

Chapter Eight

An examination of six in-depth case studies of social enterprises in the Fingal area

Introduction

This chapter will explore the mechanisms at work within six specific social enterprises. Through these case studies it is hoped to arrive at a deeper understanding of social enterprises and to answer questions such as:

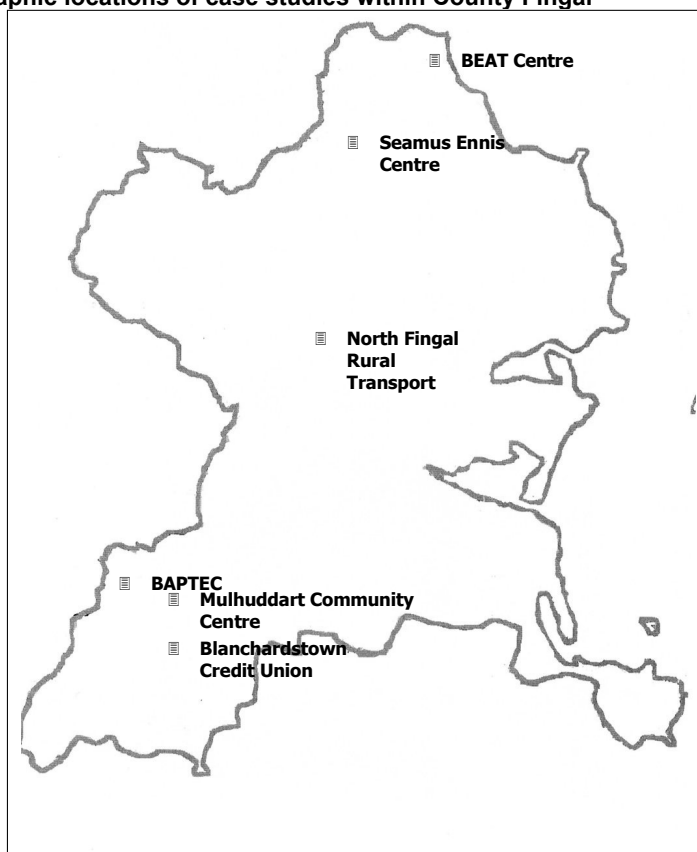
- Why were they established?
- Who established them?
- What were their motivations?
- How have the social enterprises developed?
- Have the original objectives been met?
- Have they developed new objectives over time?
- What lessons have been learned?

The six case studies have been selected from the Fingal local authority area in north Dublin. The chapter will start by looking at the historical development of the social economy in Fingal and the current context within which the social enterprises operate. This will be followed by a detailed analysis of the six case studies and the outcomes of the survey. The chapter will then continue with a profile of each case study individually and the chapter will conclude with a short summary.

Historical development of the social economy in Fingal

The development of the social economy in Fingal mirrors the growth of the county itself. Fingal County was created in 1993 when the old Dublin County Council area was split into three new local authority areas. Fingal covers the area to the north and northwest of Dublin city.

Fig. 8.1 – Geographic locations of case studies within County Fingal



It is estimated that the population of what is now Fingal, was roughly 40,000 people in the late 1960's. At that time, the county was predominantly rural and towns like Swords, Blanchardstown, Mulhuddart and Balbriggan were rural villages. In the 1960's, plans were mooted to develop a series of 'new towns' surrounding Dublin city to facilitate economic development. Blanchardstown and Swords were marked for development as the foundations for two 'new towns'. Population growth in Fingal since then has been dramatic. By 1991, the population had almost quadrupled in twenty years and stood at 157,761 people. In the subsequent fifteen years, the population continued to grow rapidly and the 2006 Census data stated the population of Fingal as 239,813¹. This rapid growth in population was accompanied by large-scale residential development concentrated in several large urbanised areas – Blanchardstown, Swords and Balbriggan. Other villages in the county also saw also seen significant housing developments, especially those on the coastal region. These housing developments have created demand for

¹ Central Statistics Office (2006), 'Census 2006' (CSO, Dublin)

services, especially for schools, transport, employment opportunities, retail outlets, and community facilities and services. Much of the growth in the social economy in Fingal has been created as a response to these demands.

Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) have observed that the social economy is not only embedded in their institutional context, but also in their historical context. In each country or region, the social economy developed in historical waves and this is true to a certain extent in Fingal. The first phase can be identified in the 1960' and 1980's. The social enterprises formed in this time were established to service the needs of a predominantly rural community. Many of the members of these communities were financially insecure and small-scale agriculture was still predominant. They were established to assist local people who were in need of financial support. This phase of development occurred prior to Irish membership of the European Union, prior to the CAP and before the rapid population growth.

The second phase of social enterprise formation dates from the 1990's. These enterprises were formed in response to the effects of demographic change and the needs generated by this growth. These effects included high levels of local unemployment, a skills mismatch between employers in the area and the local unemployed, a lack of community services and facilities which became reflected in the growth in anti-social behaviour in certain areas (especially the local-authority housing estates). Both the community enterprise centres (BEAT and BASE) were established to give local unemployed people the opportunity to start small-scale businesses in what were defined as unemployment black spots. BAPTEC was formed to meet a skills mismatch between the large-scale Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies in Blanchardstown and the local unemployed people, who had no ICT skills and could not secure employment. Mulhuddart community centre, initiated following a serious joy-riding incident, was built in response to high levels of anti-social behaviour and a lack of positive outlets for the large youth population in its local area. These social enterprises were responding to high levels of social and economic need. Most of these

enterprises were planned before, or at the early stages of, the Celtic Tiger phenomenon.

