what social enterprise is and its benefit to communities. END