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Testing Place-based Approaches in Plymouth

A report on work commissioned by Power to Change from Social Enterprise UK (working in collaboration with Plymouth Social Enterprise Network and the Real Ideas Organisation)

June 2016



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About this report

Power to Change commissioned Social Enterprise UK (SE UK) in June 2016 to undertake some exploratory place-based research in Plymouth. SE UK worked closely with partners, Plymouth Social Enterprise Network and the Real Ideas Organisation to design and deliver the various activities. Although Power to Change has provided input and support throughout the process, the views expressed here are entirely those of SE UK and their partners.



We are the national body for social enterprise. We are a membership organisation. We offer business support, do research, develop policy, campaign, build networks, share knowledge and understanding, and raise awareness of social enterprise and what it can achieve. We also provide training and consultancy for clients of all kinds, including local authorities. Our members come from across the social enterprise movement – from local grassroots organisations to multi-million pound businesses, as well as the private and public sectors. Together with our members we are the voice for social enterprise. We believe that social enterprise is our best chance of creating a fairer world and protecting the planet.

www.socialenterprise.org.uk



The Network aims to be a focal point for the social enterprise sector within Plymouth providing a way for social enterprises to exchange information, ideas and expertise helping to strengthen the sector, represent the interests of social enterprises and provide the opportunity for social enterprises to influence the development of their sector within Plymouth.

<http://plymsocent.org.uk/>



At RIO we believe social enterprise has the power to change the world. We're passionate about solving social problems and by working with individuals, organisations and sectors we harness the power of social enterprise to deliver real and lasting social change. We draw on our own very real experience of developing award winning social enterprises to deliver strategic programmes, along with a range of social enterprise solutions - including consultancy, training and business support - to help others realise their ambitions through social enterprise.

<http://www.realideas.org/>

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Executive Summary

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) was commissioned by Power to Change to help explore approaches to place-based working. SEUK was chosen as a partner in part because of its work on its Social Enterprise Places programme: one of those existing 17 Places is Plymouth, where a number of successful social enterprises are in operation, and that laid the ground for its selection as the location for this activity.

SEUK has worked closely with two key partners in Plymouth, Real Ideas Organisation (RIO) and Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN) to deliver the following programme of work between December 2015 and April 2016:

- desk research into city strategies and plans
- identification of, and 3 x meetings with, key stakeholders in the city
- 6 x local events to foster and support community business ideas, which reached 150 people in two of the most deprived areas of the city, Devonport and Stonehouse

The objectives of this activity were to:

- raise awareness of community business
- engage with individuals to think about community business ideas and to support them
- start to connect community businesses and help them navigate existing support and finance
- understand the 'top-down' picture both in how this links to the 'bottom-up' community activity and also how Power to Change can achieve additionality and impact in its place-based work

Key learnings for place-based work

- i) **Focus by geography and in areas of most need** – there is a balance between a large enough population for ideas, but a small enough area for impact
- ii) Maintain **connections to key strategic players** such as the local authority to maximise the opportunities for leverage and legacy
- iii) **Work through and with local anchor organisations**, but encourage them to look at new approaches to engagement and delivery – this should include individuals rooted in the communities where they live and work
- iv) Encourage community-based approaches and **activities that are aspirational, creative, inspire, build momentum and generate energy**: building on assets
- v) Replicate a **local and national partner working structure** to bring independence and insight, and expert support in different areas
- vi) Understand that **at the earliest stages** (pre-start) of activity, the **focus needs to be on community engagement, understanding assets and priorities and mobilising energy**, before embarking on creating business vehicles
- vii) Ask future places to identify and get genuine buy-in from **stakeholders across sectors** to support community business from the start
- viii) Consider **resilience and connectivity of local infrastructure** as potential criterion (or outcome) of a future places programme

Introduction

Social Enterprise UK (SEUK) was commissioned by Power to Change to help explore approaches to place-based working. The intention of this was to both test out different approaches on the ground, but also to inform future place-based Power to Change work and investment.

