

‘Empowering active citizens to contribute to Wales’

A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Invitation:

Thank you for your interest in helping with the preparation of our Strategic Action Plan. This document should be read in conjunction the draft version of the Plan. It follows the layout of the Plan and poses a series of questions arising from the text. We would appreciate your responses to any (or all) of these questions, but they need not limit your thinking. We would be pleased to hear from you about any aspect of the current or future relationship between the Assembly Government and the third sector.

Please send your comments to:

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....by **Wednesday 4th April 2007**. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

1 Purpose of the Strategic Action Plan

- 1.1 What should the SAP seek to achieve over the full term of an Assembly Government, particularly in the light of the Making the Connections – Delivering Beyond Boundaries?

2 Nature of the Third Sector in Wales

- 2.1 Are you comfortable with our decision to use the term: the third sector?
- 2.2 Have we accurately summarised the most important characteristics of the third sector in Wales? Have we missed anything significant?

3 The Welsh Assembly Government's interests in the Third Sector

- 3.1 Do you find the 'Spheres of Interest' picture helpful in understanding the Assembly Government's interests in the third sector?
- 3.2 Do they encompass all the Assembly Government's interests in the sector?

4 The Assembly Government vision for the Third Sector

- 4.1 Do you feel we have accurately described the sector's unique essence? If not, what do you think it is?
- 4.2 Is our strategic vision for our work with the third sector the right one?

5 Interwoven Themes

- 5.1 Have we identified an appropriate set of interwoven themes?
Do you feel there should be any others?

6 Principles and values, and dimensions for action

- 6.1 Should anything be added?

7 Empowering Active Citizens

Volunteering to make a difference

- 7.1 What should the Assembly Government's role be in promoting and support volunteering?
- 7.2 How could we better measure and understand the contribution made by volunteers?

Building sustainable communities

- 7.3 Can third sector organisations do more to engage, involve and empower volunteers and help them change their communities of place or interest for the better? If so how?
- 7.4 What role should organisations and structures at county and community levels play?

Helping citizens to be heard

- 7.5 What are the pros and cons of helping citizens' voices to be heard through the third sector?
- 7.6 What are the best ways of ensuring public bodies comply with the proposed Code of Practice in Consultation? What should the code contain?

Delivering personalised public services

- 7.7 Do you agree that greater involvement of the third sector in public service delivery should be about harnessing its distinctive strengths in order to transform the responsiveness and reach of public services?
- 7.8 Have we identified the relevant settings in which the third sector can be in a position to offer a viable alternative to both the public and private sectors?
Are there any others?
- 7.9 What improvements could be made to the way the third sector helps the public sector design, commission and evaluate public services?
- 7.10 Make the case for a Third Sector Capacity Building Fund explaining how it would differ from existing funding sources.

8 Supporting Empowerment

The Voluntary Sector Scheme and Compacts

- 8.1 What should our commitment to position the scheme at the heart of the next administration mean in practice?
- 8.2 What capabilities will the proposed Third Sector Unit need to be fully effective?

- 8.3 How broad do you think the remit of the Third Sector Unit should be to maximise the synergies between activities? (see Action Plan Task 2a)
- 8.4 How should the different subject departments approach the task of preparing their own third sector action plans in response to the vision, themes and proposals in the Strategic Action Plan?
- 8.5 What ideas do you have for enhancing the usefulness of:
- a) the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council;
 - b) the Ministerial meetings;
 - c) the specialist networks feeding into the scheme;
 - d) contacts between all three partnership councils?
- 8.6 Are we right to see 'compacts', backed up by effective operational processes, as the principle vehicle through which public / third sector dialogue and joint working should be pursued? If so, how can we ensure they work effectively?

Generic and specialist support services

- 8.7 What improvements should be expected in the generic support service now that all three levels are working more closely through the Partnership Agreement with the Assembly Government?
- 8.8 Would the proposed review of the specialist support services currently available in Wales be sensible and useful? How should this review be undertaken?

Capacity building for development and growth

- 8.9 What are the implications of Full Cost Recovery?
- 8.10 How can we help overcome the challenges facing third sector organisations trying to diversify their funding sources?
- 8.11 Do you agree with our challenge to third sector funders to become more flexible, less competitive and more community development orientated, and to build more capacity building support into future grant programmes?

8.12 How best can the quality and reliability of the third sector's performance be enhanced in future?

9 Empowerment for Change

9.1 What exemplars can you suggest that are pioneering the ideas in our document?

‘Empowering active citizens to contribute to Wales’

A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme

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‘Empowering active citizens to contribute to Wales’

A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme

Executive Summary

Creation of the National Assembly for Wales heralded the introduction of a Voluntary Sector Scheme with statutory force. It is unique in the United Kingdom and has helped nurture a close working relationship between the voluntary sector and both the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government. It has enabled a sharing of knowledge and views, and facilitated closer policy and practice than might otherwise have been possible.

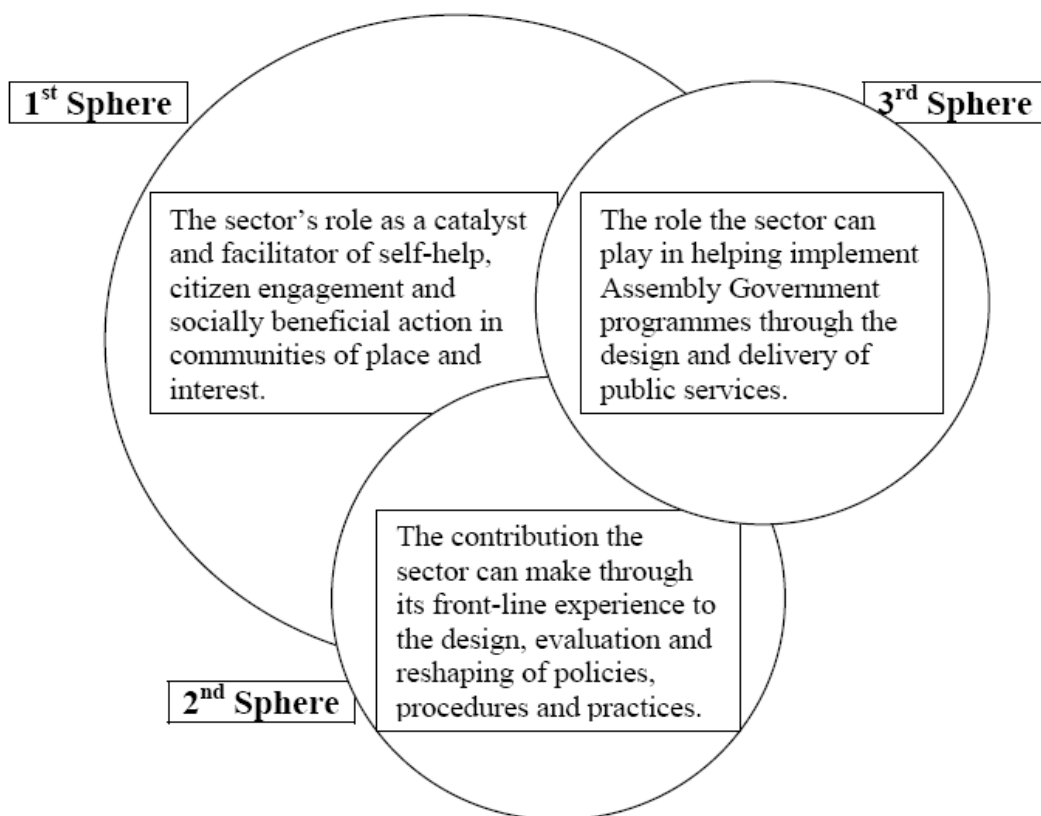
A review by an independent commission in 2003/4 found the scheme *“fit for purpose”*. However it recommended the preparation of a Strategic Action Plan *“setting out the next steps in implementing the Scheme”*. Experience has also suggested that the value of partnership working through the scheme could be further enhanced if there was a clearer understanding of what the next Assembly Government wishes to achieve for the people of Wales through its support for the sector.

This document therefore presents a vision for the Assembly Government’s future work with the sector, and shows how it will guide a range of activities and services delivered through the sector to help tackle some of the most deep-rooted problems facing Wales, and to enhance people’s overall quality of life. It needs to be read in the context of 'Making the Connections - Delivering Beyond Boundaries'. It is the Welsh Assembly Government's expectation that public service improvement and delivery of services for citizens - particularly those that are relevant to the most complex scenarios - should be undertaken in a way that is not confined to a specific sector alone. Collaboration across sectoral boundaries is of particular importance. At the same time the Assembly Government is interested in learning and developing its cultural behaviours and processes in a way that takes account of a variety of sectoral interests.

The document begins by identifying some of the most important characteristics of the ‘third sector’ in Wales. This term is used to encompass all parts of the sector including voluntary organisations, community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, community co-operatives and enterprises, religious organisations and other not-for-profit organisations of benefit to communities and people in Wales. It also conveys a powerful message that the large numbers of people who act voluntarily for the benefit of others each year in Wales represent a major third force in society, separate from and additional to, the public and private sectors.

The relationship between the Assembly Government and the third sector is a complex one. Nonetheless, we believe it is possible to identify three distinct but overlapping ‘spheres of interest’ that structure and help define the relationship:

The Assembly Government’s three spheres of interest in the third sector



The first sphere is bigger than the others because it forms the foundation on which the others are built. This is because it secures the citizen involvement, operational experience and public credibility that enables the other benefits to be gained, and yet it is often taken for granted. We value the contribution that the vast range of activities taking

place within the first sphere makes to a healthy, cohesive and self-supporting society. It reflects the fundamental right of people to organise and cooperate in a free society, making voluntary action a powerful expression of active citizenship. Whilst fully respecting this right to independent action, we have a keen interest in helping the third sector to flourish and grow.

Spheres two and three show how the sector helps us to design and deliver policies and services of benefit to the people of Wales. Its unique front-line experience provides personal and human insights into the impacts of public sector programmes or of gaps in provision; it forms a channel through which the voices and concerns of ‘ordinary people’ can be heard; and it offers evidence of successful alternative approaches that could be developed and mainstreamed.

Proposals contained in this document respond to each of the spheres, but it is important to understand the overlapping, dynamic nature of the relationships between them. They do not exist in isolation, as each can draw strength from the development and growth of the others. Conversely, each can be prejudiced and weakened by inappropriate actions under the others. In planning our future work with the third sector, all three dimensions need to be considered together.

However it is not enough simply to analyse the nature of our interest in the third sector. We have gone further by clarifying the fundamental reason why we want an effective working relationship with the sector. This is based on what we see as its truly distinctive qualities – that the activities it generates are entered into voluntarily, that they are taken for the benefit of others, and that personal gain is relinquished in favour of wider group or societal gain. The third sector is in our view a powerful manifestation of people’s active engagement and participation in society as citizens.