The third phase of development has been growth-driven. As the levels of affluence and economic development increased as a result of the economic prosperity since the mid 1990's, the levels of unemployment and social exclusion have reduced. This is not to say that they have been eliminated. There still exists a large cohort of long-term unemployed and Ireland has seen the development of new socially-excluded groups. However, the affluence has made resources available to address these issues that would have been unimaginable only fifteen years earlier. Social enterprises are now addressing issues developing from economic growth. North Fingal Rural Transport is an initiative developed as a result of increased population growth in the remaining rural areas of the county. The two enterprise centres have changed their focus. BASE Phase II was opened in 2004 and BEAT is currently planning the building of its second phase. These phase-two developments were not driven by the desire to give unemployed people the opportunity to become self employed, but to meet the needs of the large numbers of skilled employees who wished to be entrepreneurial, and to meet the needs of the new ethnic minority communities that were proving highly entrepreneurial. This is an interesting example of the pragmatic and flexible nature of social enterprises. Although established to meet one type of need, the enterprise centres have changed with the circumstances and have developed new products and services to meet the new demands of their communities of interest.

Fingal County Council has been highly supportive of these last two phases, especially in the development of infrastructure. Fingal has been a key partner and supporter of BASE, BEAT, Seamus Ennis Centre and all the community centres. In nearly all cases, the council provided the land for these developments and supported the establishment of social enterprises to manage and develop their operations. The current situation is one of hiatus, as there seems to be little development of new social enterprises. The only

exception to this is the newly proposed enterprise centre in Swords. However, this follows on from the track record and success of the two other community enterprise centres in the county. Fingal County Council is both developing and promoting this venture and it is likely that it will initiate the establishment of the community-based limited-by-guarantee company to run this venture. It is notable that it is not being driven by a pre-formed community organisation.

Case Studies

Six social enterprises were chosen within the county of Fingal as case studies to provide a broad geographic and activity spread. The six case studies were chosen to give a cross sample of the social enterprises identified in Fingal within the European Edge Cities Network survey in Chapter 5. Each case study represents a type of social enterprise: a community IT training company, a community enterprise centre, a community-resource centre, a cultural/arts centre, a credit union and a community rural transport company. There exists no official list of social enterprises in Ireland so it is impossible to say if these are representative of all social enterprises but they clearly represent many of larger categories of social enterprises. Thirty-five in-depth interviews were carried out between the case studies. The information from these in-depth case studies is analysed here following a short introduction to each of the six social enterprises. These short introductions were compiled from the information provided through the interviews and supported in some cases by documents provided by the social enterprises including business plans and social audits for example.

BAPTEC

BAPTEC is a community-based IT training company operating in the Dublin 15 area. BAPTEC is an offshoot of an area-based partnership but it is unusual in several ways. Area-based partnership companies are local development organisations formed under the remit of the national social partnership agreements and funded by the government. They are established as

companies limited-by-guarantee and have a board of directors usually comprising an equal proportion of directors from the community and voluntary sector, public-sector representatives and representatives from the social partners. The partnership companies are funded under the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP) and are administered and overseen by Pobal². Partnerships are funded under three-year programmes. At the beginning of each programme, under the direction of government and social partnership, Pobal outlines the priorities for the next three-year phase. Each partnership then engages in a process of community consultation to identify the actions to be included in the next three-year plan. This consultation leads to a three-year programme of activities which the partnership management and programme staff implement during those three years. However, BAPTEC was established in a reverse process, under which the project was initiated by the programme staff and then adopted by the board as part of the programme of activities. In 1997, Blanchardstown Area Partnership (BAP) was in its first strategic programme and, as a result, all its programmes were new. At the time, Blanchardstown saw a strong demand for staff from the newly-established information and communication technology (ICT) companies³ in the area. The programme staff within BAP had clients on their books with strong potential, yet most of these clients were unemployed. With no infrastructure in the area to meet the ICT training needs of clients, people were being sent into the city and other areas to be trained. This was creating difficulties as many of these clients were lacking in confidence and many failed to complete their training. There were also difficulties in transporting these clients into town or other areas, as there was a restricted public transport service available at the time.