SEUK was chosen as a partner in part because of its work on its Social Enterprise Places programme, which similarly seeks to understand the key factors in creating a supportive ecology and fostering hot-spots of activity in local communities. One of those existing 17 Places is Plymouth, where there are a number of well-established social enterprises, and that laid the ground for the city's selection as the location for this initial exploratory work.

SEUK has worked closely with two key partners in Plymouth to help inform, design and deliver this work: Real Ideas Organisation (RIO) and Plymouth Social Enterprise Network (PSEN). RIO is a local anchor organisation which runs one of the best known community businesses in Plymouth, Devonport Guildhall, and is at the centre of many of the city's enterprise and business activities. PSEN is a dynamic network and key player in local infrastructure, bringing together different players of different sizes and sectors to build a favourable environment in the city for community business.

The planned activity for the project was set out as follows:

- identification and meetings with key stakeholders, including emerging and existing community businesses
- desk research into city strategies and plans
- local events to foster and support community business ideas

with an interim and this final report to feed into further phases of work in Plymouth and into future place-based investment.

The objectives of this activity were to:

- raise awareness of community business
- engage with individuals to think about community business ideas in local areas of Plymouth, and support these new ideas
- start to connect community businesses and help them to navigate existing structures and opportunities (support, finance etc.)
- understand the 'top-down' picture of key stakeholders to understand how this both links to the 'bottom-up' community need and also how Power to Change can bring clear additionality and understand its own impact in place-based work

The report that follows looks into the conditions and context for this work in Plymouth, the local infrastructure and conditions, the activities that were carried out and their outcomes, with reflection on the approach taken, and finally recommendations for future place-based work and investment.

1. Places – conditions and context

This section looks at the particular conditions and context for this work in Plymouth, in terms of geography, demographics, and other factors.

Plymouth is the 2nd largest city in the South West and the 15th largest in the UK, but what becomes evident through desk research of economic plans and regional strategies is that Plymouth is also in a fairly unique situation in its region. Cornwall gets a lot of specific attention and investment because of its rurality, tourism, seasonality and (challenged) infrastructure; Bristol has a reputation as an independent, forward-thinking city and a haven of sustainability, forward-thinking; Exeter similarly attracts businesses and inward investment.

Plymouth arguably has as much in common with other dockyard cities like Sunderland or Portsmouth or with other places that have been faced with the decline of a dominant major industry, such as fishing in Grimsby or mining areas of Wales. This is occasionally characterised (generally and unfairly) as places with a ‘take a job, rather than make a job’ mentality – in that generations expected for many years to go into the same industry as other members of their family. More substantively, there is evidence that the city has lower rates of business start-up and of total businesses per resident population¹, so there is a continuing emphasis on entrepreneurship.

It also remains the case that, although there are pockets of rural deprivation in the South West (particularly in parts of Cornwall), Plymouth and Torbay are amongst the two most deprived areas in the whole region against a wide range of indicators, including health, education, and employment. Of course, there are variations within a city of Plymouth’s size (see discussion on where to base activity in section 3 Activities and Approach), but there remain many challenges to tackle and address.

What this has meant is that there are a large number of overlapping economic and social strategies and plans which have relevance to Plymouth². There are also a number of connected and overlapping programmes happening in Plymouth which are relevant to Power to Change’s own mission, including the [Plymouth Fairness Commission](#), Local [Food Plymouth](#) and Plymouth’s [Cities of Service](#) work³.

Plymouth City Council is at the centre of many of these initiatives and it has the reputation of being forward-thinking and pioneering, particularly with regard to social and environmental issues. For example, its work on embedding the Social Value Act is amongst the most far-reaching in England⁴. Its overall Plymouth Plan won awards for the extent to which it involved, consulted and engaged with the whole city and can be viewed in more detail here: <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan>. What is striking in the plan is how many of the

¹ See the Plymouth Fairness Commission report, p.19 on business demography

² These include Local Enterprise Partnerships, notably the Heart of South West LEP, and connected European funding activity (under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund), and regionally-delivered activity from the Department of Work and Pensions and the Skills Funding Agency.

