



17th March 2020

FAO: Nicola Sturgeon Aileen Campbell, John Swinney, Rosanna Cunningham & Kate Forbes

Dear Ministers

Re: The role and financial sustainability of third sector organisations across Scotland

As the pandemic continues, the **Chief Officers of the TSI Scotland Network**, representing and supporting our members day to day across Scotland have decided to send you a collective letter, to highlight the severity of the situation for many smaller charities, social enterprises and community groups and the importance of providing as much support as possible, as early as possible to the sector.

The health of the population is of primary importance but may necessitate actions which lead to significant social and economic disruption. The third sector has a track record of responding swiftly and flexibly in these circumstances. For example, a volunteer army could be mobilised with multi-agency co-ordination. It also provides vital services which need to be maintained during this emergency situation. The sustainability of many is already under threat. The sector has a critical role to play in helping the government and wider population to meet the potential crisis but it will also need access to communication networks and financial support to do so effectively.

We are asking that charities and community groups are given the highest priority when the Scottish Government is considering how to respond to the emerging crisis. Communications and resources can be channelled quickly through the TSI Scotland Network organisations to ensure that their essential services are maintained through these coming weeks. The charity sector is facing exceptional pressures already, and yet their care and provision to the most vulnerable is essential.

We therefore urge you to implement urgent measures to support the not-for-profit, charity and social enterprise sector as has already been requested in England. For example by immediately establishing an emergency fund to support charities at risk of insolvency or significantly lower levels of fundraising or trading income due to economic disruption, in particular care providers and hospices. This fund could be administered through the TSI Network. This would mean short-term grant funding could go direct to the organisations we know need it first, and if necessary larger short-term loans to ensure jobs are maintained over the longer term, to support communities.

We would also suggest that the sector will need explicit support both from local authorities and other Scottish Government departments in the future as part of a stimulus package to support the sector and protect thousands of jobs and community facilities.

As a Network we closely monitor the situation to identify the crucial issues for our members and their communities so that support can be provided to them and so we will be able to pass on our insights to government.

We would be keen to meet you and other relevant officials at your earliest opportunity to discuss these proposals further.

Best regards

Chief Officers of the TSI Scotland Network

Sent on behalf of Chief Officers from over 40 TSI organisations across Scotland

Cc Calum Irving, Head of Third Sector Unit

Anna Fowlie, CEO SCVO

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