In 1998, the Job Initiative (JI) project co-ordinator saw an opportunity to provide ICT training for her participants. She identified two JI participants

² Pobal is an intermediary funding body, established as a company limited by guarantee, that manages and oversees programmes for the government, especially in community-based programmes

³ A number of large information and communication technology (ICT) companies established in Blanchardstown in the 1990s. In particular IBM established their European call centre in the Ballycoolin Industrial Park and also their European manufacturing plant in Damastown Industrial Estate.

who wanted to become ICT trainers and suggested that if these participants could have their skills enhanced then they could provide training for other participants within the programme. She secured a quarter of the main training room in BAP and set up six computers workstations as a computer training room. Initially, the trainers became qualified to offer the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and later they became qualified to offer Microsoft Office User Specialist Programmes (MOUS). Over the next two years the trainers became fully-qualified ICT trainers. Based upon the success of this, the computer training room doubled in size and took over half of the main training room. In time all JI participants who needed IT training received these skills and qualifications. As capacity grew, the other Community Employment projects in the area started to look for places within the training programmes and the 'IT project' grew organically. At the same time, there were several other project staff who had an interest in the social economy, prior to any national programme. A number of conversations took place about 'spinning off' the computer project into a separate social enterprise with the capacity to become self-sufficient. In 1999, this occurred. A board was brought together consisting of the key programme staff, comprising the enterprise officer, employment officer, Local Employment Service (LES) co-ordinator, the JI co-ordinator, STEPS⁴ programme co-ordinator (Enterprise Programme) and a few other staff, the social enterprise being established as a company limited by guarantee. One point of interest was that there was collaboration from an early stage with IBM and it nominated a director to represent a commercial/industry focus on the BAPTEC board. IBM still has the same representative on the BAPTEC board.

BAPTEC initially earned most of its income through charging training fees to the JI project, CE⁵ projects and the LES. In 2001, it received funding under the NSEP⁶ and also moved to new premises belonging to the partnership in Coolmine Industrial Estate. A full-time manager was hired, as well as new

⁴ STEPS was a special Community Employment project that provided an extended pre-enterprise training for unemployed persons interested in starting their own business.

⁵ Community Employment (CE) projects are intermediate labour-market programmes.

⁶ National Social Economy Programme (NSEP)

trainers and administrators. In 2006, BAPTEC moved to its own 288 sq m. unit in the BASE Enterprise Centre. It is still in receipt of CSP⁷ funding. BAPTEC currently has a manager, three full-time trainers and two part-time administration staff and has a turnover of €530,393, of which 52% is self-generated traded income.

BEAT Centre

Balbriggan Enterprise and Training Centre was opened in 2000 in the Stephenstown Industrial Estate, Balbriggan. BEAT was established as a joint initiative between the Balbriggan Enterprise Development Group (BEDG) and Fingal County Council as a response to the very high levels of unemployment in Balbriggan in the 1980's and 1990's. Balbriggan had been a centre for the textile and clothing trade and, when these declined in the 1980's, Balbriggan became an unemployment black spot. BEDG was established as a community response with a strong commercial focus, Balbriggan Chamber of Commerce having been a key player in BEDG. BEDG gave advice and information on self-employment to the local residents and ran enterprise-related training programmes. One key issue identified by BEDG was the lack of a community enterprise centre for people looking to set up a local business. There was no suitable enterprise space in Balbriggan at the time. BEAT became the response. The local authority and BEDG became one of the first examples of building a centre using a public-private-partnership (PPP). Fingal came to an arrangement with a developer, whereby a site owned by the Council would be developed. The site was designated with tax incentives. The developer agreed to build the enterprise centre on one half of the site, and, in return, was allowed build a unit for itself on the other half of the site. The developer got the full benefit of the tax incentive and a small contribution towards the enterprise centre. BEAT was established as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status to act as a facilities management company for the centre. It also had a remit to establish a training element within the project,

⁷ Community Services Programme (CSP)

later to become the Balbriggan Enterprise Support Service (BESS) project funded by INTERREG III⁸ and the NSEP, and later the CSP.

Today, BEAT comprises a 2,000 sq m. enterprise centre with 22 units. It has a manager and administrator but is supported by participants from other CE projects in the area. BESS has a manager and 6 staff and, although separate, is effectively run by BEAT management. BEAT had a turnover of €215,253 in 2005, all of which was generated through traded income.

Mulhuddart Community Centre

Mulhuddart Community Centre is located in the heart of Mulhuddart parish, consisting of the DED⁹s of Tyrellstown and Mulhuddart. These two DEDs and the parish as a whole are areas of long-standing social and economic disadvantaged, characterised by very high levels of deprivation (Blanchardstown Area Partnership, 2005). In the 1990's, the local authority housing estates that surround the new centre - Parslickstown, Dromheath, and Wellview - had very high unemployment and high levels of anti-social behaviour. In 1995, there was a serious 'joy-riding' incident in the area and a number of people were invited by the Blanchardstown Youth Service (BYS) and the WEB¹⁰ project to a meeting to discuss the issues surrounding the incident. Residents in the area were so concerned about reprisals that the meeting was held in secret. From this meeting a small sub-group was formed in order to hold a public meeting regarding the development of a community centre providing services especially to the youth of the area. A building committee was established with representatives of the community, local development groups and agencies, especially BYS and Fingal County Council. Fingal provided the land for the centre and funding was secured through the Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund¹¹.

⁸ Interreg is an inter-regional programme funded under the European Union structural funds. Interreg III was the third round of Interreg funding.

⁹ A district electoral division (DED)

¹⁰ The WEB project is a community-based programme aimed at working with youth that have been in trouble with the law.

¹¹ The Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund is a programme aimed at assisting disadvantaged young people and is funded by the Irish Exchequer.