³ Cities of Service focuses on fuel poverty and community food projects.

⁴ <http://plymouthnewsroom.co.uk/new-social-value-policy-plymouth/>

overall areas by which the Council judges success relate closely to Power to Change's own priorities and objectives for community business⁵:

- *"More residents are contributing to and involved in their community"*
- *"Plymouth has good quality neighbourhoods where people feel safe and happy"*
- *"Plymouth has more vibrant, productive and innovative businesses"*
- *"Plymouth has a reputation as a welcoming and multicultural city with diverse communities"*

More specifically, in the detail of the Plan ([Plymouth Plan Part One](#)), there are some very relevant policies which relate directly to community business practice:

- *Devolving power, supporting communities to lead change in their area (Policy 11)*
- *Empowering people, communities and institutions to drive their own economic success (Policy 17)*
- *Creating an entrepreneurial culture which supports new business start-ups and investment into existing businesses (Policy 17)*
- *Local stewardship of heritage assets (Policy 28)*

With this existing plan, created through a collaborative cross-sector process, there is clearly a fertile environment for community business to land and have impact. Of course, it is difficult to gauge in a short project the extent of agreement from all communities that these priorities reflect their own, but it provides a foundation and framework to work with. Constant connection to the more strategic elements of city development will be important as the role of the local authority continues to evolve and change, or as political leadership changes.

Within Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport were chosen as the locations for the local events and major activities. Both are amongst the most deprived areas in Plymouth⁶ and therefore the areas of most need: Devonport is the most deprived ward in Plymouth, and Stonehouse is not far behind. Their characteristics are very similar, which manifests in the data in various ways:

- highest unemployment rates (accounting for c. 20% of all Plymouth's unemployment)
 - economic inactivity (accounting for c. 36% of all Plymouth's incapacity benefit claims)
- child poverty (highest numbers in the city)
- poor health (Devonport has lowest life expectancy – 10+ years less than some parts of city)
- larger numbers of 'vulnerable families'
- fuel poverty (highest % of households living in fuel poverty in the city)
- fewer local job opportunities
- more limited access to space and other leisure activities
- crime and anti-social behaviour (after the city centre, amongst the highest rates)

⁵ The principles that underpin the plan also resonate strongly with Power to Change's work: *"People mix, learn from each other & work together"* // *"People have confidence they can influence decisions that affect them"* // *"People can contribute to and benefit from being part of the city's future"* and so on.

⁶ See the Plymouth Fairness Commission report for more detail. It is worth noting that some of the data is inevitably a few years out of date, so may not reflect progress made in these communities in intervening years.

2. Community businesses – infrastructure and support

This section looks at existing local infrastructure and conditions.

Portsmouth City Council has been at the centre of some very direct support, both for community businesses and the wider social sector. This includes the establishment of their own Social Enterprise Investment Fund and significant and engaged involvement in flagship community businesses such as Devonport Guildhall and Plymouth Energy Community, the city's energy co-operative, for the city's development trusts – and also support for more emerging examples like Bread and Roses, a community pub. These examples (even exemplars) seem to play an important role not only in raising awareness, but also in raising aspiration and a sense of what is possible.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the social sector infrastructure in the city is therefore also quite strong and well-supported. These include not only RIO and PSEN, the delivery partners on this project, but also a broad range of other trusts, networks and support programmes⁷. Pertinently for this programme, there are also more focused, local activities and networks such as Big Local work in Whiteleigh, and Devonport Community First Partnership (and its offshoot Devonport Live): both have a strong focus on, and experience of, community engagement and supporting community-led activity in a very focused location.

Alongside these elements of a supportive infrastructure, it is also worth noting that many of the larger organisations and employers in the city are also in the social sector. These are not community businesses in the Power to Change sense, but housing associations like Plymouth Community Homes and Affinity Sutton, healthcare social enterprises like LiveWell South West and academic institutions like Plymouth University share many similar goals and objectives and have the potential to be supporters and advocates of community business in different ways.

