



South of Scotland
Network of Councils
of Voluntary Service
(SoSNet)

PROJECT REPORT 2001-2004



PROJECT PART-FINANCED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

Europe and Scotland
Making it **work** together





South of Scotland Network of Councils of Voluntary Service (SoSNet)

Project Report 2001-2004



PROJECT PART-FINANCED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

Europe and Scotland
Making it **work together**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Partners	2
Partner Locations	2
Principal Activities of CVSs	3
CVSs SWOT Analysis at 2001	3
Policy Context	4
SoSNet Objectives	4
SoSNet Management	5
SoSNet Central Staff	5
Challenges and Achievements	6
PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES Objective 1	7
Strengthening Organisational Systems	
Electronic Monitoring and Reporting System	8
Information and Communication Technology Strategy	8
Marketing, Promotion and Public Relations Strategy	10
Common Visual Identity.....	13
Communication Toolkit	13
Sharing Practice	14
Quality Management Systems	14
Common Policy Documents	15
Common Evaluation Tools.....	15
New Premises and Satellite Offices	16
Community Databases	17
Dumfries and Galloway Community Information System	17
Scottish Borders Community Grid for Learning	17

PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES Objective 2	18
Regeneration, Inclusion and Sustainability - Case Studies	
AECVS Annandale Community Transport Capacity Building Project	19
BAVS Berwickshire Furniture Restoration Company Ltd	20
CBAVS Central Borders Access Panel	21
NCVS Holywood and Newbridge Community Hall Initiative	22
RAVS Stonefield Residents Action Group	23
SCVS Stewartry Family Support Group	24
TAVO Walkerburn-Innerleithen Partnership	25
WCVS Millennium Centre Users Group/Ready Steady Crew	26
PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES Objective 3	27
Consultation, Representation and Facilitation of New Opportunities for Partnership and Sharing	
HORIZONTAL THEMES.....	29
Equal Opportunities	30
Environmental Sustainability	31
OUTPUTS	32
Outputs Graphs	33
Outputs Summary	35
FINANCIAL REPORT.....	36
Monitoring System.....	37
Financial Profile	37
Income and Expenditure Summary	37

INTRODUCTION

The **South of Scotland Network of Councils of Voluntary Service (SoSNet)** is a partnership of eight Councils of Voluntary Service (CVSs), the Borders Forum of Councils for Voluntary Service (BFCVS) and the Dumfries and Galloway Federation of Councils of Voluntary Service (DGFCVS).

CVSs are independent membership organisations which exist throughout Scotland. They are well-established – those in the South of Scotland (Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway) were set up between the early 1970s and the 1990s. Each is governed by a Board of Directors elected from its member organisations. The South of Scotland CVSs provide support services to over 800 community and voluntary organisations.

The SoSNet project was formed to deliver a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programme from September 2001 to September 2004 under the Objective 2 South of Scotland European Partnership Programme (Measure 3.1: Developing Community Support Structures)

In line with the Scottish Executive's social justice agenda SoSNet was designed to make an additional, direct contribution to community economic regeneration, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The project outcomes were designed to meet ERDF eligibility criteria and to take into account outcomes set out in the national standards framework agreed with the Voluntary Issues Unit (VIU) of the Scottish Executive. Grant funding from the VIU provided financial match for the project.

The ERDF grant provided additional funding across the network to put in place development work staff together with two strategic development workers, one with responsibility for developing the communications strategy and infrastructure and the other with a development remit for the Borders. Administrative support and a Monitoring and Finance Officer were also engaged by the project.



SoSNet staff and volunteer committee members with a SOSEP representative at the first SoSNet Development Day in Hawick, January 2002

ERDF funding for Tweeddale Association of Voluntary Organisations (TAVO) ceased at the end of June 2003, due to their Transitional Area status. However, because of the success of TAVO's activities in Walkerburn and Innerleithen, they continued to contribute to Objective 2 by directly supporting partnership working within the Community Regeneration Initiative funded by Priority 3 Measure 2 for this targeted area. TAVO was also awarded a Lloyds TSB grant of £26,000 over three years to fund a part-time Development Worker for this area.

This Introduction provides information on the SoSNet partner organisations, outlines the principal activities of the CVSs and offers a brief analysis of their perceived strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats they faced at the start of the project. The SoSNet project objectives are summarised and an account is given of project management structures and central staffing. The final section of the Introduction summarises how the project was reviewed, its main achievements and lessons learned. The Progress on Objectives and Horizontal Themes sections provide an overview of some of these achievements. The Outputs and Financial Report sections provide quantitative background on the project.

Partners

AECVS	Annandale & Eskdale Council of Voluntary Service, 16 Main Street, Lochmaben, DG11 1NH, tel 01387 810974, email info@aecvs.org.uk , website www.aecvs.org.uk
BAVS	Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service, Platform One, Station Road, Duns, Berwickshire, TD11 3HS, tel 01361 883137, email info@bavs.co.uk , website www.bavs.org.uk
BFCVS	Borders Forum of Councils for Voluntary Service, Platform One, Station Road, Duns, TD11 3HS, tel 01890 870336, info@bfcvs.org.uk , website www.bfcvs.org.uk
CBAVS	Central Borders Association of Voluntary Service, 6 Roxburgh Street, Galashiels, TD1 1PF, tel 01896 755370, email info@cbavs.org.uk , website www.cbavs.org.uk
DGFCVS	Dumfries and Galloway Federation of Councils of Voluntary Service, Holywood Building, Old Assembly Close, Irish Street, Dumfries, DG1 2PH, tel 01387 269161, email info@dgfcvs.org.uk , website www.dgfcvs.org.uk
NCVS	Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Service, Holywood Building, Old Assembly Close, Irish Street, Dumfries, DG1 2PH, tel 01387 269161, email info@ncvs.org.uk , website www.ncvs.org.uk
RAVS	Roxburgh Association of Voluntary Service, 1 Veitch's Close, Jedburgh, TD8 6AY, tel 01835 863554, email info@ravs.org.uk , website www.ravs.org.uk
SCVS	Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service, 17 Castle Street, Kirkcudbright, DG6 4JA, tel 01557 331346, email info@stewartrycvs.org.uk , website www.stewartrycvs.org.uk
TAVO	Tweeddale Association of Voluntary Organisations, The Volunteer Resource Centre, School Brae, High Street, Peebles, EH45 8AL, tel 01721 723123, email info@tavo.org.uk , website www.tavo.org.uk
WCVS	Wigtown Council of Voluntary Service, 27 Church Street, Stranraer, DG9 7JG, tel 01776 705645, email info@wcvcs.org.uk , website www.wcvcs.org.uk

Partner Locations



Principal Activities of CVSs

Representing the Voluntary Sector

- ◆ Acting as a bridge between the statutory sector and local voluntary organisations
- ◆ Working in partnership to identify effective ways of meeting local needs
- ◆ Representing the sector within the Community Planning process
- ◆ Keeping in touch with national agencies

Informing and Supporting the Voluntary Sector

- ◆ Providing advice and information
- ◆ Developing networks
- ◆ Running training courses
- ◆ Providing practical services
- ◆ Producing publications

Developing the Voluntary Sector

- ◆ Creating new groups in response to local issues and needs
- ◆ Supporting internal policy development and good practice
- ◆ Helping to develop effective relationships between the voluntary sector and key public agencies
- ◆ Supporting rural services

In the course of the SoSNet project CVS staff worked with the national network to align the Standards Framework more closely with the current priorities of the social economy and Scottish Policy objectives.