Fig 8.2 – Outside photograph of the Mulhuddart Community Centre



The centre was completed in 2002 and received operational funding under the then FÁS Social Economy Programme that allowed the centre to recruit a manager and staff. This programme has subsequently changed over to the POBAL Community Services Programme. The centre provides meeting rooms for community groups and training, it has a coffee shop, but also operates a very successful youth programme sponsored by Blanchardstown Youth Service. The youth project includes outreach workers who engage the local youth directly and develop initiatives to give the local youth a positive social outlet and access to other services and training opportunities. At present, Mulhuddart community centre has a manager and 12 staff. Traded income makes up roughly 16.7% of the centre's turnover.

The Seamus Ennis Centre

The Seamus Ennis centre is a unique cultural project supporting the traditional arts, music and language. It is the brainchild of one person, Sean MacPhilibin. He has been the organiser of the Seamus Ennis Festival held annually for over 15 years and was the main organiser of the Scoil Seamus Ennis that provides courses in traditional music and instruments, as well as the Irish language. In the mid 1990's, MacPhilibin saw the opportunity to create a centre to act as a hub for such cultural activity.

Fig 8.3 – Statue of Seamus Ennis outside Seamus Ennis Centre



Seamus Ennis was a musician and archivist who recorded many traditional music and musicians and different genres within the Irish music tradition and lived most of his life in the Naul, a small rural village in north Dublin. In the 1990's, two small cottages at the centre of the village had fallen into disrepair and MacPhilibin made an approach to Fingal County Council to take over these cottages and restore them as a centre for the arts. Supported by two officials within the Council, the Senior Executive Officer in the Property and Economic Development Department and the Arts Officer, the Council agreed to initiate the project. The two cottages were bought and were restored using the traditional building methods, including original thatch roofing. A prefabricated building was located at the rear of the building to act as a larger hall. The centre was dedicated to the memory of the Seamus Ennis and has two main objectives: to act as a centre for the traditional arts, culture and language, but also to act as a local meeting place for the people of the Naul and surrounding hinterland.

The centre opened in 2001 and provides meeting rooms for local community groups, it runs a coffee shop, provides a home for the Scoil Seamus Ennis and the Seamus Ennis Festival, and it also runs musical events, mainly traditional music evenings but other genres are also encouraged. Today the Centre has a manager and a staff of six. Its turnover in 2005 was €429,652 of which €289,178 was traded income.

Blanchardstown Credit Union

Blanchardstown Credit Union is the oldest social enterprise of the six case studies examined. It was set up in 1970 by an initial group of thirteen community leaders as a vehicle to assist local residents who could not access financial services from the main banks at the time. The local parish priest, Canon Morgan Crowe, was a key supporter of the credit union in the initial stages. It also received mentoring support initially from the Navan Road Credit Union. Blanchardstown today is a new town with a population of nearly 100,000, with large-scale residential, retail and commercial property developments. It is hard to envisage that in 1970 it was a small rural village¹² with limited public services. Many local residents were financially challenged and it was in response to this that the credit union was initiated. All credit unions are set up on a 'common bond' and the Blanchardstown Credit Union has a bond based on the local residents of Blanchardstown.

Fig 8.4 – Exterior photograph of the Blanchardstown Credit Union's offices



Blanchardstown Credit Union has developed considerably in its lifetime. Initially starting as a wholly voluntary credit union operating out of the parish hall, it is now a significant local financial player, with a full-time manager, a staff of 8 supported by 3 volunteers and has built its own premises in Blanchardstown Village. It has a strong and proactive voluntary board and had total assets in 2005 worth €53.3 million, with a turnover of €2,833,198, all of which is derived from traded income.

¹² CSO, 'Census 2002, (CSO, Dublin, 2002), Volume 1, Table 5 (information gathered is from 1996)

North Fingal Rural Transport

North Fingal Rural Transport (NFRT) is a social enterprise providing a flexible transport service to the rural area of north Fingal and was part-funded under the national Rural Transport Initiative (RTI). In the late 1990's, several residents in the area, with the support of public representatives, made efforts to ask Dublin Bus to increase their service to the area, which was showing rapid signs of population growth. Dublin Bus was not in a position to justify a significant increase in public service provision and this spurred the creation of a new independent local transport provider. In 2002, the RTI was launched and the management by POBAL. 34 projects have engaged with the initiative and 26 have moved to operational status¹³. Of these, 11 were given permission to buy and operate their own buses. NFRT was one of these eleven companies. In the first instance, a working group was established under the auspices of Co-operation Fingal, a local development organisation covering north Dublin. This working group initiated a report on the local need from Fitzpatrick and Associates, which formed the basis of the application to RTI.

NFRT was approved for RTI funding in 2002. It recruited a manager and trained her in-house as they did not know what requisite experience would be required. The new manager started work on 31st December 2002 and two buses were delivered in early 2003. However, due to a temporary FÁS embargo on recruitment, no staff could be recruited until the summer of 2003 and the buses did not become operational until July 2003.