It is also worth noting the importance of local leadership, across sectors, people⁸ who work across a wide range of activities and networks, mobilising activity and drawing people together. This constant and continuous connection between policies and programmes and subsequent practice on the ground should not be underestimated. As with so many other areas of life and business, understanding and trust that is built through relationships and joint experience is the unseen factor behind successful work – and arguably the most difficult to replicate in any broader place-based programme.

In short, Plymouth has:

- a supportive and engaged local authority
- flagship community business exemplars
- a healthy and well-connected local infrastructure
- large social sector employers
- leadership from individuals across sectors

⁷ Including Millfields and Wolseley Development Trusts, the Zebra Collective, the Plymouth Octopus Project, Devon School for Social Entrepreneurs, SEEDbed and more

⁸ Individuals like Gareth Hart at PSEN, Lindsey Hall and Ed Whitelaw at RIO, Chris Penberthy at Plymouth City Council, Jacky Clift at the Plymouth Octopus Project.

3. Activities and approach

This section looks at the activity and approach in more detail: why partners and places were chosen, how original plans were adapted, and the outputs.

The approach to this work was informed by a number of things which included:

- desk research of documents and research
- meetings and conversations with key stakeholders
- existing and previous experience of partners
- timescale
- being complementary to existing work

These informed the activities in that the partners undertook what might be termed a ‘learning by doing’ approach – moving to action, promotion and engagement rather than undertaking significant consultation or more formal or traditional community engagement beforehand. This is also a reflection on the ability and capability of the local infrastructure bodies to move quickly and effectively.

A twin-track of activity was finally decided on:

- a) a series of 6 local events in Devonport / Stonehouse aimed at encouraging community business ideas, raising awareness of community business, and connecting people with new ideas to existing resources and support
- b) 3 meetings with key city stakeholders (at the start, middle and end of the project) including local development trusts, the Council, voluntary sector infrastructure and others: this was aimed at both supporting the community engagement work, but also to understand how best this project (and future phases of work) could have most *additional* impact in Plymouth

Whilst Stonehouse and Devonport were chosen firstly because of their needs and relative disadvantage, the second reason was the more pragmatic one of there being existing local infrastructure bodies that could hold events and quickly get to community engagement – namely RIO in Devonport and Millfields Development Trust in Stonehouse. With the reality of a short timescale, there was a need to move quickly to activity and this required local partners with connections and readiness to move.

a) Local events

The six events were preceded by promotional and outreach activity in the communities in question, undertaken by Plymouth Social Enterprise Network. In an effort to reach what was described as ‘not the usual suspects’, entire estates and areas were flyeried, and promotions were put up in local shops and newspapers. The table below summarises venues, dates and attendee numbers:

Each outreach/ideas event had a short introduction about Power to Change and community business, and used a simple community business planning canvas⁹ to

⁹ A simple template that lays out a business model on a single page, in this instance combining Power to Change’ criteria around community business with more standard business planning aspects.

prompt group discussion and to flesh out people's ideas.

Table: Schedule of events and attendance in Devonport and Stonehouse

Date	Event	Venue	Attendees
February 9 th (evening)	Outreach / ideas event	Devonport Guildhall	35
February 11 th (daytime)	Outreach / ideas event	Millfields HQ (Stonehouse)	7
February 16 th (evening)	Outreach / ideas event	Stonehouse Creek Leisure and Social Club	10
February 18 th (daytime)	Outreach / ideas event	Stiltskin Theatre (Devonport Park)	8
February 25 th (evening)	Devonport Soup	Devonport Guildhall	60-70
April 19 th (daytime)	Momentum / referrals	Devonport Guildhall	26

A wide variety of ideas was brought forward at these early events, many at a very early stage. For example, at one of the Devonport events, ideas from members of the community included:

- raising money for a play area / taking over local green space
- trying to build a commercial model for a community hub & café
- a church group working out how its space could be useful to others
- redeveloping an (unused) shop as a community hub
- developing pop-up retail outlets along Union St
- an independent care business, owned by the local community
- franchising GoodGym (an exercise / isolation project) to Plymouth

These were a very broad mix of issue-based, pre-start, start-up, importing existing ideas, re-purposing existing projects, interested activists and more; and a mix of both ages and specific parts of Devonport & Stonehouse (in terms of where people were coming from).