CVS SWOT Analysis at 2001

Strengths

- ◆ Local community involvement in wider action
- ◆ Building local social capital
- ◆ Independence, flexibility to respond to need

Weaknesses

- ◆ Individual CVSs are small organisations
- ◆ Lack of capacity to meet demands
- ◆ Strategic working only possible locally or in partnership

Opportunities

- ◆ Scottish Executive recognition of potential of CVSs
- ◆ Availability of EU funding for strategic projects
- ◆ Common standards framework facilitates partnership working

Threats

- ◆ Lack of infrastructure/common monitoring procedures
- ◆ Continued lack of funding
- ◆ Lack of recognition of value of CVSs

Policy Context

Active Communities

Community Planning

Equal Opportunities

Lifelong Learning

Social Justice

Sustainable Development

Developing the Social Economy

Closing the Opportunity Gap

This list indicates the principal issues and concepts that defined the work carried out under the SoSNet project. The policy context developed over the lifetime of the project with the last two issues in the list gaining prominence.

SoSNet Objectives

1. **Strengthening the organisational systems** of the CVS network across the South of Scotland European Partnership programme area
2. Stimulating and facilitating community economic development initiatives to respond to **rural regeneration, inclusion and sustainability**
3. Improving **consultation, representation** across the sectors and **facilitation** of new opportunities for partnership working and sharing of best practice

SoSNet Management

Lead Agent

The SoSNet project was administered by Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service which was the lead agent for European Regional Development Fund funding.

Project Monitoring Committee

The Boards of each of the partner organisations elected representatives to the SoSNet Project Monitoring Committee. This committee oversaw the progress of the project. Representatives from the Local Authorities and Enterprise Companies in Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway also sat on the SoSNet Project Monitoring Committee.



Operations Group meeting, Gretna, February 2003

Operations Group

An Operations Group of key staff from all the partner organisations was mandated to take action to meet the objectives of the project.

SoSNet Central Staff

The SoSNet project created a number of posts to administer the project, to develop and implement project strategies and to support partners in achieving project objectives.

Some central staff were employed by the lead agency, Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service, and some by Borders Forum of Councils for Voluntary Service.

At the start of the project SoSNet central staff consisted of a full-time Finance and Monitoring Officer and a full-time Communications Officer based in Dumfries and Galloway and a full-time Development Officer and a part-time Administrative Officer based in Scottish Borders.

Part-time, temporary staff were also employed at various times during the project.

Dumfries and Galloway

Finance and Monitoring Officer (full-time, based SCVS) – Peggy Taylor
Communications Officer (full-time, based SCVS) – Glen Murray
Administrative Assistant (part-time, based SCVS) – Brian Smith (06/04 to 07/04)

Scottish Borders

Development Officer (full-time, based CBAVS) – Lena Hutton (01/02 to 08/03)
SoSNet Administrator (part-time, based RAVS) – Diane Brooks (01/02 to 06/04)
Marketing Officer (part-time, based TAVO) – Kay Pringle (02/04 to 09/04)
Development Officer (part-time, based BAVS) – Tessa Brailsford (02/04 to 09/04)

Challenges and Achievements

SoSNet was established within a developing national policy context which recognised the vital role the social economy plays in the delivery of community services and regeneration initiatives. The project was developed as a response

- ◆ to demand for flexible community based support from within the sector itself
- ◆ to the need to organise and co-ordinate CVS support services more effectively and strategically
- ◆ to the expectations of local and national partners for representation and increased partnership working within Community planning structures

It is clear from the quantifiable outputs of SoSNet that the project has played a major role across the South of Scotland in growing our local social economy and in stimulating and sustaining regeneration in our communities. That 467 organisations were substantially assisted to start up or to develop initiatives and almost £4million of additional external funding was levered into the South of Scotland's economy via the labours, often well into the night, of SoSNet staff is proof of the demand and the response. That SoSNet has been able to capture that information and evidence it through improved organisational and monitoring systems has been a major challenge and achievement. That the voice of the voluntary sector has been heard and sustained within Community Planning structures is testament to the project's success.

These achievements were borne out by an interim evaluation carried out during the second year of SoSNet¹ which provided qualitative evidence demonstrating that the project was

- ◆ significantly surpassing many of its community regeneration and social inclusion objectives
- ◆ making progress towards achieving organisational objectives
- ◆ contributing substantially to the outcomes of public/voluntary sector partnerships in both Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway

SoSNet contributed to the cohesion of the national network of CVSs, encouraging partnership developments in other areas of Scotland. On a South of Scotland level, it demonstrated that geographically and structurally challenging cross-border projects could be achieved through shared objectives and improved communications.

Other spin-offs such as the collective promotion of the ESF funded Direct Grants scheme; the ESF EQUAL South of Scotland Social Economy Zone; the Borders Community Grid for Learning and the creation of cross border collaboration between communities have added value to SoSNet activity and to our South of Scotland partnership.

We have faced many challenges along the way but our greatest, in the new SoSNet project and the years ahead, will be, with our partners help, to consolidate and maintain increased levels of support for what is a growing area of dynamic economic activity in our communities.

1. Linda Stevenson Centre for Rural Expertise and Marion Lacey Research Department Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations Interim External Evaluation of SoSNet Project November 2003

PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES - Objective 1

Strengthening the organisational systems of the CVS network across the programme area

The SoSNet project provided the partner organisations with the resources to substantially enhance their organisational systems by improving internal and external communication, marketing, promotion and public relations, establishing and developing quality management systems, introducing common policies and evaluation tools, building information systems and opening new premises and satellite offices.

Electronic Monitoring and Reporting System

One of the first tasks of the SoSNet central staff was the creation of a shared electronic monitoring and reporting system. This enabled work to be recorded and measured, progress towards achieving project objectives to be assessed and grant claims and reports to be submitted to the South of Scotland European Partnership.

The system is based on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet application and records both financial and non-financial outputs. Partner organisations fill in spreadsheet forms and submit these quarterly to the Finance and Monitoring Officer for collation into a master spreadsheet.

Electronic timesheets are also being introduced to make the task of recording and monitoring staff time more manageable.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy

Early in the project the ICT resources of the SoSNet partners were audited. Based on these findings an ICT strategy was developed to improve the infrastructure and procedures across the network. The strategy had five principle objectives:

1. Bring hardware and software holdings up to a good minimum standard
2. Standardise software to avoid communication and file sharing problems
3. Bring ICT awareness and skills of all staff up to a good minimum standard
4. Implement good ICT housekeeping procedures and practice to protect valuable data and ensure efficient use of ICT resources
5. Ensure compliance with all relevant UK and international legislation

The following measures were taken to meet these objectives:

- Policy guidelines for hardware and software standardisation established
- Minimum specifications produced
- Recommended suppliers identified
- Central hardware/ software ordering system implemented
- New computers meet hardware specification and follow software standardisation guidelines
- Most old, low specification computers removed from use
- Full compliance with software licensing law
- Hardware and software appropriately registered

- Application software configured for cost-effective, efficient Internet/ email use
- All CVSs have Internet access and email domains
- Each member of staff has a standard format, CVS domain email account
- Most staff access email using MS Outlook
- SoSNet Communication Toolkit contains guidance on effective email use
- All computers now run antivirus applications
- Greatly increased awareness of virus risks/ need to keep virus definitions up to date
- All new computers have CD read-write devices for the backup of essential data
- Some CVSs backup to a server or principal network computer
- Most SoSNet partners now carefully store software and maintain records of their hardware and software resources
- SoSNet Communications Officer maintains a directory of all SoSNet partner staff contact information
- The use of file compression and PDF file transfer is increasing
- All the CVS main offices have either ISDN or Broadband connectivity
- A pilot client-server network was installed in the SCVS office
- All CVS offices now have effective and efficient telephone systems
- Some CVSs now have professional support and maintenance arrangements
- On-site basic ICT training delivered to most CVS staff

Marketing, Promotion and Public Relations Strategy

A marketing, promotion and public relations strategy was developed with the following main aims:

- to assess community need for the services, facilities and resources provided by community and voluntary organisations
- to assess the support needs of these community and voluntary organisations with a view to developing CVS services to meet them
- to assess and improve the level and quality of awareness of the work of CVSs among community and voluntary organisations, corporate bodies and the public
- to promote the work of the CVSs and their client community and voluntary organisations to the corporate sector and to the public

The following table outlines progress towards these objectives.