NFRT currently runs two buses and has a manager and six staff. Each bus can accommodate three wheelchairs or fifteen passengers under optimal seating arrangements. NFRT runs a commuter service to Swords, the main town in the area, five times a day, servicing school children and commuters. From Swords, commuters can access main-line bus services. It provides a service to people with a disability who are going to sheltered employment. In

¹³ see www.pobal.ie/live/RTI

the evening there are services for the elderly and for bingo. On Fridays, there is a shopping run to the Pavilions Shopping Centre in Swords, the main shopping centre in the north Dublin fringe. There is also a contract to service a day-care centre in Baldoyle, run by the Health Service Executive. NFRT has a manager and staff of six. Its board disclosed neither its turnover nor traded income.

Table 8.1 summarises the quantitative information provided by the six social enterprises.

Table 8.1 – Summary overview of case study outputs in 2005

Case study	No. of paid staff	Traded income as %
BAPTEC	6	52
BEAT	2	100
Mulhuddart Community Centre	13	16.7
Seamus Ennis Centre	7	67.3
Blanchardstown Credit Union	9	100
North Fingal Rural Transport	7	n/a
Totals	44	82.5

In total, the six enterprises have a paid staff/management of 44 people and the five enterprises on which there is information had a combined turnover of €4,364,966, of which traded income averaged 82.5%. However, NFRT is a demand-deficient social enterprise and would probably have a lower level of traded income than the average.

Findings from the case studies

Figure 8.5 outlines the coding used for the case-study interviewees for the purpose of analysis.

Figure 8.5 – Key to case-study interviewees

Case study	Interviewee codes
BAPTEC	C01-C07
BEAT	C08--C12
Blanchardstown Credit Union	C13-C18
Mulhuddart Community Centre	C19-C27
North Fingal Rural Transport	C28-C30
Seamus Ennis Cultural Centre	C31-C35

Characteristics of respondents

In order to understand the respondents and their attitudes, an examination of their positions, length of service and the sector they represent is presented. The analysis is based upon 35 in-depth interviews covering both general and specific issues which were carried out across the six case studies, with other primary documentation also being gathered. Table 8.2 summarises the length of time that respondents have been involved with the social enterprises.

Table 8.2 – Length of involvement of respondents in case studies

Case Study	How long involved			Total
	1-3 years	4-6 years	7 years +	
Mulhuddart Community Centre	3	2	4	9
BAPTEC	2	2	3	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	0	0	6	6
BEAT	1	2	2	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	0	1	4	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	0	1	2	3
Total	6	8	21	35

Overall, some 18 interviewees whom were board members and managers of the six social enterprises examined (60%) had been involved with their social enterprise for more than seven years. This demonstrated the longevity of board membership, which in turn could indicate either high levels of commitment or high levels of stagnation.

Table 8.3 provides a breakdown of the number of interviewees for each case study and the breakdown of membership *vis-à-vis* stakeholders. Not all board members were interviewed, but a majority were. The selection of those to be interviewed was the decision of the management and board of the individual case studies. If one excluded the managers from the equation (as they normally are not allowed to be board members, based upon accepted best practice in this sector), then 18 interviewees were members of the community and voluntary sector (66.6%), 5 were from public bodies and agencies (18.5%), with 2 interviewees each from the private sector and local development organisations (7.5% each).¹⁴

Table 8.3 – Sectoral composition of interviewees

Case study	Community/voluntary/third sector	Public sector	Private sector	Local development – BAP	management	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	6	2	0	0	1	9
BAPTEC	1	0	2	2	2	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	5	0	0	0	1	6
BEAT	1	2	0	0	2	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	3	1	0	0	1	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	2	0	0	0	1	3
Total	18	5	2	2	8	35

With two-thirds of board members of the six social enterprises examined being drawn from the community/voluntary sector, it might indicate that control of these social enterprises rests within this sector. The low percentage of representatives from public-sector bodies and agencies was broadly consistent with the findings from the survey of the previous chapter.

¹⁴ Local development sector would include area partnership companies and similar.

However, as not all board members were interviewed as part of this exercise, no statistical reference was taken from the output.

Table 8.4 – Length of time respondents have been involved in case studies by sector

Sector	How long involved			Total
	1-3 years	4-6 years	7 years +	
Community & voluntary sector	0	4	14	18
Public sector	3	1	1	5
Private sector	1	0	1	2
Local development	0	0	2	2
Management	2	3	3	8
Total	6	8	21	35

In an examination of sector representation, summarised in Table 8.4, it became evident that it was the community and voluntary sector and local-development sector representatives who had been engaged with the social enterprises for the longest duration and it was they who provided the majority of the respondents who had been engaged for seven years or longer, comprising 66% of all interviewees possessing a long-standing involvement. This was generally consistent with the findings from the survey of social economy networks. Interestingly, the majority of public-sector representatives had been engaged for the shortest period of time, less than three years. However, the high turnover in public-body staff, resulting of promotion and restructuring, may account for the brevity of public representative membership.