Seventeen projects applied for one of the four places at the Soup event (in which people pay £5 for soup, get one vote and the money goes to the winning project with most votes) and four were selected based on their readiness to move to action and their ability to help create positive impact for the community.

These were:

- Plymouth Community Currency (Plymouth Pound) – local currency project aiming to be community-owned
- Real Junk Food Project – a food waste project with pay-as-you-feel business model
- Go Fund Yourself – a project to help other community projects build their media skills
- Seeds and Feeds – aiming to regenerate a community space through plants & art

The final event was intended to give people who attended the initial events referrals, connections and a continuation of momentum to take their ideas forward. Support agencies and funders working in the city were therefore invited¹⁰, and the Power to Change existing funds (and criteria) were also discussed. This last event was originally planned to be the start of a more substantive 'community business network' but as the project developed, it was felt that this would be duplicating existing activity, be too early to be clear on its objectives, and that more direct signposting and referrals would be more useful at this stage.

Case Study: The Real Junk Food Project, Plymouth

- Jess Sneyd has initial idea to bring Real Junk Food Project to Plymouth (late 2015)
- Attends outreach event at Devonport & uses community business canvas (early Feb 2016)
- Applies to take part in Devonport Soup and is selected to be one of four presenting
- Pitches at Devonport Soup - wins £800 (incl. match from Power to Change) (end Feb 2016)
- Attends momentum/networking event (April 2016)



Real Food Junk Project launches end April 2016

In total, the events were attended by around 150 people. The intention was to try to reach beyond existing networks to what were described in planning meetings as 'unusual suspects' – broadly, this meant 'people who weren't already well-known in the community or to the partners', and no more rigorous thought was given to targeting. There was some anecdotal, qualitative evidence that this was successful, and that the flyers and promotional activity did reach 'new' people through their community engagement.

However, it would certainly not be possible to say from this project to what degree the attendees were representative or reflective of the communities of Devonport and Stonehouse in age, background, residency and so forth; nor is it possible to say how fully the partnership was able to reach into all parts of both communities, and whether greater consultation or more intensive (or different forms of) community engagement might have assisted with this.

While not all of the ideas coming forward could be described instantly as a community business, many had the community at their heart and several people were interested in how to build community ownership and genuine engagement into their models from the

¹⁰ Crowdfunder and Devon School for Social Entrepreneurs both presented. Other support organisations, such as UnLtd, the Plymouth Octopus Project and Plymouth Social Enterprise Network were presented / connected to

start. No specific thematic areas stood out, but there was a thread of using unused or under-utilised space in different ways – from empty retail outlets to community-managed parks, from potential pop-up hubs to community gardens.

b) Stakeholder meetings

The project partners held three stakeholder meetings, all chaired and facilitated by SEUK, as detailed in the table below.

Date	Content	Attendees
December 23 rd	Initial stakeholder engagement and delivery planning	SEUK, PSEN, RIO, Millfields Trust, Plymouth City Council
February 9th	Introducing Power to Change to Plymouth; overview of activity & opportunities discussion	SEUK, PSEN, RIO, Millfields Trust, Plymouth City Council, Devonport Live, Power to Change, POP
April 26th	Initial findings of project to date, update on Power to Change strategy, discussion on potential future phases of work	SEUK, PSEN, RIO, Millfields Trust, Plymouth City Council, Devonport Live, Power to Change, POP, Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust, LiveWell South West, The Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce, Barnardos

4. Outcomes

This section looks at what broader lessons have been learned from this project, both specific to Plymouth and ones that are more widely applicable and relevant

This project was undertaken at pace (signed off in November, planned in December, with delivery starting in January and largely completed by the end of March) and has made significant ground in that time. It was testing out a number of ideas and approaches through this activity, and trying to answer some key questions for Power to Change including:

- where to focus activity (what are the optimum conditions: the size, scale and characteristics of a 'place')?
- how to best identify community needs and what sort of activities to undertake?
- what is the role of national and local bodies in delivering support?
- what can Power to Change add in cities like Plymouth; and how can it work to create both leverage and legacy?

