



Plymouth Social Enterprise Network
One Year In: Social Enterprise City Strategy Update
February 2022



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Contents

Introduction	4
Priority 1: Stimulating social enterprise.....	5
Priority 2: Growing markets for social enterprise.....	6
Priority 3: Access to world class business support	7
Priority 4: Increasing funding and finance for social enterprises	8
Priority 5: Policy, advocacy and movement building	9

Introduction

Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN) [published a five-year strategy](#) to develop social enterprise in our city in 2020. One year into this strategy, what have we achieved so far and what is still to do?

By way of a quick refresh, the strategy was based on a vision to see a more socially enterprising economy that helps to create a more equal world with zero poverty, and zero carbon emissions. The strategy had five main aims. These were to:

1. Stimulate the development of social enterprise
2. Grow markets for social enterprise with private, public sector and general public
3. Increase access to world-class business support
4. Increase funding and finance for social enterprises
5. Develop policy for, advocate for and promote the wider movement of social enterprise.

Each of these priorities had a set of proposed actions and suggested partnerships to help develop these themes. The full strategy includes much more context, research and background information.

So, what has been delivered so far and what is still to do? We'll look at each priority in turn.

Priority 1: Stimulating social enterprise	
Action	Progress
<i>Showcase the best of Plymouth’s social enterprises at the annual Social Enterprise City festival</i>	Achieved and ongoing. We delivered our biggest social enterprise festival to date in November 2021. Around 500 people attended more than 30 events spread over two weeks. The theme was on the United National Sustainable Development Goals. We were really pleased also to make many new friends in the private sector through this event.
<i>Provide social enterprise experiences in schools, colleges and universities at careers fairs and through enterprise education</i>	Partially achieved, ongoing work. Our Education Action group has met regularly with providers in the city (many of whom are social enterprises themselves - like University of Plymouth, Plymouth Marjon University and Plymouth College of Art. We have a contract in place with University of Plymouth to deliver careers and social enterprise related advice. There is more work to do to link with more schools. PSEN is delivering a partnership programme with City College Plymouth (SIVSEN) to promote work experience.
<i>Promote a diverse social enterprise movement to encourage social enterprises start-ups</i>	Some progress but slower than expected. We created a Diversity and Inclusion Action Group consisting of a number of organizations and partners to look at how the social enterprise movement could be more diverse. Progress has been slower than expected. This is a high priority for us for the next year.
<i>Build careers in social enterprise – explore promotional campaigns with larger social enterprises</i>	Ongoing. The Education Action Group has worked with a number of organizations, and we have a contract with University of Plymouth in place to look at careers. We’ve not developed a promotional campaign with other, larger social enterprises yet.
<i>Stimulate better policy and legal framework for community businesses and social enterprises to take on physical assets</i>	Ongoing. We delivered some work with a proposed community asset concept in Plymouth. One of our members attended the Labour party conference to discuss this. There is more work to do to understand the issues more clearly, engage relevant partners and advocate for necessary changes.

Priority 2: Growing markets for social enterprise	
Action	Progress
<i>Create a PR campaign to raise awareness of social enterprise amongst the general public</i>	Ongoing. General PR work has been delivered, especially around the Social Enterprise City festival. However, a specific campaign has not been delivered yet.
<i>Explore a Plymouth corporate 'Buy Social' programme to encourage use of social enterprise in supply chains</i>	Partially achieved and ongoing. We attend the Spend4Plymouth working group looking at corporate and public sector spending in the city and have made some progress around use of the Social Value Act and raising awareness of social enterprises. However, progress is slow. In February 2022 we worked with a pioneering group including Chamber of Commerce, University of Plymouth, Bailey Partnership, Babcock, Plymouth Argyle, Plymouth City Council to scope out ideas around supply chain development.
<i>Promote the Social Value Act and its use amongst public sector organizations particularly organizations that have had limited engagement so far such as Clinical Commissioning Groups, Ministry of Defence, Police and NHS</i>	Partially achieved and ongoing. Good progress with Plymouth City Council but other public sector organizations still need to be engaged. Plans to engage with a public sector procurement forum are in development.
<i>Encourage social enterprises to buy from each other and from other ethical businesses in and around Plymouth</i>	Ongoing. We've promoted social enterprises in Plymouth to over 6,000 subscribers of our content including weekly newsletters and daily social media posts. We've also encouraged intra-trading amongst social enterprises at networking events and spending at Christmas with social enterprises. More work to do.

Priority 3: Access to world class business support	
Action	Progress
<i>Create a specialised business support programme for social enterprises at start-up and development stages – following and learning from the Enhance Social Enterprise scheme</i>	Achieved and ongoing. A new business advice programme - [Start]Social – was funded by Plymouth City Council. This aims to help set up new social enterprises. Developing social enterprises can access advice from schemes funded by The Rank Foundation and Esmee Fairbairn plus digital support (see below). The Shared Prosperity Fund is a significant opportunity to develop an ongoing business advice programme.
<i>Boost digital skills and use of digital technology in business development</i>	Achieved and ongoing. Plymouth City Council has funded social enterprise Cosmic - a PSEN member – to deliver their Digital Boost scheme in the city.
<i>Support and advice to help social enterprises win public sector contracts</i>	Ongoing. PSEN is delivering a contract to engage our members with the ‘sector plans’ that emerged in the Resurgam recovery work in the city. We attend and advise the Spend4Plymouth programme which also encourages public sector spending with social enterprises. We championed and led the develop of the The Resurgam Charter – a charter to sign to show your organization is committed to a greener and fairer city. This has over 50 social enterprise signatories and is becoming an important badge for those wanting to contract with the public sector.
<i>Support to help the sector become more investment ready and better able to manage investment and finances</i>	Some progress. A new programme with the Rank Foundation will include ‘repayable grants’ – a more accessible form of social investment. We delivered the SIMPL programme with POP that explored increasing access to social investment. We attended the national Social Investment Commission and many of our recommendations are included in the final report.
<i>Explore ways to market social enterprises more effectively</i>	Ongoing. We’ve supported social enterprises in the city with marketing and promotion. The Digital Boost programme supports organizations with digital marketing amongst other things. This will be a key part of any ongoing business advice programme.
<i>Investigate a leadership programme for social enterprises at start-up, growth and mature phases</i>	Some developments but slower than expected. We have worked with Social Enterprise UK on a potential bid to government around leadership and support. This ties in with existing business advice programmes. A leadership component should be a key part of any ongoing business advice programme.