Beneficiaries of social enterprises and social mission

All 35 respondents identified specific social objectives for the original establishment of their companies, all respondents citing clear 'social' motivations as catalysts for their original foundation. According to C01 (BAPTEC), 'there was an identified gap in the availability of locally-based

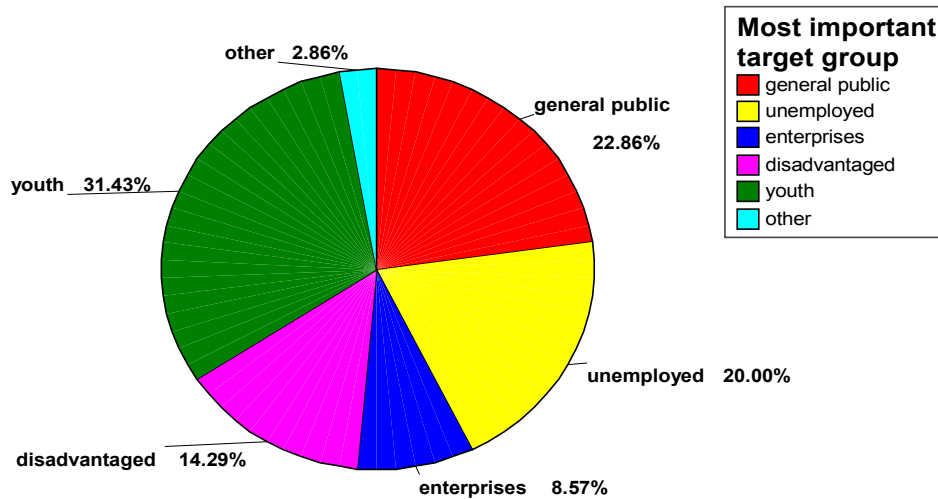
training...this training needed to be delivered in a non-threatening holistic environment as our participants were some of the most distant from the mainstream'. In the case of BEAT, C12 affirmed that it was established 'to address a community need. At the time there were high levels of unemployment in Balbriggan and there were two obvious needs if we were going to solve this problem'. In the opinion of C13, BCU was set up 'to help people in certain socio-economic groups that might have needed financial assistance and to encourage thrift'. In relation to Mulhuddart Community Centre, C24 stated that 'there was a crying need for even a basic community facility in the area. There was a great level of demand for any facility or service'. According to C30 (NFRT), 'there was transport need. There is very little public transport services in the Naul, Ballyboughil and Garretstown areas. This is still a rural area'. Finally, in relation to the Seamus Ennis Centre, C35 stated that the centre was set up 'to meet a number of objectives, artistic and community-based'.

Interviewees were asked to identify the main beneficiaries, or target groups, of their social enterprise and their responses is outlined in Figure 8.6, showing that 65.7% of interviewees noted the disadvantaged, youth and unemployed as their main target groups, all involving categories that would be expected when addressing the needs of the socially marginalized. Interviewees from BAPTEC and BEAT mainly noted the unemployed as their major target group, while Mulhuddart interviewees identified youth as their main target group. In the case interviewees from the Seamus Ennis Centre, the community and the traditional arts and music community were particularly identified, with North Fingal Rural Transport respondents identified the local community of north Dublin, the elderly and those with a disability and Blanchardstown Credit Union serving the residents of Blanchardstown common bond area.

One interesting point that emerged from the comments of respondents was that staff in most of the case-studies social enterprises had been recruited from the local community or from the target groups. Thus the social

enterprises were using employment as a progression route. This had advantages for the employee but it also assisted the enterprise. To quote C03 from BAPTEC 'ninety percent of our staff has been recruited from CE and JI. Our staff is community-based and progressed through the system and know where our clients are coming from'. C25, from Mulhuddart community centre, stated that 'the centre was initially driven by local people and many local people now work in the centre. There needs to be a maintenance of this local ethos...within the centre'. The benefits outlined by C22 of staffing the social enterprise by people from the target group are, 'being a social enterprise does have an effect on how the managers and staff see themselves and their work. Definitely seen as a job rather than a scheme and as a result there is a greater professionalism and commitment'. Many social enterprises, especially BAPTEC, BEAT and Seamus Ennis Centre, argued that they possessed a more 'holistic approach' and also took the time and effort to work with new staff members and empower people through employment. This could be seen as one major social advantage of social enterprises over other businesses, as private-sector business could not take the time and effort necessary to work so intensively with staff members within a fully commercial environment. Another point of interest was the representation of the target group on the boards of management. As the community and voluntary sector was the largest group represented on boards, many of these community representatives saw their role as representing the target groups in the decision-making process. In fact, several social enterprises, including BAPTEC, Seamus Ennis Centre and Mulhuddart Community Centre, had members of their boards appointed to represent specific target groups. Furthermore, some social enterprises, like BAPTEC, conducted social audits and polled the opinions of clients and service-users as to their satisfaction with the performance of the company. These were examples of social enterprises including target groups in decision making and evaluation processes to ensure that the goods and services provided were meeting the needs of beneficiaries.

Fig 8.6 – Main target group for the case-study social enterprises



Respondents were asked for the reason the organisation was established as a social enterprises as compared to another form of community-based organisation. The purpose of asking this question was to ascertain the motives underlying the establishment of the operations as social enterprise. The responses fitted into three main categories. Fifteen respondents (42.8%) stated that their social enterprise was a social enterprise by nature, generally operating along business lines. Eight respondents (22.8%) stated that it was because of the funding streams available and that benefit might be derived for their local communities by chasing available funding sources. Seven respondents (20%) referred to sustainability issues, the trading income allowing them to be sustainable in the long run and less dependant on funding. Of the rest, one did not answer and four gave other answers.