What follows is learning gathered from each stage of the project in Plymouth, and from Social Enterprise UK's own broader work on developing places and supporting local networks. As previously, much of this is based on qualitative material and anecdotal reflection from the project, rather than substantive or rigorous evidence.

a) Size, scale and scope – the optimum conditions?

- i) In the Plymouth work, the scale of operations was appropriate and manageable: operationally, it was small enough to flyer and cover in a comprehensive way, but large enough to have enough people coming forward with ideas. So working in a focused way in two wards of the city worked well. There was real evidence from the people in both Devonport and Stonehouse of entrepreneurial energy, ideas and passion for their community, and the outreach activity reached people who previous initiatives by project partners had failed to engage.
- ii) A geographically-bounded approach rather than, say a thematic one (e.g. like Local Food Plymouth), seems to make more sense for Power to Change work, with *communities* at its heart. The majority of ideas from people in their communities were clearly powered by their ties to that location and that specific geography.
- iii) The focus on areas of multiple or relative deprivation make sense in terms of impact, but also will also inevitably already have the attention of the council, health system partners, housing associations and others. There are pros and cons to this: the potential to get strategic leverage; but also the potential for external influence, duplication and competing agendas.

b) Identifying community needs and developing activities

- i) This project deliberately chose a 'learn by doing' approach. Although informed by significant amounts of desk research and from the views and insights of local partners, the activity focused on generating activity and ideas and solutions, rather than on a more intensive focus on understanding community needs

through more specific engagement or consultation. There are clear pros and cons to this approach:

Pros	Cons
Focuses people on what they can do	Tends to be top-down, use existing channels
Creates energy and momentum	Unclear how representative of community
Creates new examples to inspire others	Broad and wide approach to engagement
Rush of activity reaches beyond networks	Limited time to inform design & planning
Builds on assets of community	Community members don't drive all activity

- ii) What the Plymouth work shows is that building energy, momentum and openness into this work is important, and that it simply can't be done without local infrastructure partners. However, constructive challenge to those partners to take new approaches to engagement or to question how their approaches can be improved can be useful. One way to achieve both is to have people from the community driving even more of the work from the communities they live and work in – as delivery partners themselves.
- iii) One aspect of the learning by doing approach is that not sufficient thought was given to *who* exactly was trying to be reached or engaged. This makes judging the 'success' of techniques more difficult, beyond the anecdotal and qualitative. The monitoring of age, gender, background, postcode and so on that one might find in a project with greater lead-in or over a longer time period could help here. Achieving this without alienating or putting off potential participants would be a critical consideration.
- iv) The pre-start activities generated a significant number of ideas and projects, several of which are being taken forward. It was interesting to note that people did not identify with any one particular term to describe their activity – many were entirely new to any relevant concepts, be they community business, co-operatives, social enterprise, or community ownership. The extent to which the *term* 'community business' is therefore relevant in pre-start or early stage activity is questionable – the same is true of social enterprise: at this stage, it is more values-based and about intention and how it joins and contributes to a broader movement.
- v) The plans to build a network of community businesses (in the original proposal and post-December meeting) were dropped as it was realised that this would only be serving to confuse the landscape rather than help people navigate it. Replacing this with the 'momentum' event made more sense: continuing the

focus on the practical, and more obviously doing some of the navigation and signposting that people required.