Marketing	
Objective	Result
Assess community need for services, facilities and resources with a view to enhancing CVSs' capacity to support voluntary and community organisations in meeting these needs.	Individual CVSs have worked with community and voluntary organisations on community needs audits.
Assess and quantify the support needs of existing and potential CVS member and client organisations with a view to increasing CVSs' capacity to provide this support.	A Borders Community Database and the Dumfries and Galloway Community Information System gathered data on community and voluntary organisations and the services and resources they provide. EQUAL project in both regions aims to support needs of social economy organisations.
Assess the level and quality of awareness among community and voluntary organisations of the objectives, activities and resources of CVSs.	Member organisations of 5 CVSs were surveyed. The results were distributed to the CVSs concerned in direct briefing sessions with the Organisers.
Assess the level and quality of corporate awareness of the objectives, activities and resources of CVSs.	Plans are in hand to carry out a corporate awareness survey early in the second phase of SoSNet.

Promotion

Objective	Result
<p>Increase the level and quality of awareness among community and voluntary organisations of the objectives, activities and resources of CVSs.</p>	<p>Individual CVSs have improved the quality of their newsletters and distribution lists. Some CVSs circulate a version of their newsletter by email. Dumfries and Galloway CVSs' and DGFCVS's websites being upgraded and new Scottish Borders CVSs' websites being created to incorporate new common visual identity and allow online access to newsletters and annual reports. A SoSNet website is also under development. All new stationery items carry website addresses. Purpose, format, design and distribution of the promotional leaflets produced by each CVS under constant review. All CVSs have a presence at appropriate events for the purpose of distributing promotional material.</p>
<p>Increase the level and quality of corporate awareness of the objectives, activities and resources of CVSs.</p>	<p>CVSs use email networks within Community Planning Structures to disseminate information on their activities. List of key organisations and agencies compiled. Key personnel being identified and classified by information interests. Email and postal contacts lists compiled. Some distribution of information has taken place using these lists – for example SoSNet Interim Report was distributed to stakeholders.</p>
<p>Increase the level and quality of public awareness of the objectives, activities and resources of the CVSs.</p>	<p>Database of print and broadcast media advertising outlets in (including approximate coverage area and contact information for each title and group) distributed as appendix to SoSNet Communication Toolkit. Individual CVSs advertise relevant activities in the Press. Several CVSs have Yellow Pages entries.</p>
<p>Increase the level and quality of public awareness of the services and resources provided by community and voluntary organisations.</p>	<p>The CD-based A Borders Community Database and the Dumfries and Galloway Community Information System (currently under development) provide/will provide information on community and voluntary organisations and the services and resources they provide.</p>

Public Relations

Objective	Result
<p>Develop and maintain a positive and dynamic image of the CVS network among voluntary and community organisations in order to maximise CVS membership and uptake of CVS resources and facilities.</p>	<p>A common logo was developed to be used alongside the names of SoSNet partner organisations on all stationery and other communication and promotional materials. Customised stationery templates for all partner organisations were developed using this logo. The logo and associated visual identity elements are being incorporated into partners' websites, email signatures, newsletters, annual reports etc. Customised business cards incorporating the new logo have been produced for all appropriate staff. All partner websites are being reviewed and upgraded to incorporate the new visual identity elements. Most staff in SoSNet partner organisations now have email signatures incorporating the new visual identity elements. All CVSs now have telephone systems capable of handling the volume of telephone traffic - callers can make quick and effective contact.</p>
<p>Develop and maintain a positive and dynamic image of the CVS network among corporate bodies and a positive working relationship with these bodies.</p>	<p>Appropriate staff or committee member(s) appointed to represent individual CVSs, Federation/Forum groupings or the entire South of Scotland Network of CVSs on all appropriate partnership projects and bodies to ensure that the CVSs are visible in these situations.</p>
<p>Develop and maintain a positive and dynamic image of the CVS network among the public.</p>	<p>The SoSNet Communication Toolkit provides detailed advice for CVS staff aimed at ensuring that members of the public have a positive experience of dealing with CVSs.</p>

Common Visual Identity

The SoSNet partners agreed that establishing a common appearance in communication materials would help strengthen their visibility and message. It was felt to be important to convey clearly that the SoSNet partners are organisations with common aims whose activities, projects and programmes are CVS initiatives

Stationery templates were designed for each member of staff based on common visual identity elements described in the SoSNet Communication Toolkit. Prototypes of these templates were in use at the end of the project. Their design and use is to be reviewed early in the continuation project with a view to making any practical improvements.

The stationery design implements the principles of the recent Disability Discrimination Act.

Communication Toolkit

A SoSNet Communication Toolkit was produced to provide detailed guidance on a range of aspects of marketing, promotion and public relations for the use of SoSNet partners.

The Toolkit provides a detailed description of the elements of a shared visual identity including the materials on which these should appear.

There is detailed guidance on how funding organisations should be acknowledged in internal and external materials and activities. Guidance is also provided on managing dealings with the media and with public and, given the increasing importance of email to both internal and external communication, there is a substantial section outlining best practice.

The Toolkit also contains a section outlining basic principles for good written communication along with an alphabetically arranged writing style guide.

Appendices contain reference information on SoSNet internal contacts as well as media contacts and design and print suppliers in Dumfries and Galloway and Scottish Borders.

Sharing Practice

Capacity building training events helped to increase staff and committee skills. Topics covered included governance, legal structures, committee skills, effective meetings, race awareness, employment contracts, data protection, benefits of information and communication technology and media relations.

Regular SoSNet Development Meetings were held to share practice, provide training and work out common strategies to achieve SoSNet objectives. These meetings provided opportunities for discussion of evolving strategies on evaluation, monitoring and reporting systems and issues, information and communication technology, marketing, promotion and public relations and a range of operational issues. They also provided a forum for building relationships between partner organisations, developing a network identity, learning from each other's knowledge and experience, sharing successful practice and developing joint projects.



Governance Skills workshop at a SoSNet Development Meeting

Quality Management Systems



Investors in People presentation to Borders Forum of Councils for Voluntary Service

Following the Avante Review of the CVS network in 2003, SoSNet staff have worked in partnership with the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations to update the CVS national standards framework developed in October 2001 into a new shared activity framework based on current national policy objectives. Through SoSNet, the South of Scotland is now recognised at national level as a regional grouping and represented as such on a new Liaison Group. The new activity framework incorporates core competencies and key indicators and measures required to provide a quality service.

During SoSNet, just over half of the network gained Investors in People (IiP) status. Other SoSNet staff undertook training in the Big Picture Quality Improvement tool and became registered to support and mentor other social economy organisations to address quality improvements and make informed choices about quality standards such as IiP, PQASSO (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations), EFQM (European Foundation of Quality Management), SQMS (Scottish Quality Management System or Charter Mark). Other SoSNet staff have gained skills in Learning Evaluation And Planning (LEAP) which is incorporated in their support to the social economy.

Common Policy Documents

A part-time development worker was employed between February and September 2004 to develop a comprehensive set of common policy documents. Drafts were produced and consultation carried out with all SoSNet partner organisations to ensure that policies met a wide range of requirements.

Many of these policies have been finalised and widely adopted. Others are still under development. All require to be regularly reviewed and revised to keep up with changes in circumstances and legislation.

With appropriate adjustment many of these policy documents are applicable to other voluntary and community organisations and are available to them.

