



Driving the Social Enterprise Agenda within the Peak District

PDP Think Tank: 01-07-2021

Call to Action

The following recommendations emerged from the 2021 PDP Think Tank that took place on July the 1st 2021 and had as its theme “community collaboration in driving a social enterprise agenda as a vehicle for shaping the Peak District in the post-pandemic world”.

The Context

1. Individuals, communities and the overall economy of the Peak District have experienced significant challenges during the pandemic and as we begin to plan for the future a key consideration must be the part that individuals and communities can play in building a sustainable economy within the Peak District that addresses anticipated future challenges.
2. There is a growing interest in the social value of business and in the social economy¹, yet the role that social enterprise can play in delivering a vibrant and sustainable economy is often overlooked and this may in part be attributed to confusion over the terminology.
3. In order to address this confusion, the paper adopts [Social Enterprise UK](#)'s definition of a social enterprise as a business that:
 - a. Has a clear social or environmental mission that is set out in its governing documents
 - b. Is independent and earns more than half of its income through trading
 - c. Is controlled or owned in the interests of its social mission
 - d. reinvests or gives away at least half of its profits or surpluses towards its social purpose
 - e. is transparent about how it operates and the impact it has
4. Social enterprises are of increasing importance with it recently being reported that there are now more than 100,000 in the UK, worth a combined total of £60bn to the UK economy and employing 2m people. Furthermore, their significance is growing with a record 12,000 new start social enterprises being registered during the 12 months of the pandemic. They also serve as a vehicle for social mobility with 23% operating in the UK's most deprived communities, whilst 20% reference tackling the climate emergency as part of their core mission².

¹ Monzon, JL & Chaves, R (2008) “The European Social Economy: Concept and Dimensions of the Third Sector”, *Annals of Public & Cooperative Economics*, Volume 79, Issue 3-4

(<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8292.2008.00370.x>)

² [Barclays and Social Enterprise UK report a record-breaking rise in number of social enterprises founded during pandemic » Social Enterprise UK](#)

5. Intelligence regarding the vibrancy of social enterprise activity within the Peak District is difficult to ascertain and this reflects the findings of the most recent Social Enterprise UK's regional report for the East Midlands, which states that "There has been a lack of a regional social enterprise network in the region for some years and as a result information, education and networking has been patchy."³
6. The think tank that was convened by the Peak District Partnership on July 1st 2021, was seen as a step towards raising awareness of the social economy and social enterprises as an important means of supporting the post-pandemic recovery of the Peak District, its communities and economy.
7. The think tank attracted 35 participants, most of whom were based within the Peak District, with some having launched social enterprises and others who were gearing to do so. The think tank was also attended by representatives of local government (including the leaders of both High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council), the University of Derby, as well as representatives of prominent third sector organisations with an interest in both the economic and social wellbeing of the communities of the Peak District.

The Challenges

8. There is no joined up, strategic approach to driving a social enterprise agenda within the Peak District and this has meant that those who have been inspired to launch social enterprises have had to work hard to identify a suitable support infrastructure to advise them on the vital first steps in founding and then building their business.
9. The challenges of journeying down the social enterprise route without a clearly identified and accessible support network inevitably means that some would-be social entrepreneurs will have abandoned their plans and not pursued their vision to launch stage.
10. Even if social entrepreneurs are able to successfully navigate the start-up stage, there can be a real challenge in balancing the need to be financially sustainable alongside a social or environmental mission.
11. Both a one size fits and a top-down approach to driving a social enterprise agenda is unlikely to succeed within the Peak District where there are such different operating environments.
12. There remains a level of confusion and misunderstanding about social enterprises that could well serve as an inhibitor to those who might otherwise be motivated to become social entrepreneurs.

The Opportunities

13. The increasing importance of social enterprises nationally (as referenced at 4) means that there is likely to be a significant opportunity to grow this sector of the economy within the Peak District from what is assumed to be a relatively low base.
14. A peer support network that includes a coaching service could help to unleash the social enterprise potential of the Peak District.
15. There are examples of successful social enterprises within the Peak District and these could be used as case studies to de-mystify the concept, raise awareness and drive interest in building the number of such businesses operating within the area.
16. The fantastic landscape and the large number of visitors to the Peak District could play a part in shaping the activities of social enterprises across the Peak District, which could then become a vital source of employment for local residents, especially the younger age groups.

³ "State of Social Enterprise: East Midlands" (June 2020) Social Enterprise UK

17. The social enterprise landscape is continually shifting and so there is a need to ensure that information/intelligence is shared on a regular basis.
18. Key national and international agendas, including that related to climate change and localism, are likely to see greater emphasis being placed on social enterprise as a key component of balanced local economies.

How might we go about optimising the opportunities and addressing the challenges

19. Create a social enterprise ecosystem and support infrastructure across the Peak District for those operating social enterprises and those interested in launching new ones. This infrastructure will need to reflect and respect the differences between different subsets of social enterprise e.g. for profit businesses that nevertheless have a social or environmental mission and community not-for-profit businesses.
20. There are excellent resources and networks available outside of the Peak District and these need to be effectively engaged in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and to ensure that we gain an insight into best practices. That said, the ambition should be to build a toolkit for launching and building social enterprises that is Peak District specific.
21. Alongside the toolkit there should be a space in which those engaged in establishing and running social enterprises can share their day-to-day experiences and exchange practical advice and information e.g. via a Facebook page.
22. Engagement with local authorities across the Peak District might help in identifying funding that could be used to build the ecosystem and support infrastructure, which could be secured via a bid into D2N2.
23. Engagement with schools and community groups across the Peak District should help to build interest in social enterprises as a key future source of employment and economic activity.
24. The social enterprise ecosystem would benefit from key advocates that can provide advice and guidance at a community level, together with frequent showcasing opportunities for locally based social entrepreneurs.

Next steps

25. Undertake a baseline mapping exercise to identify the existing components of the fledgling social enterprise ecosystem across the Peak District and begin to dialogue with members of the fledgling ecosystem.
26. Engage with civic leaders, local authorities, D2N2 and other key stakeholders to secure support for driving the social enterprise agenda. This may include a level of funding support.
27. Engage with schools and community groups across the Peak District so as to help build interest in social enterprises as a key future source of employment and economic activity.
28. Use key opportunities such as the Derbyshire Festival of Business and World Social Enterprise Day to build momentum towards establishing the Peak District's social enterprise ecosystem.

Dr. Peter Dewhurst
Chair, Peak District Partnership