We have therefore framed the following strategic vision to underpin our relationship with the sector:

The Welsh Assembly Government promotes the interests of the third sector because it enables people in Wales to play a role as active citizens contributing to the good of society. The Assembly Government will support and work with the third sector to maximise its potential to engage, involve and empower the public as active citizens.

We believe a third sector that engages, involves and empowers citizens by facilitating voluntary action for the good of society, is one that contributes positively to democratic governance. It does not undermine the responsibilities of elected politicians or democratically controlled public institutions. Rather, it encourages a more participative form of representative democracy in which people and politicians are in closer contact, in which both are better informed, and in which there is a mature understanding of the opportunities and constraints of, and thus the rationale for, decision-making and the consequent allocation of resources.

A basic tenet of our approach is that there are (or should be) distinctive qualities that define the character of the services and benefits provided by the public, private and third sectors. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is through a better understanding of these that sound decisions can be taken about which 'model' is most suited to a given situation, set of objectives and desired outcomes. We do not therefore view public, private and third sector 'models' as infinitely flexible and inter-changeable, or believe that decisions about which to use should be decided solely through market mechanisms.

In building a Strategic Action Plan upon this vision we have taken account of a number of interwoven themes. We have also reaffirmed our commitment to the principles and values contained in the Voluntary Sector Scheme, and we have identified five principal dimensions for action: the UK level, Wales-wide, regionally, county level and community level.

In terms of the Assembly Government's role, we believe the strategy requires us to:

- champion the sector's interests at the highest level and across the whole of government;
- create an administrative arrangement that fuses a critical mass of key functions to provide an integrated source of support to the third sector;
- identify a set of 'civil empowerment indicators' that enable us to assess progress towards the citizen involvement and empowerment goals in this Strategic Action Plan.

In terms of the third sector's role, we anticipate that organisations will:

- strengthen the ways their members / volunteers / beneficiaries can feed views into the organisation and actively participate in its activities and governance;
- maximise opportunities for their members' / volunteers' / beneficiaries' voices to be heard and have an impact, and to provide evidence that the ideas, views and solutions put forward have been shaped through this active citizen participation.

Our Strategic Action Plan identifies a range of actions we will take in partnership with the third sector. These are organised under seven headings, four of which are designed to engage, involve and empower citizens directly, and three of which show how they will be supported through an effective infrastructure, backed up by resources:

Empowering active citizens:

- *Volunteering to make a difference*
- *Building sustainable communities*
- *Helping citizens to be heard*
- *Delivering citizen-centred public services*

Supporting empowerment:

- *The Voluntary Sector Scheme and Compacts*
- *Generic and specialist support services*
- *Capacity building for raised performance and growth*

We have elaborated our approach under each of these headings both in the text and in the detailed Action Plan proposals towards the end. We have highlighted new proposals, as well as including a number of relevant ongoing commitments. We are particularly keen to receive feedback on the appropriateness of all these proposals for action with the third sector, and we have included a list of questions to help focus responses.

We believe the direction we are proposing runs firmly with the grain of many recent strategic policies, not least Delivering Beyond Boundaries, Health Challenge Wales, Designed for Life, the Social Enterprise Strategy, Learning to Live Differently and the new opportunities arising from the Government of Wales Act. These and many other policies emphasise the critical need to engage more effectively with citizens in order to respond more sensitively to their needs and tap more effectively into their knowledge,

motivations and energies to achieve positive and lasting changes that improve lives. The third sector can play a crucial role in facilitating this process.

We believe the third sector is coming to the fore as a major player. It is proving itself to be a vital Welsh asset and a powerful force for positive change – challenging, complementing and transforming the roles played by the public and private sectors. We are fortunate that the dynamic partnership we are seeking with it can be built on an already excellent working relationship facilitated through the Voluntary Sector Scheme. Our strategy is aimed at achieving even more from this relationship by giving it sharper focus, clearer direction and renewed impetus.

‘Empowering active citizens to contribute to Wales’

A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme

1 Purpose of the Strategic Action Plan

- 1.1 Creation of the National Assembly for Wales heralded the introduction of a statutory Voluntary Sector Scheme unique to the United Kingdom and probably to the world:

114 – (1) The Assembly shall make a scheme setting out how it proposes in the exercise of its functions, to promote the interests of relevant voluntary organisations.

Section 114, Government of Wales Act, 1998

- 1.2 The Scheme established the principles and mechanisms which have nurtured a close working relationship between the voluntary sector and both the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government during the first two government terms.¹ There is broad agreement that it has enabled a sharing of knowledge and views, and facilitated closer policy and practice than might have otherwise been possible.
- 1.3 This largely positive experience has also made it apparent that the effectiveness of the Scheme could be further enhanced if there was a clearer understanding of what the next Assembly Government wishes to achieve for the people of Wales through its partnership with the voluntary sector.
- 1.4 In its 2003/4 review of the Scheme, an Independent Commission concluded that “...the Scheme is still fit for purpose and should not be remade.”² However it also submitted 59 recommendations for the Scheme’s improvement, one of which was

¹ The Government of Wales Act 2006 further clarifies the distinction between the National Assembly (the legislature) and the Assembly Government (the executive). The Voluntary Sector Scheme becomes the exclusive responsibility of the Assembly Government. Arrangements for liaison between the National Assembly and the sector are under consideration.

² Independent Commission to review the Voluntary Sector Scheme: Final Report, March 2004

that a Strategic Action Plan should be prepared “...*setting out the next steps in implementing the Scheme...*”

- 1.5 Preparation of the Strategy provides a valuable opportunity to examine the contribution being made by the voluntary sector to the development of Welsh society as a whole, and to explore how this contribution could be enhanced and extended over the next four to eight years through a closer alignment with the Assembly Government’s strategic objectives.
- 1.6 This document therefore presents a vision for the Assembly Government’s future work with the sector, and shows how it will guide a range of activities and services delivered through the sector that help tackle some of the most deep-rooted problems facing Wales, whilst generally enhancing people’s overall quality of life. It needs to be read in the context of 'Making the Connections - Delivering Beyond Boundaries'. It is the Welsh Assembly Government's expectation that public service improvement and delivery of services for citizens - particularly those that are relevant to the most complex scenarios - should be undertaken in a way that is not confined to a specific sector alone. Collaboration across sectoral boundaries is of particular importance. At the same time the Assembly Government is interested in learning and developing its cultural behaviours and processes in a way that takes account of a variety of sectoral interests.
- 1.7 We have chosen to use the term ‘third sector’³ in this document for several reasons:
 - there is evidence that small community groups and organisations pursuing a social enterprise model view ‘the voluntary sector’ as describing formally structured bodies with charitable aims many of which are long-established household names;
 - we believe the sector actually includes voluntary organisations, community groups, volunteers, self-help groups, community co-operatives and enterprises, religious organisations and other not for profit organisations of benefit to communities and people in Wales;
 - for reasons we will elaborate, we also believe the term conveys a powerful message that the large numbers of people who act voluntarily for the

³ The public and private sectors being the other two.

benefit of others each year in Wales represent a major third force in society, separate from and additional to, the public and private sectors.

- the term is concise and simple to remember.

2 Nature of the third sector in Wales

HEADLINES:

- **There are at least 30,000 third sector organisations in Wales.**
- **26,000 have a primarily local focus and rely entirely on volunteers.**
- **More than 1.5 million people volunteer – contributing as many hours as 90,000 full time workers annually.**
- **250,000 people act as trustees for third sector organisations.**
- **The third sector's paid staff represents 2.2% of the total workforce.**
- **Nearly 50% of third sector income comes directly from the public, but funding from such sources and from the Lottery is declining.**
- **Government and public sector funding is growing, but little comes from contracting the third sector to deliver public services.**

- 2.1 Third sector organisations are an expression of the motivation within civil society to take action independent of the state and private enterprise to improve people's quality of life. Whilst many third sector activities today reflect concerns that are shared across the UK, the struggle for Welsh nationhood, the influences of non-conformism and the culture of the labour movement have each had an influence on the growth of the third sector in Wales.
- 2.2 Over the last 200 years a wide range of motivations have driven voluntary activity – among them the urgent need to tackle poverty, to mitigate appalling working and living conditions, to overcome isolation through community organised self-improvement, to preserve and pass on cherished social, cultural and linguistic traditions. Such activities were driven as much from the grassroots, as by the philanthropy of an elite. This may help explain why voluntary action in Wales has evolved as a natural, and often unconscious, expression of neighbourly solidarity in the face of difficulties, rather than as a noble act of generosity by a wealthy elite. This perspective can still colour attitudes to 'volunteering' today.
- 2.3 First thoughts about the third sector can bring to mind many long-established and familiar 'household names' in the fields of child protection, overseas aid and conservation. But although such organisations account for a huge amount of third sector funding, they are just a handful compared to the tens of thousands of small

organisations and groups that are active at a local community level. In many instances the 'community' is a town, a village or a neighbourhood, but it can also be a 'community of interest' drawing together people with special needs and/or concerns.

- 2.4 Of the 30,000 third sector organisations active in Wales, it is estimated that at least 26,000 have a primarily local focus⁴. The great majority of them have no staff and are wholly dependent on volunteers. Of organisations registered as charities we know that almost half have an annual income of less than £10,000. We also know that over recent years the income of national charities has increased the most and that of local charities the least.
- 2.5 Only about a quarter of all third sector organisations are registered charities, the majority being relatively informally run local associations not subject to any independent regulation. The All Wales Database of Voluntary Organisations⁵ separates them all into 46 different categories and allocates them to 21 subject-focused forums that feed into the Assembly Government's Voluntary Sector Scheme.
- 2.6 It is estimated that two-thirds of adults in Wales volunteer (1.57 million people), as well as hundreds of thousands of young people under the age of 16. Most volunteering involves only a modest time commitment of around five hours or less a month. It has been calculated, nonetheless, that volunteers contributed over 160 million hours per year, being the equivalent of 90,000 full-time workers.
- 2.7 Men and women volunteer in fairly equal numbers but more is done by students and non-workers, the better educated, and those approaching or in retirement. Volunteering can be undertaken formally through third sector organisations, or more informally (and unconsciously) in many social and community settings, when it may not be thought of as volunteering. Over 250,000 volunteers act as trustees for third sector organisations.
- 2.8 The number of paid employees in the third sector has reached over 46,000, 52% of whom are full time. This workforce now represents

⁴ There are hundreds of third sector organisations in each local authority area, with larger numbers in rural authorities.

⁵ WCVA.