Common policy documents were produced on:

Annual Leave	Individual Reviews
Cash Handling	Induction
Complaints	Lone Working
Confidentiality	People Development
Disciplinary Action	Phone Use
Environmental Issues	Recruitment
Equal Opportunities	Risk Assessment
Equipment Ordering	Sick Leave
Family Care Leave	Smoking and Drugs
Finance	Specific Family Leave
Garden Leave	Subsistence Claims
Grievances	Volunteers
Health and Safety	Vulnerable People

Common Evaluation Tools

In tandem with the development of common policy documents, work was undertaken to develop two shared and standardised evaluation tools. This work was achieved by taking the best elements of customer satisfaction tools in use by various elements of the network and combining them to create improved evaluation forms which were agreed and adopted by each CVS.

One of the evaluation forms is designed to be used on an ongoing and regular basis whilst the other more in depth, detailed form is intended for use as an annual customer satisfaction survey. Both forms are designed to elicit information on the quality, helpfulness and relevance of the service provided.

Further work in the new SoSNet phase of activity needs to be undertaken to agree a system for the co-ordinated use of these tools.

New Premises and Satellite Offices

With the advent of the SoSNet project, some CVSs moved to larger premises in order to accommodate their expanding staff and projects. Some set up satellite offices to enable them to reach a wider client base.

In April 2003, AECVS moved into larger premises in Lochmaben. This enabled the creation of a 'one-stop shop' for the voluntary sector in Annandale and Eskdale. AECVS have a fully equipped meeting/resource room and partner agencies - Annandale Transport Initiative, Lochmaben Community Initiative, Richmond Fellowship, Volunteer Action, and New Deal Tailored Pathways - now work out of the same building.

In June 2004 BAVS moved into new premises in Station Road, Duns. Though slightly out of the town centre the new premises provide considerably more working space for BAVS staff and partner organisations such as Berwickshire Wheels. The new premises also have a well-equipped meeting room.



BAVS outreach office was opened in Coldstream in June 2002.

BAVS opened another outreach office in Eyemouth in July 2003.

WCVS converted a building in Newton Stewart into offices with the help of funding from the Community Fund. It was officially opened in April 2003.

The space is shared with Volunteer Action, Women's Aid and Food Train and there is room for other voluntary groups.



RAVS new outreach office in Hawick was officially opened on 8th March 2003, by Madge Elliot from the Hawick Tourist Association and attended by local councillors, MSPs and members of community groups. The SoSNet Development Worker shares the new premises with Roxburgh Volunteer Centre, the British Red Cross, and Interest Link.

Despite these successes, finding suitable premises and the resources necessary to develop these in partnership with other voluntary organisations continues to be a challenge and a barrier to progress in capacity-building.

Community Databases

SoSNet partners have been involved in the development of two important database projects. Though the projects differ as a result of local differences in the circumstances of their development, each is designed to increase the amount and the accuracy of information available on the voluntary sector in their region.

Dumfries and Galloway Community Information System

The Dumfries and Galloway Community Information System project aims to provide a comprehensive database of voluntary sector organisations and the services, facilities and resources they provide.

A substantial body of data was collected during the lifetime of the SoSNet project and ongoing work on the development of a Web-based user interface will result in a powerful tool for increasing the visibility of the voluntary sector and the accuracy of public and corporate knowledge of it.

This project was developed in cooperation with Dumfries and Galloway Council and the Scottish Voluntary Sector Data Management Consortium.

Scottish Borders Community Grid for Learning

Following on from a successful project in which Borders Forum of Councils for Voluntary Service produced on CD a database about the voluntary sector in the Scottish Borders, the Forum is now taking forward the Borders Community Grid for Learning. This project is outwith SoSNet but, as BFCVS is a SoSNet member, close collaboration ensures that the data collected is available and helpful to SoSNet by adding substantial value in improving partners' understanding of the structure and activities of the community and voluntary sector in the Scottish Borders.

The Borders Community Grid for Learning is a partnership project with Scottish Borders Council, NHS Borders and Careers Scotland and is funded by ESF, the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) and the Scottish Executive. It provides an excellent example of complementary working between ESF and ERDF funded projects.

The Community Grid for Learning will provide an integrated web-based information resource with a searchable Community Directory, links to learning materials and opportunities, advice on careers guidance, employment skills and training and will enable partners to better deliver their services. It employs a number of trainers to support front-line workers and BFCVS also employs a content developer, funded through Lloyds TSB, who is maintaining data on all Borders-based social economy organisations.

The existence of a single web-based database will allow constant updating of information and provide a Borders-wide picture that will support the work of the individual CVSs both within the Scottish Borders and the South of Scotland.

PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES - Objective 2

Stimulating and facilitating community economic development initiatives to respond to rural **regeneration, inclusion** and **sustainability**
Case Studies

This section presents a series of case studies indicating something of the range and quality of project work carried out by SoSNet partner CVSs in pursuit of the SoSNet Regeneration, Sustainability and Inclusion objective.

Case Study - Annandale and Eskdale Council of Voluntary Service (AECVS)

Annandale Community Transport Capacity Building Project

One of 14 regional Community Transport (CT) projects this was a partnership between Dumfries and Galloway Accessible Transport Forum (ATF) and Annandale and Eskdale Council of Voluntary Service (AECVS)

Funding came mainly from the Dumfries and Galloway Community Regeneration Fund, but also from the Nationwide Foundation, Upper Nithsdale Area Committee and Upper Nithsdale Building Healthier Communities.



Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS)

Provides an on-the-road driving assessment, and a half-day class (with a multiple choice test) on defensive driving, passenger safety and accident and emergency procedures. There is also a further half-day session on accessible training (helping passengers with sight and hearing impairment and safety of passengers in wheelchairs).

Passenger Assistant Training (PAT)

This includes dealing with challenging behaviour, epilepsy, child safety and wheelchair passengers specifically for people acting as escorts on bus journeys.



The project provided two types of accredited training to CT volunteers:

- 12 volunteer trainers trained 216 volunteers
- 4 people obtained employment after training with the project
- South Machars Transport Initiative and Cairn Valley Community Transport, were enabled to train new volunteers in MiDAS and Glenkens Transport Initiative created a part time post to deal with MiDAS training
- All CT providers in the project have recruited additional volunteers
- A regional group of MiDAS trainers now meets quarterly to address issues and improve services
- The CT project administrator moved on to a permanent administrative position within Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Accessible Transport Forum received 3-year funding from the Scottish Executive to recruit a part time MiDAS coordinator for the region continuing the good work of the pilot project delivered by AECVS.

Case Study - Berwickshire Association of Voluntary Service (BAVS)

Berwickshire Furniture Restoration Company Ltd (BFR)



Berwickshire Furniture Restoration Company was previously a project of BAVS. In 1996 BAVS began a project named BAVS Furnishing. The project was set up to collect donated furniture which was given to homeless people, people just out of hospital or prison, and women made homeless because of domestic abuse. To help finance the project BAVS Furnishing sold furniture through the warehouse in Eyemouth and the BAVS Charity shops.

BAVS set up a training workshop in Eyemouth for New Deal trainees and an integrated workshop for young men with special educational needs with the help of Lottery funding.

The project developed, through funding from the Scottish Borders Council homelessness unit and the Workwise project. The project became a Company Ltd by Guarantee in July 2003 and moved to new warehouse premises in Duns.



Items are sold at a nominal price and there is a delivery service charge at a set rate for items that clients cannot transport themselves. Furniture supplied to Social Work clients are charged to the Social Work Department.

The team in the warehouse and the new training units in Duns has six part time staff and a vital team of volunteers as well as New Deal and Tweed Training trainees. Donated household items in need of renovation or cleaning are sent to the BFR workshops. The workshop is partly funded by Scottish Borders Council and employs two trainer-joiners who renovate alongside the trainees. The workshops are equipped with woodworking machinery purchased with a grant from Lloyds TSB Foundation.