c) The role of national and local bodies

- i) There is obviously a crucial and central role in such work for local anchor organisations like RIO and Millfields Trust – that combine track record with community connections, assets and event spaces and a deep understanding of the areas they work in. Similarly important are the roles that other local networking groups play, such as Plymouth Social Enterprise Network, which join up, mobilise and further connect between groups, sectors and communities. Throughout this project, good individual working relationships also helped tie in and connect very local activity and events to a much broader and important strategic view of city-wide work and investment.
- ii) The short timescale prevented greater involvement of a wider set of stakeholders at an earlier stage – for example, with more lead-in time, those represented at the *final* stakeholder meeting (such as LiveWell South West, Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust, the Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce) could and arguably should have been more substantively involved at an earlier stage¹¹.
- iii) The role of a national partner such as SEUK can be important: to bring insight from elsewhere, as well as independence and neutrality from local (sector) politics or historical projects and initiatives. This independence was found to be particularly useful in this project in stakeholder meetings when trying to progress an initiative or resolve a more thorny issue, or in asking ‘stupid questions’ that challenged the way things have been done previously.

d) What can place-based investment add and how can it create leverage & legacy?

- i) Any place-based investor, such as Power to Change, arriving in Plymouth finds a city which shares many of its objectives and aims, and where many of the necessary elements are in place. One of the lessons from the work is that Power to Change needs to focus its activity in specific areas (such as Stonehouse and Devonport) as city-wide initiatives risk becoming too broad or ‘diluting’ available resources. The additionality and impact of more focused work therefore also becomes somewhat easier to identify, track and measure. There was strong feedback from local stakeholders along these lines in the three meetings.
- ii) In order to achieve leverage and legacy, it is also key that place-based investors engage with and work with the strategic players in the city. This could be about achieving alignment with the Council’s work or investment alongside European support programmes or matching Livewell South West’s own grants fund but this requires a strategic engagement alongside the focused local and community-based activity.

¹¹ This involvement of key stakeholders and organisations from across sectors is a key piece of learning from SEUK’s Social Enterprise Places work; to the extent that the application form for the programme requires evidence of such cross-sectoral buy-in and activity

5. Learning for future-place based work and investment

This section draws out key learning for future place-based work and investment, both in the specific context, and more broadly.

a) What would we do differently if starting again?

In summary, if we were starting the project tomorrow with greater time and lead-in, there are 5 key things that we would definitely do differently on another place-based project:

- i) Engage the community in multiple ways (and in multiple locations); and ensure activity is led to an even greater extent by those living within the community.
- ii) Target a representative mix of Devonport and Stonehouse's residents, and monitor the extent of success with regard to both those leading ideas and in who they are seeking to serve and involve
- iii) Involve a wider range of stakeholders in strategic discussions at an earlier stage: opportunities for support and leverage might otherwise be missed (for example with housing associations, business connectors, chamber of commerce, healthcare)
- iv) Aim for a better balance of desk and action research with the community to provide more real-time, live intelligence and information to inform project design (i.e. not being too reliant on top-down plans or on the views of very established organisations)
- v) Use the examples in the city even more in the early events to demonstrate what is possible, and to raise awareness and understanding of what community business can achieve.

b) Recommendations for investors engaged in place-based work

Emerging from the lessons described above, SEUK and partners have some clear recommendations for investors engaged in place-based work:

- i) **Focus by geography and in areas of most need** – there is a balance between a large enough population for ideas, but a small enough area for impact
- ii) Maintain **connections to key strategic players** such as the local authority to maximise the opportunities for leverage and legacy
- iii) **Work through and with local anchor organisations**, but encourage them to look at new approaches to engagement and delivery – this should include individuals rooted in the communities where they live and work

- iv) Encourage community-based approaches and **activities that are aspirational, creative, inspire, build momentum and generate energy**: building on assets
- v) Replicate a **local and national partner working structure** to bring independence and insight, and expert support in different areas
- vi) Understand that **at the earliest stages** (pre-start) of activity, the **focus needs to be on community engagement, understanding assets and priorities and mobilising energy**, before embarking on creating business vehicles
- vii) Ask future places to identify and get genuine buy-in from **stakeholders across sectors** to support community business from the start
- viii) Consider **resilience and connectivity of local infrastructure** as potential criterion (or outcome) of a future places programme

Finally, place-based investors, including Power to Change, will themselves have to adapt and evolve as local infrastructure changes across the country. The role of local authorities has changed significantly even in the last five years; local charity and social enterprise infrastructure and networks vary significantly in different areas of the country, and are either disappearing, under considerable strain or re-purposing themselves in different forms; new organisations and new sectors will play a larger role in communities and local areas in future.