Distribution of third sector organisations between subject forums / networks

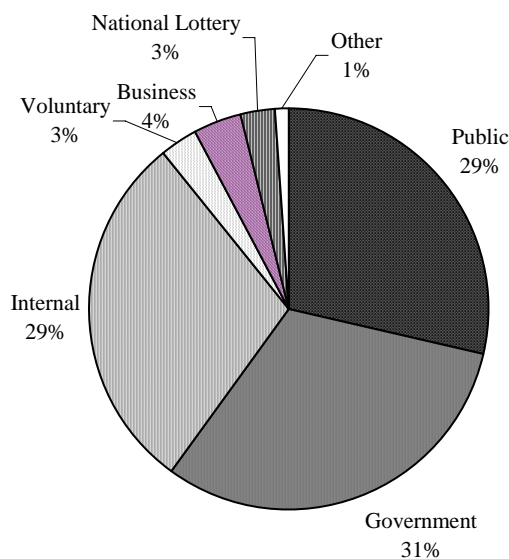
Voluntary Sector Scheme Subject Forum / Network	per cent of organisations
Sport and recreation Groups with an interest in sports and recreation, including local rugby or bridge clubs as well as regional or national sports associations	24.6 ⁶
Community Groups working to regenerate their local communities, through community facilities, local access to services, community newsletters and development programmes	16.6
Benevolent organisations All organisations, which give grants to individuals or organisations	14.3
Health and Social Care Organisations concerned with addictions, HIV/AIDS, carers, counselling, the elderly, mental health, health promotion and specific health conditions.	12.5
Children and Families Preschool provision, local centres providing services, adoption and fostering services, children's rights organisations and services for disabled children.	11.8
Youth Groups that involve young people, youth centres, young farmer's clubs, uniformed organisations and cultural groups.	9.9
Arts, Culture and Heritage Organisations involved in the production of all forms of art, organising cultural activities and organisations that aim to conserve, explain or develop heritage.	9.4
Religion Faith based groups and the social and community activities that they undertake.	8.9
Gender Gender specific groups of other activity areas, such as male voice choirs, women's organisations offering support and working for equality of opportunity.	7.2
Disability Groups which provide support for people with disabilities and their families, empower people to live in the community and campaign for change	6.6
Environment Groups concerned with natural and built environment, conservation groups, community transport groups and recycling groups.	6.6
Education and training Organisations involved in education or training as part of their work.	4.2
International aid & emergency relief Groups with an international element, be it provision of aid or cultural exchange, and local life saving societies.	3.2
Housing Housing associations, homelessness projects, care and repair schemes, housing advice services and tenants and residents associations.	2.9
Advice and advocacy Citizen Advice Bureaux, welfare rights organisations and organisations specialising in other activities but which provide advice.	2.4
Animal welfare Organisations directly concerned with animal welfare and those interested in conservation of animals or sports organisations where animals are involved.	1.9
Ethnic minorities Groups concerned with racial equality, refugees, religious and cultural activities and general activities where the group is run by members of an ethnic minority.	1.4
Community justice Organisations working with offenders, victims, prison visiting schemes and neighbourhood watch schemes.	1.0
Employment Organisations providing supported or sheltered employment and those providing facilities or advice to those seeking employment or starting businesses	0.9
Volunteering Groups that support and develop volunteers and volunteer bureaux.	0.6
Intermediaries Groups, which support other voluntary organisations.	0.4

⁶ Percentages of the All Wales Database - NB: organisations may be classified under more than one forum.

2.2% of the total working age population. In 2000, over 1 in 10 of the workforce was employed on a temporary or casual basis, this being nearly twice the rate for the paid workforce as a whole. Whilst a tiny handful of organisations employ over 100 staff, most Wales-wide bodies have just one or two staff and the majority of local bodies have none.

2.9 Total income for the sector was estimated as over £1 billion in 2005, and Figure 1 shows the main sources. There has been a decrease in public giving in recent years, a gap that has only be partly filled by the National Lottery, a source that is also now declining (Figure 2). A survey⁷ suggested that the average annual gift per person in Wales is around £10, compared with £14 for the UK as a whole, with the bulk of the money (75%) donated to national organisations.

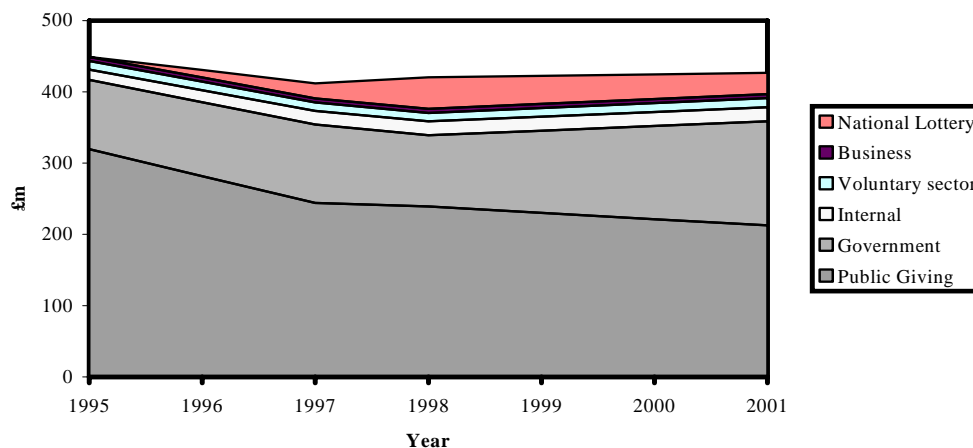
Figure 1: Sources of third sector income.⁸



⁷ NCVO/CAF Giving Survey 2004-5.

⁸ Source is the most recent WCVA Panel Survey.

Figure 2: Changes in the real value of income, excluding housing association income



2.10 In contrast, funding from the public sector has been increasing (Table 1). However significant increases in grant-aid may become less likely in future as pressure is brought to bear on the public sector to achieve efficiency savings. As a result, income generated through contracts or service level agreements for the delivery of public services, especially in response to the recent Beecham Review, may assume greater importance.

2.11 Many third sector organisations are trying to increase self-generated income through activities like trading. Social and community enterprise approaches⁹ also are being promoted through the Social Enterprise Action Plan, and they are likely to assume greater importance as third sector bodies attempt to diversify their sources of income as part of their strategy for long-term security and sustainability.

⁹ The term 'social enterprise' is used to describe a commercially structured activity run by a third sector body to generate funds towards its objectives. The activity itself may generate additional social benefits. A 'community enterprise' describes the same approach where the benefits derived are invested back into the local community for regeneration.

Table 1: Trends in public sector funding (£ million)¹⁰

	1994-5	2001-02	2004-05
UK Government	4.7	12.0	28.0
Assembly - main	13.8	37.0	57.0
Assembly - housing	126.6	69.2	39.0
Local Authorities	21.6	68.2	125.0
Health	9.2	8.8	13.4
ASPBs	11.4	29.8	60.0
Europe	16.0	28.0	29.0
Total	203.3	253.0	340.0

¹⁰ Source WCVA Voluntary Sector Almanac. Improved categorisation over time may exaggerate the increases.

In Focus: The Health, Social Care and Well Being sector in Wales

The importance of third sector organisations to the provision of services in this sector has prompted a more detailed analysis to enable better quality strategic decisions to be taken about its future involvement and capacity building needs.

It is estimated that around 5,000 services are delivered to people in all parts of Wales. Between 227 and 436 of these services can be found in each local authority area, which equates to between 15 and 43 services per 10,000 people.

The largest group of services involve advice, advocacy and helplines. The second largest provide social and community support and leisure services. The third largest help people to live independently.

The total budget of all services is estimated as £292 million, representing £98.90 per person. Local authorities are the biggest funder (£77.5m), with the Assembly Government and Local Health Boards being the next largest (at £44.5m and £10.8m, respectively).

Whilst public sector funding has increased in recent years, it is via numerous small transactions. There is also a huge geographical variation in spend, usually reflecting the history and cultures of local funders, which makes expanding good services from one area to another particularly difficult.

However third sector services are not just about budgets. Their contribution:

- encourages health lifestyle discussions and transfers health advice;
- reaches and engages people not easily accessible to public bodies or services;
- provides services in a holistic way that cross organisational boundaries;
- attracts additional resources outside 'the system' to enhance provision; and
- involves communities and users in service design and management.

Two key concerns of third sector providers are the bureaucracy of financial reporting, and the need to demonstrate attainment of quality standards. The former reduces if funding is available in larger packets and if reporting systems are harmonised between funders.

However strategic commissioning and bigger contracts can give rise to the suspicion that a few, larger organisations will come to dominate service delivery. This emphasises the need to support smaller, locally focused organisations and minimise monitoring and paperwork.

It is sometimes said that third sector bodies do not provide 'life or death' services. However a significant number of emergency and first aid services are provided by

volunteers (e.g. Royal National Lifeboat Institution, St John's Ambulance, British Red Cross and mountain rescue services). In fact volunteers are the primary providers in 18% of services, and are often seen as releasing paid staff for more technically demanding activities.

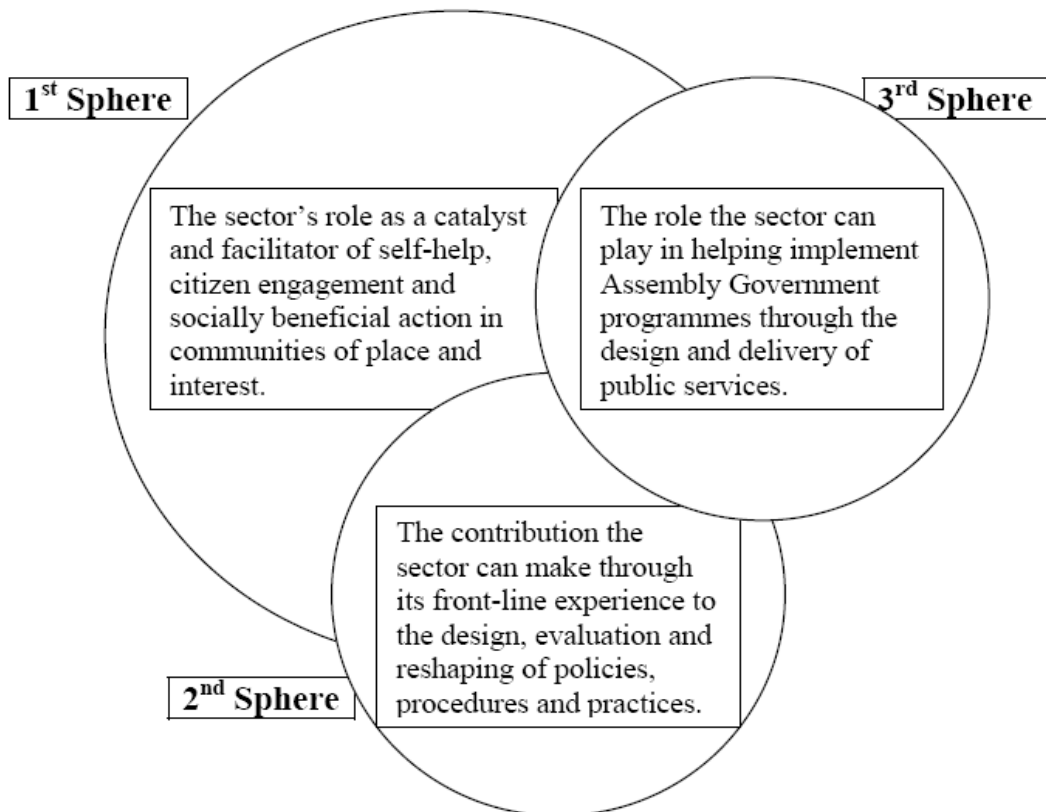
However support for volunteers is patchy with insufficiently trained volunteer managers. There is also a tendency to take a narrow view of what volunteers can do, limiting them to stereotypical welcoming services, tea bars, book trolleys and fundraising, rather than more innovative activities.