BFR is part of the Scottish Furniture Recycling Network and new projects include provision of an electrical equipment safety testing service to the community and to businesses. Computers are also repaired and recycled. Projects for the near future include a composting facility and a paint recycling facility, as well as a joint project with our Registered Social Landlord to provide a decorating and fence making service.

BFR is a social economy organisation, involved in training and now an employer of some note in social economy terms.

Case Study - Central Borders Association of Voluntary Service (CBAVS)

Central Borders Access Panel (CBAP)

The remit of the Central Borders Access Panel is to identify access issues for people with physical disabilities and seek ways to address them. Apart from a period of inactivity in the 1990s, CBAP has been run by CBAVS.

In the 1980s CBAP carried out important work including:

- installing a standard key system for public toilets for the disabled
- supporting the creation of a trust fund providing small grants to ease difficulties caused by disability
- publishing a booklet providing information about access to public buildings, shops and facilities in the Central Borders

In Spring 2002 SoSNet ERDF funding enabled CBAVS to reconvene CBAP with a revised remit and new personnel. It offered a neutral forum in which a number of established and recently formed disability-related groups could meet and work together and provided accessibility information to the Disability Forum.

The Disability Discrimination Act has been a major focus for CBAP. Disability Auditors have been recruited and trained to help many local businesses and other organisations understand the Act and take steps to comply with it.

CBAP also revived the dormant Disabled Living Trust, passing the management of its funds and grant-making activities to CBAVS. The revived Trust's first grant was paid in March 2004 enabling a severely disabled couple living in a rural area to convert their heating from coal to oil. CBAP has also identified other dormant disability-related trusts and aims to get them operational again.

CBAP carries out awareness-raising work through presentations and informal talks to concerned organisations and businesses to help them appreciate how they can improve access and inclusiveness.

Information packs produced by local and national disability-related groups have been widely distributed in the region to increase the awareness of disabled individuals of their rights under the new legislation. Letter of complaint forms have also been distributed encouraging disabled individuals to lobby for access improvements to buildings and other facilities.

CBAP is working with local bus companies to improve the availability of information about the routes and times of services operating buses with facilities for the disabled.



Case Study - Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Service (NCVS)

Hollywood and Newbridge Community Hall Initiative



The small community of Hollywood and Newbridge lies midway between urban Dumfries and rural Nithsdale. Its location has led to its being overlooked in regeneration strategies that focus on economically disadvantaged urban settlements yet not being identified as particularly rurally isolated. The result has been a decline in investment in community facilities and access to services. The one community facility, a church hall, was falling into serious disrepair, severely limiting community access.

NCVS was approached by a group of local residents for help to bring the hall back into use, thus assisting the sustainability of the community as a whole.

An open meeting was held to gauge wider community and stakeholder interest. The Hollywood and Newbridge Community Hall Initiative was formed and a committee established to progress identified action points.

Funding was secured to carry out a community appraisal to gather qualitative and quantitative information in relation to bringing the hall back into full use. Planning for Real and community capacity building workshops took place, and a business plan was developed.

Further funding enabled a full building feasibility study to be undertaken in partnership with the community, the Community Hall Initiative and local planners. A follow-up consultation meeting was held to view the detailed plans for the hall and its future use. Proposals included workshop facilities for micro businesses, a treatment room for alternative therapies, childcare provision, meeting rooms, outreach surgeries, recreational use and a learning suite to provide a range of training courses including ICT.

Negotiations were successfully concluded with the local church to transfer ownership of the hall to the community and work began to identify potential funders. Funding applications to secure the £245,000 needed to bring the hall back into use by 2006 are currently submitted awaiting decisions.



During the ongoing Nithsdale CVS development work there have already been successful outcomes;

- The community has undertaken local fundraising activities
- Increased external interest about the community
- Raising of confidence and social capital within the community
- Recognition of social enterprise potential of hall usage and income generation
- Community ownership of community assets
- Improved social cohesion and strengthened networks within the community

Case Study - Roxburgh Association of Voluntary Service (RAVS)

Stonefield Residents Action Association (SRAA)

RAVS became involved in a housing scheme in Hawick after being invited to help residents reinstate a discontinued bus service. Other issues soon surfaced and RAVS became aware that Stonefield was very run down with many problems. Tenanted housing was being transferred from Borders Council to a housing association and Stonefield was in a regeneration area. The residents had no real knowledge of what changes would be made or when they would happen, but there were indications that some flats would be demolished. Residents felt abandoned and powerless to influence decisions affecting them.

RAVS facilitated the setting up of Stonefield Residents Action Association for tenants and owner occupiers. A steering group was formed to tackle some of the other problems. RAVS facilitated interaction, listened and provided support and guidance. Assistance was given with a funding bid which was successful and enabled the group to employ their own development worker for six months. The remit of this worker was to liaise with consultants Master Planners, the housing association, the Hawick Regeneration Partnership and the residents on possible ways forward.

Meantime, older residents were concerned about issues of potential relocation. These concerns were compounded by a lack of trust based on past experiences. RAVS was able to act as mediators with the housing association whilst residents' confidence was built up, enabling them to deal with the issues themselves

RAVS also facilitated skills development such as basic computing, book-keeping and minute taking for committee members and as confidence grew a newsletter was produced, regular meetings held, a community flat created and various actions on community safety progressed.

SRAA also employed an artist to work with the residents to create an exhibition of photos, text, art and audiovisual presentations to act as a focus for consultation on regeneration plans and to persuade the housing association to listen. There were regular residents' workshops and a field trip to see other types of housing. The exhibition was a great success and fulfilled its purpose.

The project featured in The Big Issue and has brought innovative ideas to the area. SRAA members were invited to help residents in other housing schemes (including Pilton in Edinburgh) to set up similar groups which can act independently to improve services and the environment.

The Stonefield residents were enabled to become confident and active participants in the consultation process about the future of the scheme which was a sea change from their original position of having the process 'done to them'.



Case Study - Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service (SCVS)

Stewartry Family Support Group (SFSG)



SCVS assisted the Stewartry Drugs Forum to establish a new service as a response to the need for support to families affected by drug misuse. This social inclusion project is designed to build individual and collective capacity in the face of ongoing adversity to support participation in mainstream social and economic activity.

Stewartry CVS provided development and business planning support and subsequently management committee support to establish the Stewartry Family Support Group.

Initial work focussed on assisting and guiding the group with their legal structure and issues of governance. The Memorandum and Articles of Association were drawn up by SCVS and the draft submitted to the Inland Revenue for recognition of charitable status. Stewartry CVS facilitated discussion and agreement on the aims and objects of this embryo project and the committee were guided through the legal document to ensure understanding and awareness.

SFSG were supported with business planning and a funding bid was completed and submitted to the Community Fund. In January 2004 the group were awarded a grant of £158,206 for three years to develop family support concentrating on innovative and alternative methods of stress relief combined with appropriate linking to mainstream opportunities services and facilities.

Stewartry CVS continues to deliver training sessions to the SFSG management committee. These are based on an initial Training Needs analysis which identified the skills of individual members, their preferred learning styles and potential role and contribution to the management of the organisation. In workshops, the committee have covered individual and collective roles and responsibilities; governance issues; a Big Picture overview and understanding of how organisations work and employment law (covering contracts conditions of service and effective working relationships between management committee members and staff).

Utilising elements of the Big Picture Quality Improvement Tool, support work with the staff and committee will continue to help develop this service.

