



Neil O'Brien MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Iain Stewart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Scotland Office

Via email

6 April 2022

Dear Ministers O'Brien and Stewart

We enjoyed meeting you both recently to discuss the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the role of the Scottish voluntary sector in this agenda. We welcomed your recognition of the importance of the sector and would like to follow up on a couple of points.

Investment Plans

We were pleased to hear you say that local authorities would be expected to proactively involve the voluntary sector at an early stage in drafting their investment plans. Putting in place arrangements that are inclusive of the voluntary sector from the start is crucial to ensure that the needs of local communities are the focus of these plans. Working in partnership across sectors will also help achieve an appropriate split between the three strands of the UKSPF.

On this point, we understand that the UKSPF prospectus will be published imminently, and we reiterate our request that it includes a mandatory, specific requirement for local authorities to include the voluntary sector at both a strategic and delivery level. We would also welcome further information as to how the UK Government will ensure that the policy intent of the UKSPF aligns with Scottish Government and Regional Economic Partnerships' strategies to avoid confusion and even conflicting demands for organisations trying to contribute.

Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh EH3 6BB.
scvo.scot | enquiries@scvo.scot | 0131 474 8000

© 2021. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity registered in Scotland SC003558.

This is an important opportunity to highlight the UK Government's commitment to working in partnership with Scotland's voluntary sector and devolved government in tackling social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Funding

It was heartening to hear your commitment to ensuring that grassroots organisations can access this funding. We very much support your suggestion that some of the funding should be available as grants, rather than through a procurement process. Third sector organisations, particularly the smaller ones, can often struggle with cumbersome public sector procurement processes.

Third sector infrastructure organisations have a key role in building resilience and community capacity and have many years of experience in developing grant programmes. The Third Sector Interface Network has recently managed £15 million investment of funding for third sector organisations to support work on adult mental health. SCVO has an established grant management system which ensured that £85 million of COVID emergency and recovery grants reached voluntary organisations of all shapes and sizes across Scotland. We bring tried and tested expertise in fund management, combined with a wealth of experience in providing a voice for communities and grassroots organisations in resource allocation.

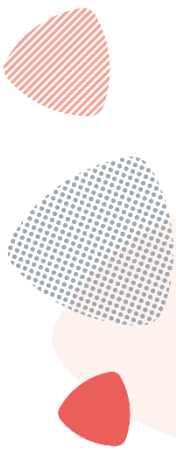
Like yourselves, we are keen to see multi-year investment, to allow third sector organisations and the people they support more stability. This is even more important in a transition period as new arrangements bed in. We were also glad to hear your commitment to minimising the bureaucracy in accessing the funding and ensuring that the monitoring and evaluation required is proportionate.

Social investment

Your comments that fuel poverty and cost of living issues can be addressed through the fund were also very welcome, as these are key issues that our communities are increasingly struggling with. On the issue of social investment, we would like to see greater emphasis put on supporting volunteering in the UKSPF guidance and subsequent investment plans. For example, in fields such as employability and wellbeing, organisations providing volunteering opportunities play a key role in supporting people to develop new skills and move towards

Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh EH3 6BB.
scvo.scot | enquiries@scvo.scot | 0131 474 8000

© 2021. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity registered in Scotland SC003558.



employment. This would be an important contribution to the UKSPF and the Levelling Up missions and yet it is too often overlooked and undervalued.

Capacity

As you'll understand, infrastructure organisations such as the third sector interfaces and SCVO work with scant resources, and we would propose that is recognised with modest funding for our organisations to support the sector in engaging with the implementation of the UKSPF and other Levelling Up activities. As Anthea highlighted in our meeting, some councils are also struggling to find capacity to deal with new developments and investing in third sector infrastructure support would alleviate some of that pressure.

As the UKSPF develops, we look forward to working in partnership with you and colleagues across both the UK and Scottish governments. We will also continue to work closely with COSLA and local authorities over the detailed implementation of this important agenda.

We hope you enjoyed your trip to Scotland. We look forward to working with you and your officials. We would welcome another meeting in the late summer/early autumn to share experience of how the UKSPF is being implemented.

Yours sincerely



Anna Fowlie



Lesley Kelly

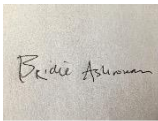


Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh EH3 6BB.
scvo.scot | enquiries@scvo.scot | 0131 474 8000

© 2021. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity registered in Scotland SC003558.



Anthea Coulter



Bridie Ashrowan



Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place, Edinburgh EH3 6BB.
scvo.scot | enquiries@scvo.scot | 0131 474 8000

© 2021. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Charity registered in Scotland SC003558.