This detailed analysis is helping local authorities and health services to clarify the future role of volunteers and third sector organisations, enabling good practice to be promoted, and capacity-building needs to be identified.

3 Our interests in the third sector

- 3.1 The relationship between the Assembly Government and the third sector is a complex one. It spans the exchange of data and information, the sharing of views through various consultation processes, the joint planning, design, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and schemes, the funding of generalist and specialist support services to the sector, direct and indirect funding of individual third sector organisations across different subject areas, the outsourcing of an increasing range of public services, a shared interest in the way local authorities, the remaining ASPBs, the UK Government, the EU and other public authorities connect with the third sector, a similar shared interest in the approaches of a range of independent third sector funders, and so on.
- 3.2 Despite this complexity, it is possible to identify three distinct but overlapping 'spheres of interest' that structure and help define the relationship between the Assembly Government and the third sector:

Figure 3: The three spheres of interest



- 3.3 The first sphere is bigger than the others because it forms the foundation on which the others are built. This is because it secures the citizen involvement, operational experience and public credibility that enables the benefits in spheres two and three to be gained, and yet it is often taken for granted.
- 3.4 We value the contribution that the vast range of activities taking place within the first sphere makes to a healthy, cohesive and self-supporting society. It reflects the fundamental right of people to organise and cooperate in a free society, making voluntary action a powerful expression of active citizenship. Whilst fully respecting this right to independent action, we have a keen interest in helping the third sector to flourish and grow.

The terms ‘citizen’ and ‘citizenship’ are used in this document to define the role people play when they do something that contributes to ‘civil life’ or ‘wider society’, i.e. when they move beyond pure self-interest to respond to the interests of other people in their community of place or interest. In many instances acts of citizenship are carried out voluntarily and thus connect strongly with the principles and values of volunteering and voluntary action.

- 3.5 The second sphere reflects our interest in learning from the direct, front-line experience of third sector organisations, which is often different from that of the public and private sectors. It offers personal and human insights into the impacts of public sector programmes or of gaps in provision; it forms a channel through which the voices and experiences of ‘ordinary people’ can be heard; and it offers evidence of alternative approaches that could be developed and mainstreamed.
- 3.6 The Voluntary Sector Scheme is primarily designed to facilitate a structured and representative dialogue between us and the third sector, and it is the embodiment of this second sphere of interest.
- 3.7 The third sphere reflects an interest that is coming to the fore through Making the Connections and in response to the recent Beecham Review. Direct delivery of some public services by third sector organisations under contract is not new. However as the sector’s capacity has developed, and as people’s expectations of

the range and quality of public services they should receive has grown, the enhanced contribution that could be made by the third sector has arisen as a topic of debate.

- 3.8 A key aim of this strategy is to better define the terms upon which this enhanced contribution should be supported and developed over the years ahead.
- 3.9 Proposals that respond to each of these three spheres of interest can be found in this document, but the overlapping, dynamic nature of the relationships between them also need to be understood. They do not exist in isolation, as each can draw strength from the development and growth of the others. Conversely, each can be prejudiced and weakened by inappropriate actions under the others. In planning our future work with the third sector, all three dimensions need to be considered together.

4 The reasons for our relationship with the third sector

- 4.1 Our relationship with the third sector is based on the sector's distinctive qualities. They are that action is entered into voluntarily, that it is taken for the benefit of others, and that personal gain is relinquished in favour of the attainment of wider group or societal gain.
- 4.2 It follows from this that all of the activities taking place within the third sector are (or should be) expressions of the personal freedom and willingness of people to act voluntarily primarily to benefit others. Whatever serves to trigger and drive this motivation, it is widely recognised (both socially and legally) that it contributes to the general good of society.¹¹
- 4.3 The third sector is therefore a powerful manifestation of people's engagement and participation in society as citizens. This willingness of millions of people to act voluntarily to benefit others forms a major third force in society.
- 4.4 We therefore view third sector activity as an expression of active citizenship, and we wish to encourage and support it as a consequence.

THE STRATEGIC VISION UNDERPINNING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE THIRD SECTOR:

The Welsh Assembly Government promotes the interests of the third sector because it enables people in Wales to play a role as active citizens contributing to the good of society. The Assembly Government will support and work with the third sector to maximise its potential to engage, involve and empower the public as active citizens.

- 4.5 In framing our strategic vision we have sought to:
- place the focus on the desired outcome – that of active citizenship contributing to the good of society;
 - value the third sector as a key means through which it can be achieved;

¹¹ There may be some exceptions at the fringes, and there are tighter requirements defining charitable action.

- make links between engagement, involvement and empowerment.

- 4.6 We believe our vision should be visible in all three spheres of interest, and it should guide how our actions under each are framed and developed.
- 4.7 For example, within the first sphere we will enhance our already strong support for volunteering, and make links between this and the achievement of sustainable community development. Within the second we will work with the sector to enable citizens' voices to be heard and to influence the way things are done. Within the third we will help the sector design and deliver services that help people to play a role as active citizens. In all three we will encourage public engagement to achieve active involvement and promote empowerment experiences.
- 4.8 We believe that a third sector that engages, involves and empowers citizens by facilitating voluntary action for the good of society, is one that contributes positively to democratic governance. It does not undermine the responsibilities of elected politicians or democratically controlled public institutions. Rather, it encourages a more participative form of representative democracy in which people and politicians are in closer contact, in which both are better informed, and in which there is a mature understanding of the opportunities and constraints of, and thus the rationale for, decision-making and the consequent allocation of resources.
- 4.9 This is one of the ideals that lay behind the creation of the National Assembly for Wales, which is why the importance of public engagement and participation is stressed in so many policies and strategies. Enabling people to make an active voluntary contribution through the third sector is a major means of achieving this.

“The creation of the National Assembly is one of the most significant events in the history of Wales. It is part of a process of bringing government closer to the people, and of making more effective the public’s participation in politics.”

**Sue Essex AM
‘Finding Our Voices’, 2001**

“Wales possesses a vibrant community and voluntary sector that has the intellectual rigour to identify the challenges that face this country and the practical determination to help ensure that we are able to meet them. It is high time the energies of this sector of Welsh life were fully utilised.”

**Margaret Minhinnick
‘Finding Our Voices’, 2001**

- 4.10 The distinctive nature of third sector activity is of paramount importance in the framing of our strategy. It needs to be understood if it is to be harnessed appropriately, and it needs to be celebrated and safeguarded, not least by the sector itself. It is an aim of this strategy to clarify what we see as the sector's distinctive contribution so that appropriate decisions are taken about the role of the sector by government departments, the remaining ASPBs, local authorities, other public bodies and agencies, independent funders of the sector and third sector organisations themselves.
- 4.11 In pursuing this distinctive contribution it should be remembered that many of the people who contribute voluntarily to the good of society through third sector activities, also make a contribution through working lives spent in the public or private sectors. The third sector is therefore where people in the other two sectors (as well as those in neither) can make a special additional contribution. It follows that there are significant social links between the sectors, even if there are differences between the approaches of each. It also follows that the public and private sectors are in a strong position to help the third sector to flourish.
- 4.12 It is a basic tenet of this strategy that there are (or should be) distinctive qualities that define the character of the services and benefits provided by the public, private and third sectors. Each has its strengths and weaknesses, and it is through a better understanding of these that sound decisions can be taken about which 'model' is most suited to a given situation, set of objectives and desired outcomes. We do not therefore view public, private and third sector 'models' as infinitely flexible and inter-changeable, or believe that decisions about which to use should be decided solely through market mechanisms.
- 4.13 Moreover, our strategy¹² for high quality, accountable, ethical, collaborative services focused on the well-being of the citizen means public services working together so that boundaries between sectors, organisations or professions do not stand in the way of meeting people's needs. The transformation we are seeking from a public sector service to an integrated public service for Wales envisages a significant role for the third sector

¹² Delivering Beyond Boundaries: Transforming Public Services in Wales

working in partnership with the public sector to perform the roles in which it is uniquely well placed to excel.

5 Interwoven Themes

- 5.1 Our strategic vision for our work with the third sector will be supported through the pursuit of a range of interwoven themes:
- the crucial importance of volunteering as a means of contributing to a better society;
 - the catalytic nature of voluntary action as spur to sustainable community development;
 - the value of cross-cutting, integrated action by the third sector to meet people's multiple needs;
 - the role third sector organisations can play in empowering citizens by enabling their voices to be heard and helping them make a difference;
 - harnessing the third sector's commitment to equality and social justice;
 - the importance of listening to and involving the third sector when shaping policies and delivering services;
 - the need to build the capacity of the third sector so that it can enhance the quality and reach of its activities;
 - the validity of both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches and the crucial importance of connecting them to improve the effectiveness and sensitivity of public services;
 - the roles the public and private sectors should play in strengthening the third sector.
- 5.2 These themes should be used to guide practical action within and in response to this Strategic Action Plan.
- 5.3 In terms of the Assembly Government, we anticipate the strategy requires:
- responsibility for the Voluntary Sector Scheme and its Strategic Action Plan to lie at the heart of the next administration;
 - the sector's interests to be championed by the whole Cabinet;
 - an administrative arrangement that fuses a critical mass of key functions to provide an integrated source of strategic support to the sector;

- all departments to re-examine their interface with the third sector, and in partnership with the sector to identify actions that respond to the vision, themes and specific proposals contained in this document, for inclusion in their annual Operation Plans;
- the use of our relationship with others to persuade, and where appropriate to direct them to respond to this challenge in a similar way;
- identification of a set of 'civil empowerment indicators' that enable us and others to assess the progress being made in implementing this strategy.