“With regard to myself, SCVS helped me by giving me advice on how to compile a CV to enable me to apply for jobs. They are very reliable and I know that if we need help for the support group or for anyone on the committee the SCVS is always there to help” member of SFSG



Case Study - Tweeddale Association of Voluntary Organisations (TAVO)

Walkerburn Innerleithen Partnership

The first meeting of the Walkerburn and Innerleithen Partnership took place in September 2002 and brought together representatives from both communities. Walkerburn and Innerleithen are two quite distinct communities; Walkerburn has a population of approximately 700 whereas the population of Innerleithen is around 2,500. Together, the settlements were recognised as a regeneration area, and it was important for the two communities to come together to work for the benefit of the whole area.



Walkerburn

The success of the Walkerburn and Innerleithen Partnership in drawing down ERDF funding for use within both communities made it crucial that people from both areas work together to achieve maximum impact and added value.

In Spring 2003 the TAVO Development Worker took on the role of servicing the Partnership and working with local people to enable them to make best use of the funds that became available. The Partnership was set up in such a way that small groups took on responsibility for community projects, tourism, and infrastructure and

applications for funding are looked at by those groups. The Development Worker gave particular support to the community sub-group but also acted as the point of contact for anyone expressing an interest in the regeneration funds. In this role the Development Worker provided advice and information to interested organisations on budgeting, strategic fit, planning, operational resources and other sources of grant funding.

Although the demand for the regeneration funds has not been as high as expected, the support given to the Partnership has been an important element of capacity building within the area. One of its most important outcomes has been that people have come together to look at possible developments for their communities. It has also helped broaden community horizons encouraging people to look at the wider area rather than focusing exclusively on their own community.



Innerleithen

Case Study - Wigtown Association of Voluntary Service (WCVS)

Millennium Centre Users Group/Ready Steady Crew

Wigtown Council of Voluntary Service works in close partnership with the Millennium Centre in Stranraer. The Millennium Centre is a community facility providing a spacious and well-equipped events venue in the centre of the town.

WCVS and the Millennium Centre facilitated the coming together of a number of organisations to form the Millennium Centre Users Group. The group's membership reflects the range of organisations that use the Centre: Stranraer Chamber of Commerce, Volunteer Action, Stranraer Drama Club, Lochryan Majorettes, Millennium Amateur Boxing Club, Stranraer Events, Dumfries and Galloway Council Events Officer, Millennium Youth Group and Gingerbread.

The Group identified a situation in which they all wanted to put on events and activities but did not have the resources to staff these properly. In response to questions like Who does what?, Who is responsible for what?, Who has time available?, Where do we go for help? The Ready Steady Crew Project emerged.

Ready Steady Crew aimed to create a pool of workers, drawn from the long-term unemployed, those on low incomes and lone parents, train them in First Aid, Health and Safety, Basic Food Hygiene and provide them with support in personal development. Teams formed from the pool would then be available to voluntary or community groups requiring staff for events.

The project was an immediate success and very soon the distinctive bright yellow uniforms of the Ready Steady Crew began to appear at events in and around Stranraer.

The Crew have so far been involved in erecting marquees, manning bouncy castles, taking entrance money, managing car parking, directing traffic, washing dishes, serving food, bingo calling, stewarding parades, providing security, building horse jumps and selling raffle tickets. Versatility is the key word! The range of events at which they have helped includes the Taste of Galloway food fair, Galloway Golf Classic, Battle of the Bands, Castle Kennedy Country Fair and Horse Driving Trials, The Terally Rally, The Cults Kart Club, The Mayday Fair, Portpatrick Folk Festival, North American Indian Arts and Crafts, Charity Bingo, Irish Showband Nights and many more.

Between March and September 2004 Ready Steady Crew staffed 57 events which were attended by over 14,000 people.

In this period people 37 registered as crew members. Of these 9 went on to full-time and 3 to part-time employment, 2 entered the intermediate labour market and 3 went into further education.

PROGRESS ON OBJECTIVES

- Objective 3

Improving **consultation** and **representation** across the sectors and **facilitation** of new opportunities for partnership and sharing



*Scottish Borders developing a local compact
May 2002*



*Dumfries and Galloway Stewartry Local Rural
Partnership Workshop
January 2003*

Within a rapidly changing national policy context focusing on broad social justice objectives it was absolutely crucial that the CVSs were in a position to respond to the expectations of partners and policy-makers and to make the voice of the voluntary sector heard. ERDF funding enabled that voice to be heard across the whole range of Community Planning structures and processes, including thematic and geographical partnerships.

Specific achievements under this objective include:

Staff from SoSNet partner CVSs represented the interests of the voluntary sector on a wide range of partnerships, groups and networks, including Community Planning theme teams and sub-groups, Rural Partnerships, Social Inclusion Partnerships, Health Initiatives, Children's and Young People's Services, Community Learning and Development Strategies and Social Enterprise Networks. Effective two-way communication has been achieved through direct contact with groups that CVSs have worked with and through CVSs' and other organisations' newsletters. When appropriate, information has been shared between the authority areas.

SoSNet partners' staff have also enabled other voluntary organisations to represent themselves on partnerships. For example, in Scottish Borders a Voluntary Youth Work Forum has been established with SoSNet support so that it can represent the specific interests of voluntary organisations working with young people.

The network held 193 seminars and workshops across the region involving organisations and representatives from all sectors. The objectives of these seminars varied from practical information sharing and networking, management and governance training to examining sustainability issues in partnership with other agencies.

Two major conferences were organised for Scottish Borders voluntary organisations to establish protocols for working relationships between the voluntary sector and community planning partners. A Scottish Borders Compact has been developed which includes an Action Plan to improve working relationships between statutory and voluntary bodies. This has been agreed by voluntary sector representatives and all the partners involved in Community Planning and inclusive mechanisms have been developed to ensure the actions are progressed to satisfactory conclusions.

A Conference was held in Stranraer in November 2001 on the sustainability of the voluntary sector at which representatives from the Scottish Executive and national delegates shared information on good practice in effective partnerships, funding and sustainability issues.

CVS representatives were consulted regarding the development of the Changing Children's Services Fund in Dumfries and Gallo-way and Scottish Borders.

A Forum of Voluntary Forums has also been established in Scottish Borders to assist with the flow of information from partnership working and to facilitate the most appropriate representation of the voluntary sector on partnerships.

Now that Community Planning structures are becoming established and new structures focusing on health and the development of the social economy are emerging, the challenge for the CVSs will be to ensure effective two-way communications across an ever shifting range of priorities.

HORIZONTAL THEMES

Equal Opportunities
Environmental Sustainability

Across the network, attention to the Horizontal Themes of **Equal Opportunities** and **Environmental Sustainability** were an integral part the development work of the SoSNet partners.

Equal Opportunities

The SoSNet partners work continuously to achieve best practice in equal opportunities both in their own internal operations and in their work with client groups.

Equal opportunities policies have been adopted by all the SoSNet partners and are inherent in all their systems, practice and procedures. These policies also cover the physical environment of CVS workplaces and aim to ensure maximum access to premises, events and information for all members of the community.

The SoSNet Marketing, Promotion and Public Relations Strategy and the SoSNet Communication Toolkit (including the visual identity elements in partner stationery and marketing material) embody equal opportunities good practice and the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Equal Opportunities policies inform the employment advice, disclosure work and support on policy development provided by SoSNet partners. Our development work addresses the access and inclusion issues at the heart of equal opportunities.

Participation in community activity and access to resources in rural areas of the South of Scotland are limited mainly by long travel distances and a poor transport infrastructure. These barriers particularly disadvantage carers, disabled people, single adult families, the elderly and the unemployed. Most SoSNet partner CVSs provide or directly support accessible community transport schemes.

Many community resource buildings in the region present access problems for people with mobility difficulties. SoSNet partner CVSs have been particularly active encouraging compliance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, often drawing down funds to help the sector assess needs.

