

Growing income for communities

Q&A | Wednesday 15th July 2026

Q: Are there limited places on the SSE workshops?

Answer from Charlie: Yes, some are as little as 12 but some are up to 50. Depends on the format. Feel free to connect via email if you are interested in a particular topic charlie.wright@sse.org.uk

Q: What would you say are the biggest positive impacts from Social Enterprises for communities, particularly those in more deprived areas?

Answer from Keely: Challenges the perceptions of certain groups e.g. what people with learning disabilities can do. Instead of misconceptions, they see the individuals. Community benefit directly by having community gardens, community cafes, ethical products to buy. We litter pick a lot and people love this. Creates civic pride and social cohesiveness through activity. Communities love to see people earning and being independent rather than relying on benefits and donations. Often act as safe space for wider group of people especially our gardens and cafes.

Q: Question for Jenny - of 50 staff - how many provide or work on the "core" functions (comms, HR, finance, marketing etc) and do you outsource any functions?

Answer from Jenny: We have an operations team of about 5 people who are absolutely amazing and talented covering a range of functions and skills. They are also very stretched and they constantly have to juggle to do everything. We have some external support we pay for but not wholly outsource. We buy in some HR support but not a full function. We also have some IT support but again do quite a bit in house. We have found we cannot afford outsourced services.

Q: I would be very keen to hear more about the CAMHS intervention for children on the waiting list.

Jenny: It is an NHS Charities funded research pilot project. If you email me I am happy to put you in touch with the team.

jenny.hindson@newquayorchard.co.uk

Q: Do the speakers think that grant/ seed-funding is an important part of becoming financially sustainable & what proportions of grant funding are still required for their organisations?

Answer from Keely: 100% yes from me, we use grants to set up all of our social enterprises and help in the first few years before they become profitable. For capital items, it is so helpful, from transport, buildings and equipment, I'd say 80% comes from grants. We also use grants for revenue projects if no statutory funding is available. I only apply for what I need, I don't scatter gun or grab funds or try to squeeze an idea into a fund. I have an idea and then get it funded.

Answer from Jenny: Agree with Keely. We had Lottery funding as well as others at the start and still have some grant funding, but we are a lot more selective as it takes resource for the application and management process. That can become a large load with a lot of small grants.

Q: What are the minimum amounts of growing land (with a community hub?) that the speakers think can be viable for communities to secure these incomes streams?

Answer from Keely: For me, 6-7 acres is our ideal as the diversity of activity it what makes it work. We need food growing space, plant growing, people space, gardens, cafe etc. Having said that I have a one-acre site where we propagate from a plant library and this is very successful.

Answer from Jenny: Interesting question. We have the 7 acres at Newquay Orchard plus another 4 acres market garden BUT only about 1 acre is actually the beds. Be clear what your product is - we grow and sell the food

BUT we also get paid for the social value of the growing and selling process and then the social activities on the rest of the land - think about £/m2.

Q: A question for Jenny. Do you experience anti-social behaviour and, if so, how do you manage that through your work?

Answer from Jenny: We have had very little trouble. I think our grounding in the community and relationships with local schools and other local organisations helps us nip any issues in the bud. The community police teams have also been great in being a bit more present when needed. We have some visible CCTV as well which acts as a deterrent.

Q: Would you suggest long standing charities look at changing their legal status to a Social Enterprise - does it give you more flexibility with income generation?

Answer from Keely: The charity is registered and a company limited by guarantee. I set up a trading arm which is a company limited by shares, 1 share which is owned by the charity. It means we can donate 100% of pre tax profit to the charity so no corporation tax. We can trade in whatever way we wish without having to change our charitable objects. We are VAT registered which means we can reclaim VAT without charging people with learning differences VAT on training (this goes through charity which isn't vat registered). We produce consolidated accounts which is cheaper than 2 sets. It keeps our turnover lower (you only count the net profit of trading arm not its total gross) which helps with funding applications. This has worked well for us and very efficient for tax, accounts and objects.

Q: You're very inspiring Keely! Can I ask, how do you obtain the land/property to deliver these fantastic services in the first place?

Answer from Keely: Hi, thanks for your question. Mostly through parish, town and district councils. We tendered for a large council planting contract and it came with the old council growing site, allotment land that

wasn't in a good state so we took a long lease and then turned it into a community garden and site. We also have a site on private land with a garden designer. It's always worth looking in local plans, neighbourhood plans and getting to know town/parish clerks, councillors and estate departments, they'll tell you what they own. Our new site opening in 2027 will be owned by us as part of section 106a of an ethical property development.