5.4 In relation to the third sector, we anticipate that organisations will:

- redouble their commitment to recruiting new members / volunteers / beneficiaries as a means of engaging and actively involving citizens in the furtherance of their objectives;
- review and refine the means by which members / volunteers / beneficiaries are able to feed views into the organisation and actively participate in its activities and governance;
- maximise opportunities for their members' / volunteers' / beneficiaries' voices to be heard and have an impact, and to provide evidence that the ideas, views and solutions put forward have been shaped through this active public participation;
- explore and pilot new ways of working, including greater collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources with others in the sector, and where appropriate with the public and private sectors too;
- recognise the value of mutual cooperation to strengthen the integrity, coherence and strategic influence of the sector in its relationships with the other sectors and with the general public;
- remain true to the distinctive principles and values of voluntary action.

6 Principles, values and dimensions for action

- 6.1 Chapter 2 of the Voluntary Sector Scheme sets out a number of principles and shared values that underpin the scheme. Whilst not repeating them in full, it is appropriate in this document to reaffirm them, which we do.
- 6.2 They are aimed at nurturing a society that:
- offers equality of opportunity;
 - is inclusive, participative and empowering;
 - values and celebrates voluntary action;
 - is committed to sustainable community development.
- 6.3 We recognise the right of citizens to act freely under the law, and to form and run independent third sector organisations. We value the contribution that volunteers and third sector organisations make to the economic, social, environmental, cultural and linguistic life of Wales, and the role they play in helping formulate and deliver public policy.
- 6.4 We believe that the scheme's principles and values are deeply embedded in this Strategic Action Plan.
- 6.5 We envisage five principle dimensions for action:
- the UK level;
 - Wales-wide;
 - regionally;
 - the county level
 - the community level
- 6.6 Important aspects of Welsh life are still governed at the UK level. Action will be necessary at this level to try to ensure that Whitehall departments and UK public agencies respond positively to the thrust of this strategy.
- 6.7 Action at the Wales-wide level will be coordinated through the Voluntary Sector Scheme and the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.

- 6.8 The growing importance of the regional dimension (e.g. through the Spatial Plan) will need to be given appropriate attention in the Action Plan.
- 6.9 Actions at the county level will depend significantly on County Voluntary Councils and local Volunteer Bureaux, as well as strong support from Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts and other public sector agencies. The planned Local Service Boards will bring all sectors together to deliver a more integrated public service through Local Service Agreements.
- 6.10 Action at the community level will also involve these bodies and structures, but with additional contributions from community development, regeneration and enterprise bodies, as well as of course from individual third sector organisations working with, and providing services to, communities of place or interest.
- 6.11 Under this framework it should be possible for any third sector organisation and the citizens it involves, to take action and exercise influence at all of these levels.

7 Empowering Active Citizens

- 7.1 This Strategic Action Plan is aimed at empowering citizens as active and influential contributors to the good of society through involvement in the third sector. We will achieve this in four complementary ways.

Volunteering to make a difference

“The Assembly values volunteering as an important expression of citizenship and as an essential component of democracy.” Chapter 5, Voluntary Sector Scheme

- 7.2 We believe citizen engagement and involvement through volunteering and voluntary action is what makes the third sector distinctive. Chapter 5 of the Voluntary Sector Scheme sets out the basis of our policy which is to:
- raise the status and enhance the image of volunteering;
 - broadening what is meant by volunteering to include participation that strengthens the fabric of community life and engagement;
 - improve access to volunteering for people from all sections of society;
 - make it easier for people to participate in volunteering;
 - encourage more effective involvement of volunteers;
 - improve the organisation and infrastructure of volunteering.
- 7.3 We are pursuing these objectives through several funding programmes including the Volunteering in Wales Fund, Millennium Volunteers and Active Communities. We help fund the network of local Volunteer Bureaux across Wales and the national support services provided by the WCVA. We are pursuing a step-change in youth volunteering through three year plan to build a sustainable structure of promotion and support in partnership with the third sector. We want to encourage more volunteering by private sector employees through Corporate Challenge Wales, and are working to achieve similarly increased activity within the public sector.
- 7.4 Unlike the other countries of the UK, Wales does not have an autonomous national Volunteer Centre. Instead the WCVA integrates the following centre functions into its wider services to the sector:

- strategic leadership & representation
- policy and research
- infrastructure support
- dissemination of good practice and standard setting
- development and capacity building
- promotion and recognition of volunteering

We support this integrated approach.

7.5 We intend to work with the WCVA, the CVCs, the Volunteer Bureaux and the public, private and third sectors to:

- raise the status of volunteering so that it is more widely valued and appreciated;
- design and run a media campaign to increase the scale of volunteering within all communities;
- promote a step change in the commitment of public, private and voluntary bodies towards volunteering to enhance both the quantity and quality of volunteering opportunities and experiences;
- further strengthen the organisational framework of support for volunteering;
- further develop volunteering within the Assembly Government itself as an employer.

7.6 In summary, the outcomes we seek include greater recognition of the multiple benefits of volunteering, increasing the numbers of volunteers in all age groups, helping them give more time and make a higher quality contribution, the removal of barriers to volunteering to make it easier to undertake both formally and informally, strengthening practical systems of support in all sectors, better ways of measuring and valuing volunteering, and achieving wider public appreciation and celebration of volunteers' contribution to people's quality of life.

Building sustainable communities

- 7.7 Community development and sustainable development require actions to be taken by the public and private sectors. However when citizens take voluntary action themselves it can send powerful messages to these sectors. By empowering active citizens through the third sector we want to strengthen their role as catalysts in the building of sustainable communities. We want them to apply an inescapable pressure for positive change that is felt by the public and private sectors who must give serious support in response.

“...communities are not without power. Their advocacy may be based on experiences as a resident in a regeneration area or a service user or a victim or survivor of crime. This experiential power provides a source of expertise that professionals or politicians may not have and gives them credibility and legitimacy with the community and, possibly with other stakeholders.”

National evaluation of Community Strategies in Wales, 2006

“...no other approach or process can offer the same rich history of experience in enabling the voices of communities to be heard, particularly from those sections of the community that have traditionally been ignored.”

Draft National Strategy for Community Development, 2006

- 7.8 Chapter 6 of the Voluntary Sector Scheme identifies the link between voluntary action and sustainable community development. However we recognise that the synergy between them has not been fully harnessed to date, and we intend to make more of this in future. In particular, we see the growth of community-owned regeneration and enterprise bodies as an important feature of the third sector’s recent evolution which we want to encourage. However, we also recognise that many third sector organisations contribute to sustainable community development in a variety of ways.
- 7.9 Our National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales, ‘Iaith Pawb’ recognises that *“the health and energetic development of the Welsh language will be under serious threat if it ceases to be a language that has a strong presence in the community.”*

We believe that the third sector has an especially important role to play in supporting use of the language at a community level. Where third sector organisations are delivering public services it is likely that the Welsh Language Act will apply, but even where the provision of bilingual services is not a statutory requirement many third sector organisations are making a strong commitment through the adoption of Welsh Language Schemes, and we wish to encourage this approach by working strategically with the sector and the Welsh Language Board¹³.

- 7.10 Detailed proposals are set out in the Action Plan. The outcomes we seek include achieving significant improvements to the quality of life in Communities First areas, promoting wider understanding of the benefits of community development beyond these areas, a cadre of community development staff and third sector trustees who are better trained and supported than at present, wider application of community enterprise approaches, greater sensitivity to the linguistic and cultural needs of different communities, and generating synergy between community development and the other elements of our third sector strategy.

¹³ To include successor arrangements

Helping citizens to be heard

“The [citizen] model relies on voice to drive improvement... mechanisms for informing and engaging the public need to be transformed... Engagement with citizens needs to be much more professional, with capacity and expertise shared across local organisations.”

Beecham Review, 2006

“There is general enthusiasm to engage with the Assembly and contribute to its policy development. Many local organisations believe they can add value to national level policy development and delivery.”

CVC consultation on WAG’s strategy for the voluntary sector, 2003

- 7.11 Whilst primarily focused on the delivery of public services, Making the Connections has re-ignited debate about how citizens can be empowered to exert a real influence on decision making. Its vision places *“citizens at the centre”* and states that: *“Every citizen must have the opportunity to contribute to the social and economic life of Wales.”* This means more than occasional elections. It means greater participation by citizens in the way services are designed and delivered.
- 7.12 Our vision recognises the sector’s intrinsic strengths in mobilising citizens and articulating their concerns. Greater value consequently needs to be drawn from the sector’s expertise in citizen engagement and community participation. Third sector organisations also need to refine and redouble their efforts to engage, involve and empower people through their activities.
- 7.13 A recent study by the Wales Centre for Health showed how few sources of support are available for people trying to promote citizen engagement in Wales. What is required to build skills and capacity in this field is currently being examined under Making the Connections. We are also supporting Participation Cymru’s efforts to build expertise in citizen engagement in the public and third sectors.

“Apart from the courses offered by Participation Cymru, there are no specific Community/Public Engagement training or education courses available in Wales, although some consultancies in Wales offer tailored training.”

7.14 Chapter 4 of the Voluntary Sector Scheme describes the way we consult with the third sector. More recently we have accepted that a minimum of 12 weeks is the ideal for consultations. Introduction of our Policy Gateway has further refined our approach, and is allowing us to include third sector participants in the policy development process. In order to make public sector consultation as accessible as possible to citizens we intend to produce a publicly available Code of Practice on Consultation suitable for wide application.

“The Assembly will build consultation into plans for policy development... [and] ... will undertake consultation at a sufficiently early stage... so that the resulting proposals are in line with current experience and thinking in the field and avoid incorrect assumptions and misunderstandings at later stages.”

Chapter 4, Voluntary Sector Scheme

7.15 The Government of Wales Act 2006 has strengthened the powers of the National Assembly and the Assembly Government to shape ‘made in Wales’ policies and to back them where necessary by legislation. The new ‘Orders in Council’ offer citizens and third sector organisations the chance to draw down new powers through which innovative and distinctive legislation can be introduced. There are also opportunities for more direct involvement in scrutinising our performance and that of other public bodies. The third sector’s knowledge and expertise, and its close contact with citizens, especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized, makes it a crucial player if these new democratic mechanisms are to prove effective.

7.16 To try to measure the impact our strategy has in terms of engaging, involving and empowering citizens, we will identify a set of ‘civil empowerment indicators’. This might include the annual amount of volunteering effort, and the quantity and quality of volunteering opportunities, the growth in the number and size of third sector organisations, the number / proportion of citizens getting involved in civil activities, and the numbers of people voting in elections.