Poor resources for people with sensory disabilities continue to restrict access and participation to many community projects. SoSNet partner CVSs actively promote sensory awareness by recognising and endeavouring to cater for people with additional physical and sensory needs. In this context new CVS stationery and developments to CVS websites have been produced to comply.

The ethnic minorities in the South of Scotland are principally located in small groups. The CVS network recognises the need to include members of these minorities by encouraging the availability of appropriate interpretation and other language materials.

Changing employment patterns within the South of Scotland have resulted in pockets of large-scale unemployment, diminishing confidence, local resources and the accessibility of other resources in main centres of population. Youth strategy groups have also identified lack of local employment as a barrier to young people's involvement in community life. These issues are being directly targeted by positive support for the creation of social enterprises and local personal development strategies as identified in appraisals of local needs.

Environmental Sustainability

SoSNet partners seek to ensure good environmental practice in their own operations and in the advice and support they deliver to community groups. This includes directing clients to specialist workers and organisations where appropriate. Such organisations include the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Scottish National Heritage (SNH), South West Environmental Action Project (SWEAP), the Energy Savings Trust and the Environmental Development Worker at the Borders Rural Resource Centre (RRC).

Every effort is made by SoSNet partners to minimise negative effects on the environment through, for example, reducing the amount of travel required by improving information and communication technology and by making essential travel more efficient. As far as possible partners ensure efficient use of energy in their own premises and operations by, for example, recycling waste paper to local playgroups, re-using envelopes, saving stamps and recycling ink cartridges. Materials are resourced locally where practical.

Support from such specialist environmental partners means that the CVSs are able to stimulate and support community recycling initiatives, environmental conservation and energy efficiency projects at grass roots level.

The CVS network works to ensure that environmental issues are addressed in area based strategies, for example, encouraging communities to become involved in Water Consultation Panels.

One partner CVS is piloting a project involving an energy audit of 29 community halls. It is hoped that the results of this audit could inform development work with community halls in other parts of the SoSNet area.

All partners are involved in promoting and supporting projects which respect, conserve and develop our environment while at the same time offering opportunities to disadvantaged people to gain skills. Most notable of these are:

- Furniture recycling projects run or supported by BAVS, RAVS and WCVS
- Waste recycling projects run or supported by RAVS and SCVS
- Environmental opportunities being developed for people with learning difficulties and disabilities by SCVS with Stewartry and Wigtown Local Rural Partnerships.
- Projects promoting biodiversity and wildlife habitats such as the South West Community Woodlands and Dalbeattie Forest partnership

CVSs support organisations applying to Leader+ for funding to develop projects designed to enhance natural and cultural resources

OUTPUTS

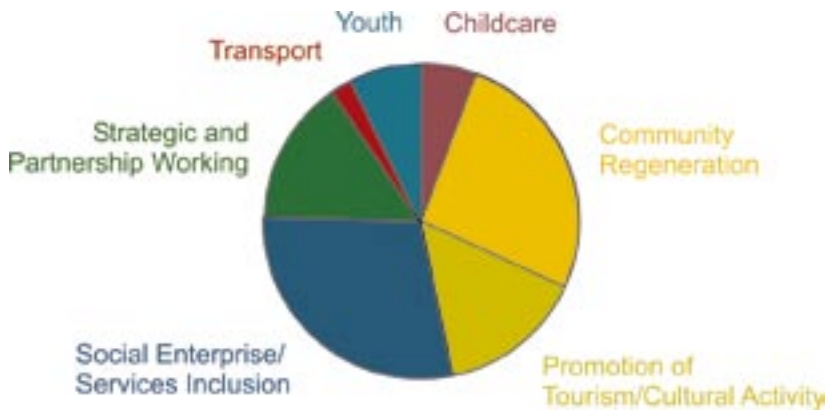
SoSNet project outputs were categorised under the following headings:

- Existing Organisations Assisted
- New Start Organisations, Initiatives or Enterprises Assisted
- Existing Jobs Safeguarded (full time equivalent)
- New Jobs Created (full time equivalent)
- Social Audits, Appraisals or Surveys Carried Out
- Community Action or Development Plans Completed
- Community Action or Development Plans Implemented
- Community Facilities Created or Improved
- Development Support Sessions to Organisations, Groups or Enterprises
- Seminars or Workshops Organised
- Attendances at Seminars or Workshops
- Organisations Introducing Equal Opportunity, Family Friendly or Environmental Policies
- ICT Programmes Assisted
- Leverage of External Funding (in pounds sterling)

Some of the key SoSNet outputs are presented here graphically for ease of interpretation.

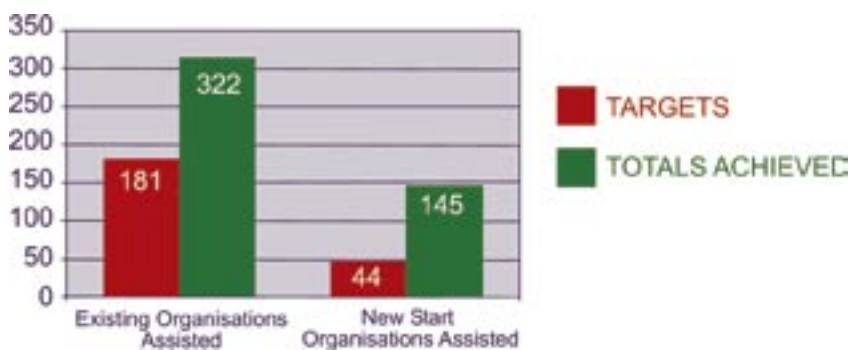
Output Graphs

Organisations Assisted - Relative Proportions of Thematic Groupings



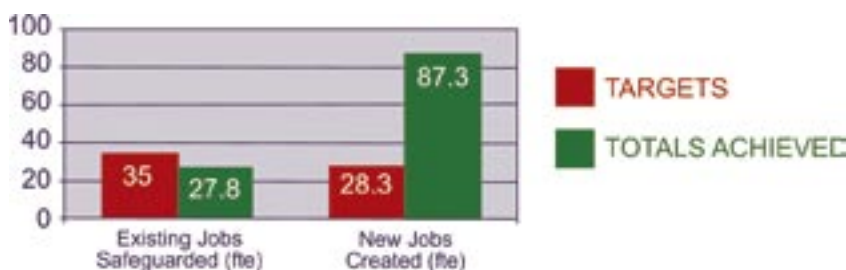
SoSNet partner CVSs worked with a wide range of organisation types.

Organisations Assisted



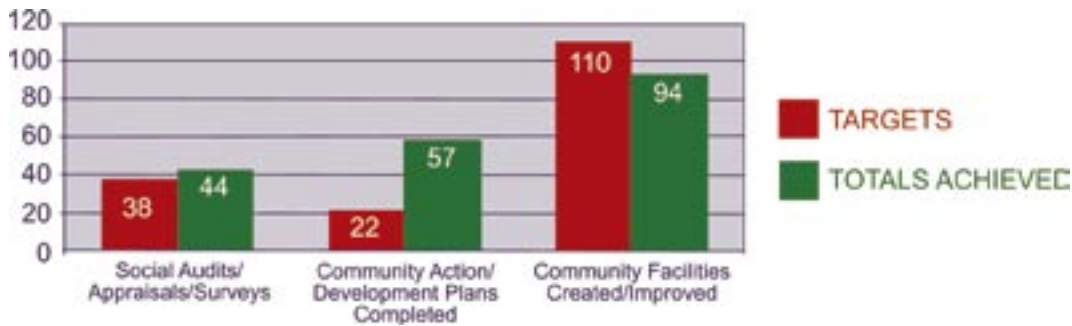
Many more existing organisations than anticipated were assisted under SoSNet and the number of new start organisations assisted was more than three times the target figure. A wide variety of organisations were assisted including village halls, development trusts, interest groups, access groups, resident's associations, community transport initiatives and many more. Many hundreds of people gained new knowledge and skills from engaging with their local SoS-Net partner CVS.