It was the respondents from credit unions, enterprise centres and IT training companies who tended to stress that they had been established as social enterprises, as they generally operated 'naturally' along business lines. Social enterprises also tended to be pragmatic and the fact that 22.8% of interviewees admitted to 'chasing funding' was not unusual as many

community projects were set up to meet a need and will use whatever resources are available to meet this need. Thus, all the social enterprises were created to meet an identified need and the majority used the social enterprise model in the main because it suited their needs, to protect the company/assets in the future or as a result of the service offered being best suited to an enterprise model, with a minority citing the availability of a funding stream for this type of social enterprise model.

In five case studies, specific local factors were identified as the catalyst for the establishment of the social enterprise. In BAPTEC, there were two specific issues noted by interviewees. The skills mismatch between the jobs available and the unemployed as well as the presence of high-technology companies. In BEAT, the 'chronic unemployment', the lack of facilities and the tax designation on the land were cited as specific local factors. In Mulhuddart community centre, the high unemployment rate and high youth population were both cited, as was the lack of facilities. In the Seamus Ennis Centre, the historical connection of Seamus Ennis to the Naul area and the availability of suitable premises were the two factors cited, while respondents from North Fingal Rural Transport identified the paucity of suitable public transport services and there appeared to be no specific local factors in the establishment of the Blanchardstown Credit Union.

Table 8.5 – Respondents opinion as to the effectiveness of their social enterprise

Case Study	Very effective	Effective (>70%)	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	2	7	9
BAPTEC	6	1	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	4	2	6
BEAT	3	2	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	2	3	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	1	2	3
Total	18	17	35

Table 8.5 represents the perceptions of interviewees regarding the success of their social enterprise in achieving its social mission. All respondents felt that their social enterprise was either 'effective' or 'very effective' in achieving its social aims, a slight majority feeling that the enterprise was indeed 'very effective', interviewees also having had the opportunity to respond by characterising the enterprise as 'functional', 'ineffective' and by failing to respond. Thus the decision to respond in the positive was a choice for respondents.

When the 17 respondents who felt that their enterprise was effective rather than very effective were isolated, the reason for their 'marking down' would seem to yield very little specificity. It would appear that the rating fell as a result of what C24 outlined as 'if there is a negative it is that we may have set our initial ambitions too high. The committee feels that there is a lack of community involvement'. Similarly, as C26 observed 'we have met around seventy-five percent of our initial aims. We will achieve all our original aims in due course' and as C29 stated 'we are always a little behind the need and playing catch-up'. Thus, it appeared that it was not, in the main, dissatisfaction with the performance of the social enterprise itself but rather a feeling that it could have done better. Table 8.6 examines whether satisfaction was affected by sector representation.

Table 8.6 – Effectiveness of social enterprise by sector of respondent

Sector	Very effective	Effective (>70%)	Total
Community/voluntary, third sector	5	13	18
Other board members	8	1	9
Management	5	3	8
Total	18	17	35

The majority of the public-, private- and local-development sectors representatives felt that the social enterprise was very effective. Those believing that the social enterprise could do better were drawn mainly from the community and voluntary representatives and some of the managers.

A large majority (34) of interviewees were able to identify specific social objectives currently for their social enterprise and 33 could also identify specific economic objectives. Most of the social objectives were similar to those identified in responses to previous questions: empowering the unemployed, providing community facilities, creating employment opportunities. 31 of the respondents noted achieving or maintaining financial stability as the sole economic objective identified. Thus, it appeared that 94% of respondents related economic objectives with the financial stability and sustainability of the social enterprise. Social objectives appeared to be related to the social mission. In some cases social mission included issues relating to creating employment, training the unemployed and addressing service shortages which were economic in nature, but most (94.1%) of the interviewees identified these as social objectives.

All but two respondents identified their social enterprise as being driven internally, by the board of management or by management itself, clearly identifying that a small number of individuals (managers and board members) were in control of these social enterprises (Table 8.7). Each individual social enterprise had its own character and in all cases there was a balance between the role of management and the board. In Mulhuddart Community Centre, there appeared to be a strong board. In BEAT and Seamus Ennis Centre, the enterprise seemed to be driven by the management. In BAPTEC and Blanchardstown Credit Union there seemed to be a collaborative relationship between board and management.

Table 8.7 – Who is driving the social enterprises

Case Study	Board/ management committee	Manager	Target group	Board and management	Membership	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	6	1	0	2	0	9
BAPTEC	1	1	1	4	0	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	1	1	0	3	1	6
BEAT	0	3	0	2	0	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	0	4	0	1	0	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	1	1	0	1	0	3
Total	9	11	1	13	1	35

A majority (54.3%) of interviewees identified the achievement of its social mission as the driving force behind the social enterprise, with 40% stating that the social enterprise was driven by its own success and the remainder (5.7%) identifying the personal commitment of individuals. As the respondents comprised managers and board members possessing full access to information on their company's performance, it was informative that a majority felt that the enterprise was still driven by its social objectives. As most respondents felt that their social enterprises were 'very effective' or 'effective' and were being driven by their own success, this indicated an ability to meet its social objectives. However, no respondent stated a factor like making a surplus (profit motive) or to any other issue relating to finance or economics.