Delivering citizen-centred public services

- 7.17 Our vision recognises the third sector's distinctive qualities. We do not subscribe to the view that the public, private and third sectors are infinitely flexible and can provide exactly the same types and standards of service such that the only factors involved in deciding who should deliver them are efficiency and cost.
- 7.18 Each sector has its strengths and weaknesses, and understanding these is a key aspect of the collaborative approach we are advocating for Wales, in which those best placed to provide high quality front-line services are identified and supported to do so through partnership working. Greater involvement of the third sector in public service delivery is therefore about harnessing its distinctive strengths to transform the responsiveness and reach of public services to meet citizens' needs.
- 7.19 We believe the third sector is in a particularly strong position to provide front line services when:¹⁴
- users have multiple disadvantages, requiring a coordinated portfolio of services from an informed provider;
 - the service needs to be directed at sections of the community that have been excluded from traditional service provision;
 - the service is targeted at users who are likely to mistrust businesses or state providers;
 - the service is labour-intensive, where the flexibility and commitment of volunteers can be an asset;
 - the needs of service users are highly variable;
 - the quality of service required by procurers is difficult to specify, measure and monitor; and
 - where procurers are unsure of the exact service required, and are seeking innovative proposals.

One of the important advantages of third sector organisations is their ability to engage clients with multiple disadvantages which can prevent them engaging with 'traditional' service providers:

- ***financial disadvantage: clients lack the money to purchase services from the***

¹⁴ Source: HM Treasury Cross-Cutting Review: The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery, 2002

private sector;

- ***personal disadvantage:*** *clients cannot easily articulate a coherent preference about what services they require (e.g. users with learning difficulties, mental health problems, children or older people);*
- ***social disadvantage:*** *clients are ‘blamed’ or stigmatised by society, which can stop services they require being directed towards them;*
- ***community disadvantage:*** *clients are living in a community where market, political and civil structures have broken down.*

Unlike third sector providers, those in the public sector are often unable to deal with more than one disadvantage and those in the private sector are constrained by the ability to pay.

Source: Billis and Glennerster, 1998

7.20 People’s multiple needs are often complicated and intertwined, and it can be difficult to tackle them separately. Third sector organisations tend to focus on overall outcomes to clients who may themselves be intimately involved in the organisation’s activities. They can also generate wider benefits such as public engagement, building the skills and experience of volunteers, keeping money and resources circulating locally, and strengthening trust within the community.

7.21 Public service procurement rules and practices have been identified as barriers which prevent third sector organisations competing successfully for contracts. As a result we are pursuing a range of initiatives including raising the third sector’s profile with procurers via Value Wales, helping the sector take better advantage of tender opportunities, and identifying how organisations can work together to increase efficiency, e.g. by sharing ‘back-office’ services. We propose to take this work forward through a Third Sector Procurement Group and publication of a ‘charter’ providing good practice on the procurement of services from the third sector.

THIRD SECTOR DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH:

GRANTS: funding that can be provided by the Assembly Government and other public bodies as a means of offering financial support to third sector organisations to enable them to undertake activities they wish to support. Grants may be aimed at assisting with the core costs of running and developing an organisation or more specifically to help it carry out a particular project or service. The grant giver is not

contracting for a service that forms part of its own business.

PROCUREMENT: the acquisition of goods and services from third party suppliers under legally binding contractual terms where all the conditions necessary to form a legal contract have been met. Such acquisitions are for the direct benefit of the contracting authority, necessary for the delivery of its service or for the running of its own business.

- 7.22 The third sector can improve public services by being involved in their design, commissioning and evaluation. Groups set up by, or involving people who use public services should play an active part in shaping improvements to those services. They should be able to do this in ways that do not prejudice the third sector's opportunity to deliver improved services. We therefore envisage Local Services Boards enabling third sector organisations to play an enhanced role as citizens' advocates, providers of policy and service development expertise, and as delivery partners.
- 7.23 A citizen centred approach requires individuals and groups to have access to information, advice and support on their rights and responsibilities. The third sector offers these services in a uniquely independent way that centres on clients' needs. There is a great diversity of such services, but their provision across Wales is patchy. We recognise the need for a strategic approach, especially where such services are threatened by tightening standards, regulations and resources, and we will work with the sector to achieve this for both advice and advocacy services.
- 7.24 Enhancing third sector involvement in the delivery of citizen-centred public services will require further capacity building. Several grant programmes are already helping to enhance the sector's performance, but we want to accelerate this by introducing a Third Sector Capacity Building Fund. This fund could be used to:
- modernise business management systems;
 - raise the skills of trustees, staff and volunteers;
 - improve business management and tendering expertise;
 - develop shared working arrangements to improve efficiencies;
 - introduce quality assurance systems;
 - better involve members / volunteers / beneficiaries in services;
 - work across public sector boundaries.

8 Supporting Empowerment

- 8.1 Our commitment to empowering citizens through their involvement with the third sector will be supported in three complementary ways:

The Voluntary Sector Scheme and Compacts

“The National Assembly’ Voluntary Sector Scheme has put Wales in the forefront of government-voluntary sector partnerships, and has drawn international interest and acclaim.”

‘Civil Society, Civil Space’, WCVA, 2003

- 8.2 The key mechanism through which we intend to fulfil our vision for the third sector is the statutory Voluntary Sector Scheme. This was judged *“still fit for purpose”* when it was reviewed by an Independent Commission in 2003/4, and we do not intend to repeat such a thorough review in the near future.
- 8.3 We will focus instead on improving the way the scheme operates in practice. Our vision emphasises the cross-cutting nature of our work to promote the interests of the third sector in all aspects of the Assembly Government’s work. The scheme will therefore lie at the centre of the new administration, championed by the whole Cabinet and supported by an integrated Third Sector Unit with strong links to all policy and service departments. Each department will be required to prepare its own action plan which responds to the vision, themes and proposals contained in this document.
- 8.4 We will explore the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council’s potential to function as a strategic ‘think tank’ on future opportunities for third sector / public sector collaboration. We will seek greater value and reach from the specialist networks feeding into the scheme to draw more of the smaller, locally focused groups into engagement. The work of the biannual Ministerial meetings should be guided more strategically by the relevant actions in annual departmental Operational Plans. We will also facilitate an effective dialogue between all three partnership councils¹⁵.

¹⁵ i.e. those for local government, business and the third sector.

- 8.5 At the UK level we will seek assurances from Whitehall departments that they will comply with the terms of the scheme through our ‘concordats’ with them. We will also take an active role, with the sector, in influencing ideas and developments at the UK level, feeding in the unique experiences under our scheme.
- 8.6 We will work with the sector to ensure there are effective arrangements for monitoring compliance with the scheme. This includes compliance with the Code of Funding and other ‘best practice’ codes for promoting the interests of the sector. Responsibility for monitoring implementation of the Strategic Action Plan will lie with the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.
- 8.7 We expect local authorities, the remaining ASPBs and other public agencies, including the health sector, to respond positively to our vision and the proposals in this document. We continue to view ‘compacts’, backed up by effective operational processes, to be the principal vehicle through which public / third sector dialogue and joint working should be pursued. Delivering Beyond Boundaries, Local Service Boards and Local Service Agreements, other strategic partnerships, spatial planning and so on, all reinforce the importance of flexible cross boundary collaboration, especially in the design and delivery of services. Compacts are valuable in clarifying how this collaborative approach will work in practice.
- 8.8 We expect to see an immediate strengthening of compact-based working at local, regional and national levels, and we will monitor progress in this direction closely. Depending on the response, we will consider issuing further Guidance on this subject.

“The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to monitor... progress in developing strong local partnerships between local authorities and the voluntary sector on the basis of local compacts.”

‘Freedom and Responsibility’, WAG paper, 2002

Generic and specialist support services

“...the Welsh Assembly Government is committed to ensuring that there is an integrated infrastructure that represents, promotes, supports, develops and is accountable to the full range of voluntary sector activity at national and local level.”

Partnership agreement between the WAG and the WCVA, 2006

8.9 Development and growth of the third sector is supported by a range of generic and specialist support services. The generic service comprises the WCVA, the County Voluntary Councils and the local Volunteer Bureaux. There are in addition many specialist bodies providing many kinds of support services to the sector, covering issues such as fundraising, community development, race awareness, equalities practice, environmental practice, rural concerns, and so on.

8.10 In relation to the generic support service, the close relationship between the WCVA, the CVCs and the independent Volunteer Bureaux has been strengthened by the adoption of a Partnership Agreement between the Assembly Government and the WCVA¹⁶. This agreement has led to a fundamental review of the services provided through the infrastructure, and a commitment from all levels to provide a seamless comprehensive service. A series of service specifications underpinned by comprehensive training and information frameworks has been drawn up covering:

- volunteering;
- trustees and governance;
- funding advice;
- general information guidance and support;
- policy facilitation and representation;
- development, initiatives and regeneration.

Under the Partnership Agreement, all three parties have pledged to work together to ensure that the links and coordination at local, regional and national levels produce:

- **added value through best use of expertise and knowledge;**
- **equity and equality through a reliable level of service;**

¹⁶ The agreement clarifies the complementary services to be provided by the WCVA, the CVCs and the VBx. Through its funding frameworks for the CVCs and the VBx, the WCVA has agreed minimum services standards with them.

- **best practice through effective monitoring, evaluation and sharing;**
- **value for money through economies of scale.**

- 8.11 The aim is to ensure that citizens as users, trustees, volunteers and campaigners, can receive the support they need to make an active contribution. Over time, the infrastructure will become an integrated citizen action and support service. As part of the commitment to a quality service, a programme of accredited training for infrastructure staff will be developed, and it is anticipated that staff from CVCs, independent Volunteer Bureaux, and WCVA, involved in delivering each specification will meet as 'service delivery networks' to review their collective performance and look at ways of improving the service. Other support agencies will be increasingly encouraged to align their services to provide added value, and will be encouraged not to duplicate the core services.
- 8.12 This generic infrastructure is a knowledgeable and valuable resource that should be utilised by all Assembly Government departments, the remaining ASPBs, local authorities and public agencies wishing to enhance their involvement with the third sector.
- 8.13 Some of the specialist services also receive funding from us. Economies of scale tend to limit the scope and availability of such services, which makes them all the more precious. We would like to see a greater awareness of what they can offer, and to encourage their development where possible.

Capacity building for raised performance and growth

“Across the range of its functions, the Assembly is committed to establishing and maintaining procedures to ensure accepted best practice in the administration of its grant schemes and those of agencies which administer funds on its behalf... The Assembly will maintain a Code of Practice for funding the voluntary sector....”

Chapter 2, Voluntary Sector Scheme

- 8.14 A third area we intend to focus on is support to raise the performance of the sector. This not only means grant-aid but other forms of income, as well as the availability of capacity building expertise. In relation to effective funding, we would like to see greater recognition of the need for capacity-building support to go hand-in-hand with pure funding to maximise the potential for raised performance and growth.

Environment Wales is a partnership of organisations in the voluntary sector, funded by the Assembly Government. It promotes voluntary action to protect and improve the environment. Five grant streams support practical environmental action including education or advisory services, projects generating social or economic benefits, and training for staff and volunteers.

