

Northern Enterprise 2016 Conference, 13 October 2016

Members of the KCVS team recently attended the [Northern Enterprise Conference](#) billed as “a one-day event bringing together organisations, businesses and individuals to share knowledge, trade ideas and co-create solutions.”

There was an impressive line-up of keynote speakers from Rob Wilson, Minister for Civil Society, the RT Hon Hazel Blears, social capital providers, leaders of think tanks and Merseyside’s own Heseltine Institute. Below are some thoughts and observations from the speakers.

See #NENT16 and Twitter feed for @North_Ent16 for more comments and reports from the day.

Rosie Jolley, CEO of SEN – the main organiser behind the conference - @cllerosiejolley2 @SENtogether

A rousing call to action to begin from Rosie (also the mayoral lead at Liverpool City Council for Social Value). Social Enterprises (SocEnt) need to be engaged in the big issues facing regions, driving and influencing debates and solutions. SocEnt need to make sure that their voices are heard and that the local, regional and national authorities are asking the sector how they can help address the big issues.

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP - @hazelblears2

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for SocEnt to move away from the margins of local economies and be part of the mainstream economy, that we all want, providing whole system transformational change.

During the Q&A session – HB is seeing a sea change in government, there seems to be a recognition that work that has been done in the past, relying on just public and private sector, has not addressed social issues (though more people need to be saying this publically). There is a real willingness to involve SocEnt.

HB also recognised that there had and still is in areas a dysfunctional mismatch between the sector and commissioner who are focussed on best value.

HB called for a public accounts select committee enquiry to find out what exactly each government department is doing to secure social value.

HB suggested that government could insist that as part of devolution that social sector had seats at the top tables and SocEnt should now start to demand this.

Mary-Kathryn Rallings, Director of Research, HACT - @HACThousing

Talked about their specific tools for measuring impact. <http://www.hact.org.uk/publications-and-tools>

Cliff Prior – CEO, Big Society Capital - @bigsocietycap

The North is full of ideas for a better society, social investment funding can help these ideas be realised. Devolution is an opportunity for SocEnt to show how they can provide better and cheaper services to local communities.

Dr. Alan Southern – The Heseltine Institute - @livuniheseltine

Posed 4 questions related to making it a better environment for SocEnt to thrive.

1. Governance – It's all very well talking about devolution to a Northern Powerhouse but is that local enough? Does devolution and local accountability mean we need local assemblies?
2. Legislation – Is the Social Value Act and other current legislation strong enough to drive commissioners to consider SocEnt in practice?
3. Cities – Is it time to make more of the potential collaboration between cities and stop competing? How do we make the most of the external relationships and links we all have nationally and internationally for a collective good?
4. Institutional Infrastructure – Are the current support and infrastructure bodies big enough to provide the voice that the sector needs? Is there enough research and knowledge exchange for the sector to thrive and integrate into the mainstream, local economy? What can the academic institutions do to help?

During the Q&A Session – called for authorities to make addressing social problems and possible solutions the centre of economic plans for city regions, with all sectors and organisational models making a contribution.

Chris Murray, CEO, Core Cities - @corecities

It is our belief that Cities drive growth not the State. There needs to be a review of the role between local authority & economy and the state. People want more control on how money is spent locally. There needs to be a renewed contract between citizen and state.

Philip Blond, MD, ResPublica - @res_publica

Perhaps the more controversial of the key note speakers with his thoughts. Have SocEnt missed the boat? Why do SocEnt matter and can we make the case to others? Is it too fragmented? Should there be fewer but bigger SocEnt who can take on the private sector providers when bidding for contracts?

We all need to reframe the question. As it stands the State cannot create an ecosystem to help those who are not already at the top, needs to be a big change, a move to more place based decisions, pooled resources and start again to address the issues.

During the Q&A session – SocEnt need to think and recognise more about what is needed rather than focussing on what they offer. Again talked about a need for big, strategic thinking at a high level, joining forces and forming consortia.

Rob Wilson, Minister for Civil Society - @robwilson_RDG

Talked about the Inclusive Economy Unit which will provide leadership, expertise and advice across government on creating an inclusive economy and implementing the Social Value Act.

Will be looking to encourage social investment on unprecedented levels through SIBs.

Driving innovation and supplying services for the most vulnerable people, creating more opportunities for social value procurement.

Other support through Social Value Awards, public sector commissioning training (look out for more case studies on line).

Finally, **First Ark** used the day to launch their new Social Investment Fund for loans from £50K to £150K (30% can be taken as a grant) **invest for impact**. <http://access-socialinvestment.org.uk/first-ark-deliver-invest-impact-fund/>

**In Synopsis, Social Enterprises Need To; Think Big. Shout Loud. Collaborate.
Be Proactive. Get Involved Now!**

We'd love to hear your thoughts and comments in response to the questions posed from a Knowsley perspective. Email us on kcv@kcv.org