

The Economic Contribution of the Social Economy in Bridport (West Dorset), and Boscombe & Springbourne (Bournemouth)



Summary Findings

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The Economic Contribution of the Social Economy in Bridport, and Boscombe & Springbourne: A Summary



Bridport Leisure Centre

'Social economy' is a term commonly used to describe the economic activity (such as employment and trading) of organisations in the community, voluntary, charitable and social enterprise sectors. The importance of the social economy in local areas is rarely quantified. This can result in misconceptions, poor promotion and lost opportunities.

A survey in 2005*, of over 200 organisations in the rural areas of Bridport and nearby parishes in West Dorset, and the urban area of Boscombe & Springbourne in Bournemouth, has aimed to assess their economic contribution and raise awareness of the importance of the social economy generally in Dorset, Bournemouth and elsewhere. The two areas are quite different in character, and were chosen so that rural/urban comparisons or similarities could be drawn. Initial research identified 119 social economy organisations in Bridport and 97 in Boscombe & Springbourne. Questionnaires were sent to all of them and returns received from 37% in Bridport and 33% in Boscombe & Springbourne.

Key Findings

- The social economy has an important role to play in the provision of social and personal services (including sport and leisure) in both Bridport and Boscombe & Springbourne.
- Bridport has a high number of organisations working with older people while Boscombe & Springbourne organisations work more with children and young people, reflecting the age profiles of the survey areas

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Key Findings (cont)

- The social economy employs over 800 people in Bridport (7% of the working population) and over 700 in Boscombe & Springbourne (5.5% of the working population).
- Staffing levels have been growing for the last two years and many expect them to continue growing over the next 3 years.
- Women make up 75% of the social economy workforce in Bridport and 60% in Boscombe & Springbourne.
- 71% of social economy jobs in Bridport are part-time compared to 60% in Boscombe & Springbourne.
- There are 8,500 volunteers in the social economy in Bridport and 2,300 in Boscombe & Springbourne.
- Training has been provided to 69% of staff in Bridport but only 10% in Boscombe & Springbourne.
- Most training in the last year was provided in fundraising and organisational management while there are unmet training needs in IT, finance and management.
- The combined turnover of social economy organisations in Boscombe & Springbourne is estimated to be as high as £35m while those in Bridport have a combined turnover of £11.4m. This accounts for 8.3% of the local economy in Boscombe & Springbourne and 3.6% in Bridport.



Dorset Reclaim - furniture recycling, Boscombe



Crumbs Bakery and Cafe, Boscombe

- Social economy organisations in Bridport receive 48% of their turnover from trading. This compares to 15% in Boscombe & Springbourne.
- Public sector grants account for only 13% of the turnover of organisations in Bridport and 43% in Boscombe & Springbourne.

- For every pound of public sector investment in Bridport, social economy organisations generate another £6.90. Organisations in Boscombe & Springbourne generate another £1.30.
- Short term (i.e. one year) funding and contracts from the public sector are the biggest concern for social economy organisations. The length of time needs to be longer if the social economy is to flourish and grow.
- While organisations surveyed are not experiencing difficulties recruiting staff, maintaining volunteer levels is a cause for concern.



Bridport Arts Centre

Conclusions

The social economy, through its employment and trading, has been found to play a considerable role in the local economy of both Bridport and Boscombe & Springbourne. Equally, social economy organisations are active in sectors of the local economy where the work of volunteers can complement that of paid staff.

The social economy can provide exceptionally high value for money for every pound of public investment, and also offers a diversity of employment opportunities which are particularly attractive to women. But the benefits provided by social economy organisations go far beyond those that can be measured in financial terms. The community work of the organisations and their volunteers are all additional benefits of the social economy that cannot be replaced by money alone. Without these organisations it is likely that many services in Bridport and Boscombe & Springbourne would cease to be provided or responsibility would fall on the public sector and the taxpayer.

*The full report 'The Economic Contribution of the Social Economy in Bridport and Boscombe & Springbourne' is available from Dorset Community Action's website,
www.dorsetcommunityaction.org.uk*