Launched in 1991, Environment Wales is rooted in the third sector and has pioneered an approach that makes the capacity and expertise of its partner organisations accessible to hundreds of other groups across Wales. Skilful support by its team of development officers has nurtured many innovative sustainable development projects beyond initial feasibility to become well established and highly successful operations.

Crucial to its distinctive approach is the recognition that both projects and growing third sector organisations require more than just funding – they need information, guidance, training, research and networking support that promotes the sharing and cascading of knowledge and experience across the sector. Its latest innovation is Green Pages which facilitates trading between EW registered projects.

Although Environment Wales has received praise from several rigorous evaluations and has survived as a programme well beyond the usual life span of schemes, it has rarely if ever been replicated either within or beyond the Assembly Government. Its steady, long term investment approach has clearly paid dividends.

EW exemplars: Cylch, Wastesavers, Craft, Antur Waunfawr, Amelia Trust, Riverside Market, Shared Earth Trust, Sundance Renewables.

- 8.15 We are determined to ensure that we adhere to the Code of Practice for Funding, and that other public sector bodies do likewise. Recent monitoring suggests a significant degree of non-compliance, and this needs to be addressed through relevant actions in annual departmental Operation Plans.
- 8.16 The Code also needs to embody our commitment to Full Cost Recovery, in which the full costs borne by the third sector in managing a project or delivering a service are built into the funding terms. We want to promote the sector's activities because of their distinctive qualities, not because they are a cheap alternative to public or private sector provision.
- 8.17 There is an urgent need right across the sector to diversify funding sources to achieve greater security and sustainability. In this respect Wales faces some challenges, including the fact that:
- tax efficient giving by the public is low;
 - few major private companies have their HQs here;
 - there are only a small number of grant-making trusts;
 - there are few sources of loan finance;
 - entrepreneurial and business management skills are in short supply;
 - fundraising expertise is low and very public sector orientated.
- 8.18 There are challenges too for funding bodies of all kinds. The last 15 years has seen third sector funding become more complex and sophisticated. Along with this has come a tendency for funders to be increasingly prescriptive in their aims, very competitive in their approach and more demanding in their monitoring. This makes managing a complex project involving several funders more difficult than it need be, and it can also put start-up funding beyond the reach of embryonic groups because they lack the skills needed to beat the competition. Funding criteria also tend to emphasise newness over effectiveness, forcing applicants to reconfigure successful activities or abandon them altogether.
- 8.19 We are working towards less prescriptive, more bottom-up approaches in which communities of place or interest can exercise greater control over the way funded

activities develop in response to real community needs¹⁷. We would like to see more of this community development orientated funding.

- 8.20 Funders need to be clear whether they are making a short-term contribution to support an organisation's aims, buying or procuring services or goods from the sector, or making a longer term investment to build the sector's capacity. Third sector bodies need to plan their fundraising more strategically so that they remain focused on their goals whilst diversifying funding, building in all the costs involved, and staying true to their values.
- 8.21 At county and community levels there is a need to identify, train and support a cadre of 'community entrepreneurs' – often volunteers with special talents or leadership skills who can make things happen and/or motivate others to achieve genuine change. We would like to reinforce the work of CVCs, UnLtd and others in this endeavour.
- 8.22 Given the enhanced role we foresee for the third sector in Wales, we want to help it raise the quality and reliability of its performance. Passion for an organisation's aims is a characteristic feature of third sector culture, but serious and sustainable improvements to people's quality of life also requires some hard headed analysis and the application of systems that raise performance and increase effectiveness. Regular feedback and evaluation is an essential part of this process.

“We're delighted to be the first third sector organisation to achieve Investors in Excellence. I am particularly pleased because it recognises our commitment to continuous improvement and organisational learning.”

Graham Benfield OBE, Chief Executive, WCVA, 2006

- 8.23 Several quality assurance and business management systems are being used by third sector organisations, including Investors in People, Investors in Excellence, Investing in Volunteers and Green Dragon. For small organisations there is also the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations (PQASSO)¹⁸. The need for quality assurance can be seen, for example, in third sector organisations

¹⁷ The Assembly Government's Sustainable Health Action Research Programme adopted a successful action research approach over six years creating many sustainable projects, and the lessons learnt are now guiding the Mentro Allan scheme. The Communities First programme is also generating good practice in this area.

¹⁸ PQASSO is available through the Charities Evaluation Services.

that deliver learning – they can be subject to an ESTYN inspection particularly if they have funding from DELLS or ESF. Wherever possible we would like to see increased use of quality assurance systems.

8.24 In future, the attainment and monitoring of quality standards will require a more consistent approach to measuring outputs and outcomes, especially in the context of the third sector's enhanced contribution to public service delivery under 'Making the Connection - Delivering Beyond Boundaries'.

9 Empowerment for Change

- 9.1 We want our vision for our future work with the third sector, elaborated under the seven above headings, to make a real difference to the opportunities open to people in every community to get actively involved in shaping a better Wales. We are fortunate that the partnership we are seeking can be built on an already tried, tested and good working relationship facilitated through the Voluntary Sector Scheme. Our strategy is aimed at achieving even more from this relationship by giving it a clearer focus and direction.
- 9.2 We believe the direction we are proposing runs firmly with the grain of many recent strategic policies, not least Delivering Beyond Boundaries, Health Challenge Wales, Designed for Life, the Social Enterprise Strategy, Learning to Live Differently and the new opportunities arising from the Government of Wales Act. These and many other policies emphasise the critical need to engage more effectively with the public in order to respond more sensitively to their needs and tap more effectively into their knowledge, motivations and energies to achieve positive and lasting changes that improve lives.
- 9.3 In all of this, the role and contribution of the third sector is coming to the fore. No longer an ‘afterthought’, the sector is proving itself to be a major Welsh asset and a powerful force for change – challenging, complementing and extending the roles played by the public and private sectors. This requires all three to think more deeply about their interaction, and to achieve a clearer understanding of their respective strengths and weaknesses so that they can work better together. There may be opportunities and threats to consider, but approached in the right way the debate we are keen to stimulate should prove propitious and genuinely useful.
- 9.4 Experience shows that the most effective way of disarming resistance, spreading enlightenment and releasing enthusiasm is through successful ‘real life’ examples of better ways of working. We have drawn attention to a few of these in this document, but we know there are many more, and we invite suggestions. Such exemplars will play a crucial part in spreading the messages contained here, and they challenge people in all three sectors to open their eyes to new perspectives and approaches that can deliver a better future for the people of Wales.

‘Empowering active citizens to contribute to Wales’

A Strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme

ACTION PLAN

2007/8 to 2010/11

Empowering active citizens:

- 1. *Volunteering to make a difference***
- 2. *Building sustainable communities***
- 3. *Helping citizens to be heard***
- 4. *Delivering citizen-centred services***

Supporting empowerment:

- 5. *Voluntary Sector Scheme and Compacts***
- 6. *Generic and specialist support services***
- 7. *Capacity building for raised performance and growth***

ACTION PLAN:

1. Empowering active citizens: <i>Volunteering to make a difference</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Work with others to design and run a media campaign to raise the status of volunteering, to increase the numbers of volunteers and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities and experiences. Link this appropriately with Volunteering Week, Volunteer Awards and other promotional strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out of the media campaign • 5% increase in volunteering in population • 10% increase in volunteering • Evaluation showing increases in quality and quantity of opportunities and experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By Sept 2009 • By April 2011 • By Sept 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA, CVCs and Volunteer Bureaux
b) Each WAG Department to clarify how it will enhance the contribution of volunteers to the delivery of its objectives within its annual Operational Plan, reflecting the vision, themes and proposals in this Strategic Action Plan (Task 5c). Challenge other public sector bodies to do likewise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant actions included in annual departmental Operational Plans which address volunteering contribution • Monitoring and evaluation to show positive measurable impacts • Evidence of positive response by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Mar 2008 • From Mar 2008 • By Mar 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental Directors • Third Sector Networks
c) Design and utilise an appropriate set of indicators and monitoring systems that enable the impact of these and related actions to promote volunteering to be measured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of indicators and systems • First set of results obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA, CVCs and Volunteer Bureaux
d) Continue overseeing implementation of the Partnership Agreement to develop a comprehensive and seamless generic support service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of agreed milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six monthly reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA, CVCs and Volunteer Bureaux
e) Work with others to produce a more detailed Action Plan to remove barriers and make it easier to volunteer. This plan to include promotion of Investing in Volunteers, Code of Practice for Involving Volunteers, training for volunteer managers and corporate policies for volunteering..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of the Volunteering Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By March 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA, CVCs and Volunteer Bureaux
f) Progress the Russell Commission Implementation Plan for Wales to achieve a step change in the numbers and diversity of young people involved in youth-led volunteering opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of agreed targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By September 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • Programme Steering Group
g) Work with the private sector to promote volunteering as an aspect of corporate social responsibility via Corporate Challenge Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% increase in business-led volunteering • 10% increase in business-led volunteering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2009 • By April 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • DEIN • Business sector networks
h) Sustain and enhance opportunities for employee volunteering within the Assembly Government's workforce and challenge other public sector bodies to do likewise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale and nature of the workforce's volunteer contribution • Evidence of positive response by others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2009 • By Sept 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit

1. Empowering active citizens: *Volunteering to make a difference: Levels for action:*

Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
1(a)		*			
1(b)		*			
1(c)		*			
1(d)		*	*	*	
1(e)		*		*	
1(f)	*	*			
1(g)		*		*	*
1(h)		*			

ACTION PLAN:

2. Empowering active citizens: <i>Building sustainable communities</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Consider revising the current structure to a Third Sector Unit that is able to develop synergy between Communities First, the Social Economy Action Plan, the National Strategy for Community Development, the third sector Strategic Action Plan and other relevant Assembly Government strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective organisational arrangements in place • Evidence of effective synergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2007 • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAG Cabinet • Management Board
b) Work with the Sustainable Development Indicators Working Group to identify and use a set of 'citizen empowerment indicators' which can be used to measure the impact of this Strategic Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set of indicators introduced • First set of results produced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • Strategic Policy Unit
c) Sustain commitment to Communities First and respond to the recommendations of the interim evaluation published Sept 2006.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of significant progression from the base-line evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • CFSN
d) Promote community development techniques Wales-wide, the strengthening of training frameworks and professional development opportunities, and identifying and sharing good practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of more effective, better supported training frameworks • Further capacity building of Community Development Cymru and other networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2008 • From April 2007 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • DELLS • CDC
e) Continue implementation of the Social Enterprise Action Plan including enhancing business support services, helping expand effective sources of investment, and strengthening knowledge networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of key actions in the Plan, rolling them forward as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and roll forward by April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WAG Depts. • DTA, CEW etc.
f) Refine and resource the mechanisms of support for trustees aimed at recruiting and retaining them, and developing their skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and launch of a package of support linked to the volunteering media campaign • Numbers of trustees benefiting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • DELLS • WCVA & CVCs
g) Strengthen the third sector's support for the use of Welsh as a community language through strategic collaboration between the sector, the Assembly Government and the Welsh Language Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement of a Compact between the WLB, the Welsh Assembly Government and the third sector • Evidence of the linguistic impact of this compact and the WLB's Voluntary Sector Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WLB • Mentrau Iaith
h) Support agreement on a compact between the third sector and the new Equalities and Human Rights Commission to promote good community relations and help individuals seek redress if they experience discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement on the Compact • Evidence of the compact's impact in furthering equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA • VSS Networks • E&HR Commission

