

Third Sector Group Ministerial Meeting: Economy & Transport

Note of meeting held on 9th July 2020

List of Attendees

Attendee	Organisation
Ben Lloyd (BL)	WCVA (CHAIR)
Alun Jones (AJ)	WCVA
Clare Sain ley Berry (CSLB)	Cynnal Cymru
Gurmit Singh Randhawa (GSR)	Interfaith Council for Wales
Lynne Hill (LH)	Children in Wales
Peter Williams (PW)	DTA Wales
San Leonard (SL)	Social Firms Wales
Ben Lloyd (BL)	WCVA
Fiona Harris (FH)	WCVA
Derek Walker (DW)	Wales Co-operative Centre
Christine Boston (CB)	Community Transport Association
Peter Jones (PJ)	Guide Dogs Cymru
Rocio Cifuentes (RC)	EYST
Jess McQuade (JMcQ)	Wales Environment Link
Hazel Lloyd Lubran (HLL)	TSSW
Clare Rudall (CR)	Business in the Community Cymru

Welsh Government

Lee Waters SM (DM)	Deputy Minister for Economy & Transport
Chris Buchan (CBuchan)	WG
Julian Carpanini (JC)	WG
Rhiannon Perkins (RP)	WG

Apologies

Ann Marie Rogan	YMCA Swansea
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Chair: Ben Lloyd (BL)

1. BL stated that at the pre-meet there was much interest in the Agenda item 3: Roadmap to Recovery. Agenda items 1 & 2 would be merged to allow a fuller discussion on Agenda item:3. Items 1 & 2 will be separated into impact on the sector and impact on transport.
2. Roundtable introductions

Agenda Items 1 & 2: Impact on third and social enterprise sectors

PW welcomed the rapidity of the Welsh Government's (WG) response to the COVID crisis and variety of support. Many organisations in the third and social enterprise sectors are concerned about the impact on their respective stakeholders now focussing on recovery. PW gave examples of concerns, many organisations have multiple assets that will need to continue to generate revenue. Many organisations

are also undertaking Community Asset Transfers and will be affected by any increase to construction costs or changes in the construction industry.

HLL highlighted lessons learned from established and non-established organisations during the crisis. Electronic cash payment systems has been a barrier to many organisations. TSSW are undertaking a piece of work to review lessons learned. Organisations' buildings is a concern, buildings can be too small or the cost of adapting buildings is prohibitive to enable a safe return to work and the cost of maintaining buildings with uncertain income generating streams could lead to empty premises.

The childcare sector has been impacted. Sustainability of services was a concern of many pre-COVID crisis, particularly in rural areas. Some local authorities have been very responsive and supportive but support is inconsistent across local authorities. HLL offered to provide a report on lessons learned about the implementation of business grant support for childcare sector.

CR informed the DM that a national business response network was set up to connect organisations in the third, community and social enterprise sectors with businesses. Over 1,700 matches were made where businesses offered support ranging from tech, food, mentoring and pro bono work, demonstrating the sector's ability to collaborate.

DM stated that the Counsel General is supporting the First Minister by leading on recovery for the WG. Having invested in field hospitals, PPE and other COVID interventions, the WG's finances are in a dire situation and every sector is in distress. The 3rd sector is high in the WG's thoughts. DM doesn't know whether the WG can sustain the same level of support but will do its' best to mitigate impacts on the sector.

DM acknowledged HLL's point about premises and that the sector will have to adapt. DM is leading on reviewing homeworking for the WG. ONS stats confirm 40% of workers worked from home in May. DM and the Deputy Minister for Housing & Local Government will make an announcement next week on transforming towns.

The WG is reviewing social distancing rules that have an impact on childcare and public transport, mindful that there could be a second peak in the autumn. DM welcomed the review of digital in the 3rd sector and confirmed that there will soon be a new Chief Digital Officer.

Transport

CB stated that passenger numbers on community transport have considerably reduced and community transport providers are making adaptations to services. Lots of community transport providers have reduced opportunities to generate income, e.g. from additional group travel services.

CB stated that changes to travel regulations and guidance is leading to an increase in inequality of access to travel. Guidance states that people should avoid public transport, unless key workers, and use their own vehicles instead. Those without

own vehicles and who rely on public transport have less access to travel. CB asked whether the messaging to avoid public transport would change?

