

**Response by the Social Enterprise Coalition to the Department
of Communities and Local Government Third Sector
Partnership Board: Consultation on the third sector's strategic
voice within Communities and Local Government.**

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The Social Enterprise Coalition's Response to the Department for Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board: Consultation on the third sector's strategic voice within Communities and Local Government.

1. The Social Enterprise Coalition (the 'Coalition') welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Communities and Local Government Third Sector Partnership Board: Consultation on the third sector's strategic voice within Communities and Local Government.
2. The Coalition was established in 2002 as the national voice of social enterprise. Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social or environmental objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. The Coalition represents a wide range of social enterprises, umbrella bodies and networks, with a combined membership reaching over 10,500 social enterprises. These include cooperatives and mutuals, housing associations, leisure and football supporter's trusts, community enterprises, development trusts and Social Firms. Social enterprises in the UK generate more than £27 billion in turnover, and contribute more than £8 billion to GDP per year. In preparing this response the Coalition consulted widely with its members.

Q1: Do you agree with these proposals on the role of the partnership board?

3. The Coalition welcomes the setting up of more formal arrangements for the Third Sector Partnership Board. We believe this will give the third sector greater involvement at a strategic level and improve the level of engagement between the DCLG and the third sector generally. The delivery of timely strategic advice from the third sector to the DCLG is a necessary tool for policy development and the Coalition supports it as the objective of the TSPB.
4. It is essential that the partnership board has a clearly defined role and remit and that this works in tandem with other third sector advisory bodies within government. We welcome the proposals that this is DCLG's intention, and the Coalition will support any clarification of those relationships.
5. The membership of the board includes local government. Although there is clearly a role for local government in the strategic development of DCLG activities, it confuses the role of the TSPB. If the Board is to provide the views of TSPB at a strategic level then there is limited need for local government membership. If the Board is to develop policy and strategy for the delivery of DCLG objectives then Local government members would enable policy developments to progress at a faster rate. This needs to be clarified to ensure the role of the TSPB is fully understood.
6. There is a need for clarification of how members of a strengthened board will be accountable to the rest of the third sector. This clarification is necessary to ensure that the Board has the confidence of the sector in driving forward relations with Government.

Q2. Do you agree we need a mixture of third sector organisations, representative bodies and local government?

7. The Coalition agrees that there should be diverse range of membership on the TSPB should be diverse to ensure a range of voices move policy forward. This should be both over different spatial as well as sectoral areas. As stated under question 1 there is need to clarify the role of the TSPB. This would determine the need for Local government members to be part of the Board.
8. The proposals identify that there are at present 20 individual members of the Board. 5 further representative bodies will be recruited taking total membership up to 25. It then states that there will be an open selection process for members in non representative roles during 2009. It is assumed that this is for the 20 individual members but is unclear in the proposals. Equally the role of the members in individual, representative, and local government roles are unclear. To ensure the right input from partners, the proposed makeup of the board needs to be clarified.

Q3. Do you have views on which representative organisations should be invited, given our strategic objectives?

9. The Social Enterprise Coalition is the national representative body of social enterprise with a reach of more than 10000 associated members. This allows the Coalition to access the wide range of experiences among social enterprises and to represent their views across the range of activities meeting the DCLG objectives. As such it is ideally placed to act as a representative body on the TSPB

Q4. Do you agree with the proposals that the department should hold an open competition for members during 2009?

10. An open competition for members would allow the best placed individual candidates to be identified for the positions of the TSPB. The role of individual non representative members needs to be clarified before the open competition begins in 2009.

Q5. Do you agree the Partnership Board should meet 3 times a year linked to key milestones?

11. The Coalition believes that it is necessary that the frequency of proposed meetings takes into account of the effect on the capacity of the members. The envisaged 3 meetings a year would give a reasonable commitment.
12. The diversity of the 3rd sector needs to be carefully considered in relation to aligning the topic of the meetings to key milestones within the DCLG. For example the Compact is only relevant for Voluntary and Community organisations and therefore would not be of importance to social enterprises and other members of the third sector.

Q6. Are there key opportunities and risks, relevant to our strategic objectives, that the partnership should consider to discuss?

13. The opportunities for community ownership of services can help engender civil society and meet the objectives developing prosperous and cohesive communities. As such the opportunity to develop social enterprise is great opportunity to meet the strategic objectives of the DCLG.
14. The Third Sector Partnership Board must be careful to ensure that it represents and works for all the diversity of the third sector. Without that diversity the most suitable means of meeting objectives will be lost.

Q7. Do you agree with the proposed approach to project groups?

15. The Coalition believes the project groups are a good method to develop greater depth of expertise and discussion for the Partnership Board. The potential work resource commitment of members to be part of project groups must be considered to ensure all members are able to contribute.