2. Empowering active citizens: *Building sustainable communities: Levels for action:*

Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
2(a)		*			
2(b)		*			
2(c)		*			
2(d)		*		*	
2(e)		*	*	*	
2(f)		*		*	
2(g)		*	*		*
2(h)		*		*	

ACTION PLAN:

3. Empowering active citizens: <i>Helping citizens to be heard</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Each WAG Department to clarify how it will work with the third sector to give voice to citizens' interests and concerns. This to be addressed through relevant action in annual departmental Operational Plans, reflecting the vision, themes and proposals in this Strategic Action Plan (Task 5c).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant actions included in annual departmental Operational Plans which include citizen engagement • Evidence enhanced citizen engagement through the third sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • All WAG depts. • WCVA & CVCs
b) Challenge local authorities, the remaining ASPBs and other public agencies to take similar action to enhance this aspect of the third sector's role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of an effective response to this challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAG Cabinet • WLGA • ASPBs etc.
c) Ensure guidance on Community Strategies, Spatial Planning, and other key planning and priority setting processes stresses expectation of an appropriate involvement of the third sector as equal partners and a conduit for public engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of this advice in guidance • Evidence that it is making an impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • LG&C • SP&PS
d) Review the provision of training and support for staff and citizens engaged in participative practices with a view to determining the future evolution of Participation Cymru and complementary sources of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed and recommendations implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MtC Unit • Participation Cymru
e) Consider introducing a publicly available 'Code of Practice on Consultation', to apply to the Assembly Government and other public agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that information on consultation processes is publicly available • Level of internal and external compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSPC

3. Empowering active citizens: *Helping citizens to be heard: Levels for action:*

Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
3(a)		*			
3(b)		*		*	
3(c)		*	*	*	
3(d)		*			
3(e)		*			

ACTION PLAN:

4. Empowering active citizens: <i>Delivering citizen-centred public services</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Promote an enhanced role for the third sector in the involvement of the third sector in the design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of public services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the active involvement of the third sector in Local Service Boards and in delivery through Local Service Agreements • Evidence of a significant increase in third sector involvement in all aspects above the current baseline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MtC Unit and all public services depts. • Local Authorities • ASPBs, LHBs etc. • WCVA and CVCs
b) Greater visibility and recognition for the sector in procurement regimes and information systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of third sector 'Charter' providing good practice guidance on procurement of services from third sector • Evidence that regimes and systems clearly acknowledge the potential for third sector provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Wales • WAG Third Sector Procurement Group
c) Raised awareness, familiarisation and training for public services procurement officers of third sector potential.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate initiatives • Numbers receiving guidance and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Wales • WAG Third Sector Procurement Group
d) Explicit recognition of the distinctive qualities of third sector service provision in contract specifications and tendering procedures. Such recognition to be given in appropriate circumstances by the Assembly Government and other public agencies, including the health sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of significant change in contract specifications and tendering procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value Wales • WAG Third Sector Procurement Group
e) More accessible and better tailored business support services for third sector organisations wishing to tender for public service delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of significant improvements in business support for the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEIN • WAG Third Sector Procurement Group
f) Development of collaborative working arrangements within the third sector to increase performance efficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of initial opportunities • Number and nature of such arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA and CVCs • VSS Networks
g) Development of effective strategic approaches to improve the coverage, independence and quality of information, advice and advocacy services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of the impact of the Advice Services Strategy for Wales • Adoption of an Advocacy Services Strategy for Wales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2008 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSS Networks • WCVA and CVCs • Advocacy Wales

h) Consider introducing a Third Sector Services Capacity Building Fund.	• A well argued case properly considered	• By Dec 2007	• Third Sector Unit
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4. Empowering active citizens: <i>Citizen-centred public services: Levels for action:</i>					
Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
4(a)		*	*	*	
4(b)		*			
4(c)		*	*	*	
4(d)	*	*	*	*	*
4(e)		*			*
4(f)		*	*	*	*
4(g)		*		*	
4(h)		*			

ACTION PLAN:

5. Supporting empowerment: <i>The Voluntary Sector Scheme and Compacts</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Create an effective Third Sector Unit comprising a critical mass of relevant expertise to promote all aspects of this Strategic Action Plan across and beyond the Assembly Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Unit • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • Year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet • Management Board
b) Designate, train and support a network of Third Sector Liaison Officers with responsibility for each Department.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of appropriate staff • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • Year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Board • Third Sector Unit • WCVA
c) Inclusion of relevant actions reflecting the vision, themes and specific proposals in this Strategic Action Plan, in annual departmental Operational Plans (see also Tasks 1b and 3a).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant actions included in annual departmental Operational Plans • Use of actions to guide Ministerial meetings • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Mar 2008 • From Mar 2008 • Year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAG Depts. • Third Sector Unit • VSPC
d) Require the remaining ASPBs to respond positively to the vision, themes and specific proposals in the Strategic Action Plan, and use influence on other public agencies to respond similarly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement in annual remit letters • Ensure guidance to public agencies makes appropriate reference to the third sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2008 • From 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers • WAG Depts.
e) Highlight the importance of bilateral and multi-lateral compacts, backed up by effective operational processes, as the principal vehicle for local authority and public sector collaboration with the third sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue guidance to this effect • Annual performance monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2007 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministers • WAG Depts. • Third Sector Unit • WCVA and CVCs
f) Facilitate regular dialogue between all three partnership councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise cross-representation • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WAG Depts. • Partnership Councils
g) Brief Whitehall Departments on the VSS and urge compliance with its terms under the 'concordats'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key briefings completed • Annual performance monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2008 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSPC
h) Ensure Wales is effectively represented in relevant UK level discussions on third sector issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA
i) Update the terms of the VSS to reflect the Strategic Action Plan and recent developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working group to make recommendations • Update the scheme appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • April 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSPC
j) Review VSS mechanisms and trial innovative formats and thematic methods of working, especially for the Partnership Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete review with recommendations • Evaluate effective approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSPC

k) Continue to build the capacity of VSS specialist networks, and clarify their role in helping implement the Strategic Action Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real and 'in kind' resources invested • Annual performance reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSS Networks • VSPC
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5. Supporting empowerment: VS Scheme and Compacts: Levels for action:					
Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
5(a)		*			
5(b)		*			
5(c)		*			
5(d)		*			
5(e)		*	*	*	
5(f)		*			
5(g)	*	*			
5(h)	*	*			
5(i)		*			
5(j)		*			
5(k)		*			

ACTION PLAN:

6. Supporting empowerment: <i>Generic and specialist support services</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Require all Assembly Government Departments and the remaining ASPBs, and urge local authorities and other public agencies, to utilise the knowledge and expertise of the generic support service when coordinating their work or planning new initiatives with the third sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased use of the service • Monitoring through the VSPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2008 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA • CVCs • Volunteer Bureaux
b) Build on the opportunities for better integration of the generic support service through the Partnership Agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance measurement and reporting via the half yearly and annual reviews • Regular user satisfaction surveys, feedback and evaluation • Full formal review of the Agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept and March each year • As programmed • March 2007 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA • CVCs • Volunteer Bureaux
c) Prepare and roll out appropriate generic service specifications and partnership initiatives to provide improved 'back office' services more efficiently to help drive up standards across the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breadth and impact of these specifications and partnership initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA • CVCs • Volunteer Bureaux
d) Carry out a review of specialist third sector services available in Wales with a view to making them more visible and accessible, and encouraging their further development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete review and produce a gazette • Formulate a development strategy in consultation with providers and users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By April 2008 • By April 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA

6. Supporting empowerment: *Generic and specialist services: Levels for action:*

Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
6(a)		*	*	*	
6(b)		*		*	
6(c)		*		*	*
6(d)		*			

ACTION PLAN:

7. Supporting empowerment: <i>Capacity building for raised performance and growth</i>			
Task	Indicators / Outputs	Deadline	Responsible
a) Consider revising our Code of Practice for Funding the Voluntary Sector to include Full Cost Recovery and take account of procurement best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due consideration given and appropriate action taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • VSPC
b) Raise awareness of the Code and embedding it in the work of all WAG departments, including Audit, Finance and Compliance, and through tasks 5(b) and 5(f) monitor compliance within and beyond the Assembly Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of wide awareness of the Code • Effective compliance monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2008 • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All WAG Depts. • VSPC • Other Sector Partnerships
c) Facilitate an Action Learning Set to encourage sharing of experience (internally and externally) in structuring, managing and monitoring grant and other funding schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a useful and well attended ALS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every two years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • PSMW
d) Continue to produce a Guide to the Assembly Government's third sector grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual production of an effective guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every autumn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit
e) Support and help promote with others the Fundraising Standard Board's 'Fundraising Promise'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of wide awareness of the Promise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • IFC, WCVA, BITC
f) Work with the private sector to promote giving as an aspect of corporate social responsibility via Corporate Challenge Wales: Task 1(f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased giving by businesses • Evidence of a further significant increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Sept 2009 • By April 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • DEIN • Business sector networks
g) Work with others to raise public awareness about tax-efficient methods of giving to increase income to the third sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch campaign strategy • Evidence of a significant response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By Dec 2007 • By Sept 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • IFC, WCVA, BITC
i) Work with others to promote the use of quality assurance and business management schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of increased use of quality systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Sector Unit • WCVA • CVCs
j) Encourage and support secondments between the public and third sectors (both ways) to share experience and understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of secondments achieved in both directions, including those to and from the Assembly Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By year end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Depts. • ASPBs • Local authorities • Third Sector

7. Supporting empowerment: *Capacity building for performance and growth: Levels for action:*

Task	UK level	Wales-wide	Regionally	County level	Community
7(a)		*			
7(b)	*	*	*	*	
7(c)		*			
7(d)		*			
7(e)	*	*		*	*
7(f)		*	*		*
7(g)		*		*	*
7(i)		*		*	
7(j)		*		*	*