Appendix A: References and Reading

Plymouth / South West-specific

- *Creating the Conditions for Fairness*, Plymouth Fairness Commission final report (March 2014): http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/pcc_fairness_bro_lr.pdf

also Plymouth Fairness Commission: initial evidence (March 2013)
http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouth_fairness_commission_introductory_analysis.pdf

- *The Plymouth Plan* <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthplan> (originally published late 2014, updated & appended since)

- Cities of Service / Our Plymouth: <https://ourplymouth.co.uk> including *Cities of Service Plan* (https://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/plymouth_cities_of_service_plan.pdf). Plymouth applied to be a City of Service in February 2014 and received funding for 2 years.

- Heart of the South West LEP *Strategic Economic Plan* (March 2014):
<http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/sites/default/files/user-88/SEP-%20Final%20draft%2031-03-14-website.pdf>

- *Plymouth Social Value and Sustainability Policy* (March 2016):
<http://democracy.plymouth.gov.uk/mqConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=70214>

- Plymouth Social Enterprise Investment Fund (ongoing):
<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/socialenterprises.htm>

- Big Local in Whitleigh, Plymouth: <http://localtrust.org.uk/get-involved/big-local/whitleigh>

- Local Foods Plymouth: <http://www.localfoodsplymouth.org/>

General / background:

- Social Enterprise Places case studies, including Plymouth:
<http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/social-enterprise-places/case-studies> (2013 onwards)

- *Leading the World in Social Enterprise: the State of Social Enterprise survey* (SEUK; Sept 2015)
<http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/advice-services/publications/state-social-enterprise-report-2015>

- *Prospecting the Future* (SEUK; February 2016) – a deeper look at social investment / finance requirements of social enterprise across the UK for the Access Foundation
<http://access-socialinvestment.org.uk/social-enterprise-uk-prospecting-the-future-research-funded-by-access-published/>

- *Systems Change: a guide to what it is and how to do it* (NPC / Lankelly Chase; June 2015)
<http://lankellychase.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Systems-Change-How-to-Do-It.pdf>

- *Place-based funding: a briefing paper* (IVAR; June 2015):
http://www.ivar.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/PlaceBasedFunding_briefingpaper_June2015.pdf

Appendix B: attendees / participants

There are not complete lists for each event due to some people not signing up with email addresses / arriving late or leaving early and so on. The Devonport Soup was an open event, not requiring registration.

February 9th event

Andrew Bray
James Bridgwater
David Brown
Matthew Carter
Wendy Coulton
Sam Cross
Danielle Doyle
Cathy Harshaw
Wendy Hart
Clint Jones
Rosie Kearton
Hayley Kemp
John Kinsman
Pat Kinsman
Joedy Lawrence
Mike Leech
Karen Pilkington
Roger Pipe
Andrew Pratt
Gareth Price
Trudy Rodgers
Helen Ryan
Luke Seymour
Jess Sneyd

February 11th

Caroline Blacker
Gin Farrow-Jones
Mark Gilbert
Jonathan Hill
Paul Keller
Rebecca Roberts
Helen Williams

February 16th

Barbara Bridgman
Graham Dawe
Mark Gilbert
Laura Killen
Chris Penberthy
Kate Phillips
Hannah Sloggett
Josanne Stewart
David Stolton

February 18th

Dawn Clarke
Iain Slade
Claire Summers

April 19th event (follow-up / momentum)

Caroline Blackler
Steve Bowen
Barbara Bridgman
James Bridgwater
Myles Coker
Becky Cox
Sam Cross
June Gamble
Wendy Hart
Laura Henry
Roger Higman
Clint Jones
Laura Killen
Susan Moores
Jess Sneyd
Josanne Stewart
David Stolton
Helen Williams