PJ stated that people with restricted characteristics and disabilities already had concerns with access to transport. This has been raised with the DM recently who has responded. There are inconsistencies with services offered by bus providers. Communication with WG officials has been good and officials have been helpful.

RC stated that the refusal of bus providers to accept cash is having a massive impact on asylum seekers who do not have access to bank cards. This is another COVID-19 impact on BAME people.

DM responded that the financial exclusion faced by asylum seekers in this context is interesting and asked RC whether she offer views. **RC** suggested that bus passes would be a good option as there are a small number of asylum seekers in Wales and they already have a very limited income.

ACTION – JC to discuss possibility of offering asylum seekers bus passes with officials

DM noted that CB made a good point about transport poverty and exclusion. There is a paradox as the WG policy prioritises active travel, the climate emergency and public transport, not roads. The WG already substantially subsidises bus providers. Demand on bus providers will increase when schools return full time in September.

Agenda Item 3: Roadmap to Recovery

DW welcomed the DM's support for the third sector's appetite for digital technology and requested a dedicated meeting to discuss further. The Wales Co-Op was due to hold a physical event on technology and there was good uptake. The event will now be held in the autumn, perhaps virtually. The Wales Co-Op has produced its own roadmap to recovery, setting out the framework to take the sector forward for the next 10 years, in partnership with stakeholders. The roadmap highlights the importance of government response to COVID-19, the learning from the response and the involvement with WG officials. WG officials' understanding of the needs of the sector has been very good and hasn't been replicated in other parts of the UK.

The roadmap shares views on the future of business support for the social enterprise sector and the ask for specialist support for the social enterprise sector.

SL stated that the sector is supportive of the principles of the Economic Action Plan and the need for responsible business behaviours, e.g. Fair Work.

PW highlighted the need to build on more resilient models of the economy, such as local supply chains and procurement, e.g. of food. PW asked how to use this learning so it becomes embedded and is not just a crisis response.

Green/Just Recovery

JMcQ welcomed the WG's commitment to a green and just recovery. Multiple surveys show that people want this. From principle to delivery has a number of challenges. Challenges include the definition and evidence of green jobs. JMcQ stated that the Wales Environment Link has a paper on green jobs and offered to work with the WG to broaden the definition of green jobs to better reflect the true number of green jobs.

JMcQ offered to work with the WG so that the multiplier effect of green jobs can be better understood. JMcQ stated that there is a danger that a green and just recovery could be minimised in ministerial portfolios and recognised the need to address the climate, health and economic emergencies. Wales Environment Link is looking at sustainable funding options.

CSLB stated that the impacts of the climate emergency could dwarf COVID-19 impacts. CSLB was pleased to learn recently that the WG is assessing the possible impact of inaction in its decision making process. CSLB asked what are the mechanisms to link up engagement channels on the green recovery.

RC stated that when designing any job creation schemes BAME and BAME young people should be prioritised for jobs created. The jobs should be created within the third sector and the assets of BAME people should be mapped.

RC suggested that a 'digital to work' scheme, where people have access to subsidised technology similar to a 'bike to work' scheme, would support BAME people to access work.

CB offered to share a recently launched report by Transform Cymru of their vision of sustainable transport with 7 steps for the transformation of transport. CB stated that a really positive meeting was held with WG officials earlier in the day.

HLL stated that their network is involved with multiple local and strategic partnerships. Key themes of discussions include the power of local.

DM stated that the digital subsidy idea is interesting but would need to be properly designed with users in mind. DM invited information of the proposed scheme. DM committed to a discussion on The Role of Digital in the 3rd Sector at the next meeting.

DM stated that on green jobs there is a balance to be sought. The DM is aware that many workers face the threat of redundancy so there will be difficult trade-offs with WG under pressure to save as many jobs as it can.

A Foundational Economy Challenge Fund project in Carmarthenshire has a local food procurement project in Carmarthenshire. PPE and food procurement is a priority. A piece of work is being undertaken to consider food procurement across all local authorities.

DM invited JMcQ to share further information with the WG.

The FM takes a keen interest in the Fair Work agenda and has created a Fair Work directorate.

DM brought the meeting to a close by stating that the WG is sympathetic to the need to support the social enterprise sector.

End.