Jobs Safeguarded/Created



While the number of existing jobs safeguarded was slightly below target, the number of new jobs created as a result of SoSNet partner CVSs' input was almost three times the target figure, creating a substantial direct economic impact on individuals and communities.

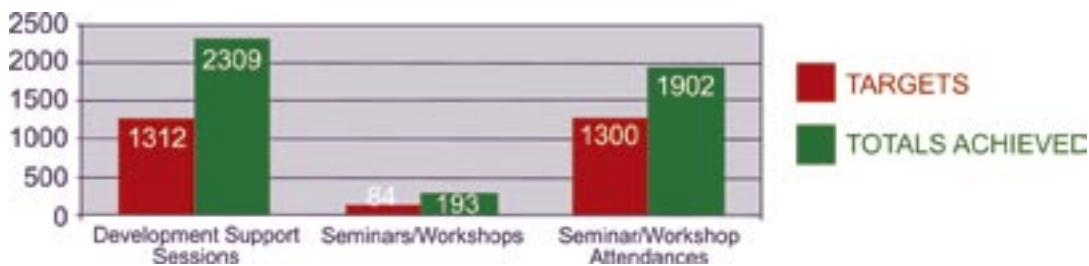
Community Development



SoSNet partner CVSs assisted many people in a range of communities across the South of Scotland, from very small villages to larger towns, in identifying their community needs and making plans to take action to fulfil these needs.

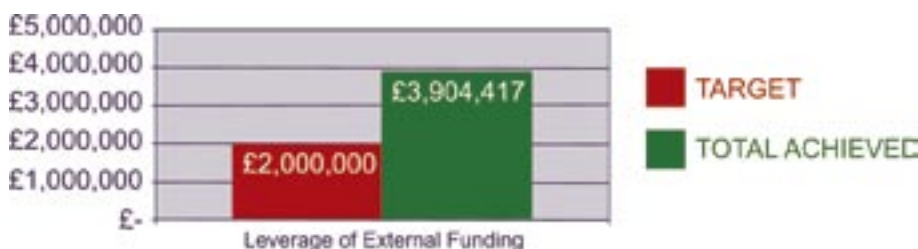
The CVSs worked with community organisations and initiatives to develop regeneration and enterprise activities leading towards longer-term economic sustainability. Some of the actions have been completed but others are more long term and are ongoing.

Development Support Sessions/Seminars/Workshops



Support provided by SoSNet partner CVSs included help with business plans, development plans, funding strategies, constitutions and legal structures, policies and operating procedures. As part of the development work, many of the workshops included here were training opportunities designed to suit the needs of particular groups. Others were delivered to representatives from several organizations together creating networking as well as learning opportunities.

Leverage of External Funding



The amount of money brought into the area by voluntary groups with assistance from their local SoSNet partner CVS is impressive. These funds made a notable difference to people's lives, increasing the confidence of the individual members of groups funded and stimulating and supporting communities in capacity-building and enterprise initiatives.

Outputs Summary

OUTPUT	TARGETS	2001 Totals ¹	2002 Totals	2003 Totals	2004 Totals ²	Overall TOTALS	Over/ Under Target	% Over/ Under Target
Existing Organisations Assisted	181	48	75	103	96	322	141	78%
New Start Organisations Assisted	44	24	46	42	33	145	101	230%
Existing Jobs Safeguarded (fte)	35	7	12.3	6.5	2	27.8	-7.2	-21%
New Jobs Created (fte)	28.3	16	19	42.1	10.3	87.3	59.09	209%
Social Audits/ Appraisals/ Surveys	38	2	28	8	6	44	6	16%
Community Action/ Development Plans Completed	22	4	45	6	2	57	35	159%
Community Action/ Development Plans Implemented	59	7	3	7	2	19	-40	-68%
Community Facilities Created/ Improved	110	4	25	18	47	94	-16	-15%
Development Support Sessions	1312	96	548	864	801	2309	997	76%
Seminars/ Workshops	84	14	52	71	56	193	109	130%
Seminar/ Workshop Attendances	1300	295	564	444	599	1902	602	46%
Policies Introduced ³	22	2	5	17	27	51	29	132%
ICT Programmes Assisted	0	0	27	20	4	51	51	no target
Leverage of External Funding	£2,000,000	£790,508	£979,268	£1,077,838	£1,056,803	£3,904,417	£1,904,417	95%

Notes

1. SoSNet financial year 2001 consisted of only one quarter
2. SoSNet financial year 2004 consisted of only three quarters
3. Number of Organisations introducing Equal Opportunities, Family Friendly or Environmental Policies

FINANCIAL REPORT

In the period September 2001 to September 2004 the SoSNet Project received a total grant from the Objective 2 Programme European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of £806,651. This was matched by funding from the Scottish Executive Voluntary Issues Unit, Scottish Borders Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council – giving a total project expenditure of £1,613,301.

The ERDF grant was disbursed across the South of Scotland Programme area, helping to fund staff and contributing towards administration, marketing, premises and travel costs in line with the project's objectives.

In January 2004, the SoSNet project was audited by the Verification and Audit Team (VACT) of the Scottish Executive who found its systems clear, transparent and robust. The auditors' report stated that 'the visiting officers are satisfied that the structure of Stewartry Council of Voluntary Service provides for ERDF monies to be properly managed and controlled'. In December 2003 an independent financial audit by the firm of Baker Tilly based in Glasgow, concluded 'that the expenditure is fairly stated and has been properly spent in accordance with the conditions of grant'.

As recognized by external agencies, the project succeeded in managing the complex process of applying a large amount of money to significantly enhance the capacity of the social economy in the South of Scotland.

Monitoring System

One of the SoSNet project's chief achievements was bringing together eight Councils of Voluntary Service, each with its own financial and non-financial systems and getting them to adopt a collective monitoring and reporting system. It has been a challenge for the CVSs to reconcile their autonomy with the importance of a collective monitoring system to the achievement of project objectives.

The electronic monitoring system, designed by the SoSNet Communications Officer, was praised as a particular achievement under the Strengthening Organisational Systems objective. Substantiated by paperwork held centrally by the SoSNet Finance and Monitoring Officer, the monitoring system enabled financial and non-financial (outputs) information to be recorded and collated effectively and accurately. The monitoring system increased the project's capacity to measure work, share best practice and bring together common themes and work strands while providing the effective reporting method required as a condition of the ERDF grant.

Financial Profile

In the original ERDF application form, the total approved project expenditure was £1,499,792. However, as work progressed it became evident that the project would be heading for an overspend in most expenditure categories. Early in 2003 application was made for a 10% increase in our ERDF grant in order to:

- secure more funds to meet growing development needs
- make funds available for CVSs to rent new/additional premises
- allow for more realistic spending levels and to address the projected overspend in administration
- fund the extension of the Data Collectors' posts enabling them to embark on a second phase of work on the Community Information System
- fund an external Interim Evaluation of the project

The request was approved and as from July 2003 we were granted an additional £63,827 in ERDF, giving a total available to spend of up to £1,627,446 (or £813,723 in ERDF).

Income and Expenditure Summary

	Actual	Budget
INCOME		
European Regional Development Fund	£806,651	£813,723
Match Funding	£806,651	£813,723
Income Totals	£1,613,301	£1,627,446
EXPENDITURE		
Staff Costs	£1,328,256	£1,318,956
Travel Costs	£66,441	£78,516
Premises	£49,698	£50,240
Marketing	£23,708	£25,796
Administration	£118,398	£127,138
Capital Equipment	£14,800	£14,800
Evaluation	£12,000	£12,000
Expenditure Totals	£1,613,301	£1,627,446