Priority 4: Increasing funding and finance for social enterprises	
Action	Progress
<i>Expand use of community shares by showcasing great examples where this has worked and link with the Community Shares Unit to promote this type of fundraising</i>	Not started yet. Some social enterprises in Plymouth have used community shares to great effect (Nudge Community Builders, Plymouth Energy Community for example). Others are investigating it. More work to do to promote this form of finance.
<i>Investigate 'repayable grant' schemes with relevant investors and funders</i>	Achieved. The Rank Foundation is about to launch a repayable grant programme in the city.
<i>Encourage use of Social Investment Tax Relief by clearly explaining it and working with Big Society Capital (BSC) to support their campaign on this</i>	Achieved but no take up. We took part in the SITR consultation which led to this tax relief being extended. However, we are unaware of any social enterprises in Plymouth using the tax relief. Clearly more to do to encourage understanding and take up.
<i>Explore a new version of Plymouth City Council's SEIF</i>	Ongoing. Our understanding is that Plymouth City Council is developing a new 'Inclusive Growth Fund' which will be available to the city's social enterprises.
<i>Encourage Rank Foundation, Power to Change and others to continue to invest in the city</i>	Achieved partially. The Rank Foundation announced a further three-year investment programme for the city. Power to Change investment is coming to its end and there is further work to do to continue this. Plymouth received a Community Renewal Fund bid with social enterprise at its core.
<i>Work with POP+ and others around increasing understanding of and access to social investment</i>	Achieved and ongoing. We delivered the SIMPL project in partnership with POP and other social enterprise networks across Devon.
<i>Work with social investors to advocate for more flexible investment that works for local social enterprises</i>	Ongoing. We contributed to the national Social Investment Commission and to the Local Enterprise Partnership's consultation on investment. We advocated for social enterprise involvement in the Community Renewal Fund process and through government's COVID recovery grants and successfully secured investment for the social enterprise community.

Priority 5: Policy, advocacy and movement building	
Action	Progress
<i>Follow up and review the climate crisis declaration made by PSEN in 2019 and deliver key actions to reduce our impact</i>	Ongoing and review needed. We explored environmental impact at the Social Enterprise City festival in 2021. A key priority is for us to review our actions on this agenda.
<i>Ensure social enterprise in Plymouth has a strong local, regional and national voice</i>	Ongoing. We represent PSEN and its members at several key forums in Plymouth and beyond. We chair Plymouth's Inclusive Growth Group . We attend the Growth Board and the Spend4Plymouth working group. We are a member of the LEP's Inclusive Growth Expert Panel. We attend the national social enterprise places scheme and work with organizations like Social Enterprise Mark and Co-ops UK to promote Plymouth's social enterprises.
<i>Strengthen co-operation across Plymouth, south west, UK, Europe and the world; work with local, regional and national networks to promote social enterprise</i>	Ongoing. We liaise closely with the other social enterprise networks in the region. We have delivered national work with SEUK and are a key member of the social enterprise places scheme across the UK. We delivered talks in Estonia and attended the Social Enterprise World Forum on behalf of PSEN and its members. We are delivering a partnership project across Sweden, Romania, Italy and UK with City College Plymouth to promote social enterprises (SIVSEN).
<i>Advocate for social enterprise with the Local Enterprise Partnership and other economic policy makers</i>	Ongoing. We attend LEP meetings and are members of the Inclusive Growth Expert Panel. We chair Plymouth's Inclusive Growth Group and attend the Growth Board in Plymouth.
<i>Promote social enterprise and this strategy at Plymouth's Growth Board and Inclusive Growth Group</i>	Ongoing. We chair Plymouth's Inclusive Growth Group and attend the Growth Board in Plymouth. Social enterprise and inclusive economy concepts are being embedded in Plymouth's economic policies and strategies. The Resurgam Charter has been hailed nationally as an exemplar project and business advice programmes and success through the Community Renewal Fund has been nurtured through this work.
<i>Promote Plymouth through the national social enterprise places scheme with SEUK</i>	Ongoing. We work closely with SEUK on the places scheme nationally. We have contributed to a Community Entrepreneurship Zone programme proposal and other bids with SEUK. We have promoted Plymouth's social enterprises at the All-Party Parliamentary Group and across several national consultations on investment, tax relief and place-based regeneration. Plymouth is a case study in the new Social Investment Commission report.
<i>Build alliances with co-operatives, community businesses, trading charities and other similar business groups and networks</i>	Ongoing. We have worked with the Devon Doughnut Collective to promote inclusive economics across the wider region. We work closely with other social enterprise networks. We have developed a new relationship with the Co-op Pioneer Scheme in Plymouth.