One concern that might arise within a social enterprise is that economic considerations (making a profit) might overrun the social mission of these social enterprises. When specifically asked about this, 28 interviewees (80%) felt that economic considerations would not overrun the social objectives of the company, 4 (11.4%) were unsure and only 3 (8.6%) felt that it could be an issue (see Table 8.8).

Table 8.8 – Fear of economic consideration overrunning social objectives

		Economic overrun			Total
		Yes	No	Unsure	
Case study	Mulhuddart Community Centre	0	8	1	9
	BAPTEC	1	3	3	7
	Blanchardstown Credit Union	1	5	0	6
	BEAT	1	4	0	5
	Seamus Ennis Centre	0	5	0	5
	North Fingal Rural Transport	0	3	0	3
	Total	3	28	4	35

This demonstrated that not only were the six social enterprises set up to meet social objectives but that the majority of board members and managers felt that they would remain driven by social objectives into the future. This was not to say that respondents were not aware of the possibility of mission drift, or that this had not been debated at board level. To quote C33, 'it may have been an initial fear but has not become a real issue'. C04 stated that 'I don't see it happening based upon the company's track record. The board is very mindful of our social objectives'. C06 pointed out that 'it is a balance issue. The board needs to keep a close eye on this. That is why we put an emphasis on annual social audits'. This balance issue was raised several times. C09 stated that 'commercial considerations regarding the viability have had an influence, the need for anchor tenants for example...viability of the centre is critical and prudent financial management is essential, but generating a profit should not be our goal. Our primary concern should be delivering services to our clients'.

One concern that also became apparent was a change in the make-up of the board. According to C24 'there is a very good balance at present. The only concern I have is that the committee is personality dependent. A coherent group could take over the centre's management committee and hijack the centre for their own agenda. The committee is only as good as the people on

it and their beliefs and ethics’ or as C13 put it, ‘it is up to the members to maintain control of the organisation and keep it doing what they want it to do’. What can be argued is that there was a consciousness of the balance between social and economic priorities between the respondents and that there was a conscious effort being made to ensure the priority of the social objectives with regard to the management of the organisation.

Financial sustainability

As social enterprises, all the case studies are driven by social objectives, but they are also businesses and must pay their overheads. Thus sustainability issues were always a concern. Nevertheless, all but two, of respondents felt that their social enterprise was financially stable at present (Table 8.9).

Table 8.9 – Financial stability of case studies

Case Study	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	8	1	0	9
BAPTEC	6	0	1	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	6	0	0	6
BEAT	5	0	0	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	5	0	0	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	3	0	0	3
Total	33	1	1	35

In response to a follow-up question on whether the respondents had concerns over any part of their enterprise’s funding mix, 29 interviewees (82.8%) had no such concerns, whilst only 5 (14.3%) did (Table 8.10). The concerns that did exist all related to their social enterprise’s reliance on public funding and external contracts, concerns being based upon the uncertain nature of these contracts. Some other respondents, although not concerned regarding financial stability, did make comments about the changeover of the Community Services Programme from FÁS to POBAL and how this might be administered, but overall the social enterprises examined appeared quite stable financially.

Table 8.10 – Funding concerns of respondents in relation to their case study

Case Study	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	1	8	0	9
BAPTEC	2	4	1	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	0	6	0	6
BEAT	0	5	0	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	2	3	0	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	0	3	0	3
Total	5	29	1	35

BEAT and Blanchardstown Credit Union were both self-sufficient and this was noted by all the relevant interviewees. Three BEAT interviewees did note the importance of building a phase 2 development as strategically important for the future of the organisation. All of the interviewees from the other four case studies noted the need for continued government funding (grant aid) as important. The importance of a funding mix between grant aid and increased traded income was noted by 19 of the 24 respondents. Thus, for those not already self-sufficient, the funding mix appeared important.

Respondents were also asked what would happen to any surplus generated by the company. Blanchardstown Credit Union stated that any surplus would be divided as a mix of dividends and reserves. All of the responses from the other five case studies stated that any surplus generated would be reinvested into the enterprise. The majority of those who responded to this question could also identify how they wanted any surplus to be spent. For example, BEAT, Mulhuddart Community Centre and the Seamus Ennis Centre all had nascent plans for capital building projects. BAPTEC interviewees pointed to the purchase of their own premises and North Fingal Rural Transport wished to buy extra buses and renew the existing ones. The fact that respondents were able to identify specific items that required future investment indicated that they had already considered the future development of the company and had at least tentative ideas regarding how this development would unfold.

This again counters any concern about stagnation and indicates a high level of confidence in the future.

In an associated question, interviewees were asked their opinion regarding the success, or failure, of the National Social Economy Programme (NSEP). The three enterprises that were funded by the NSEP/CSP felt that the programme had a positive influence and those that were not funded did not venture an opinion. This was not entirely surprising, but the level of perceived benefit from those supported projects was much higher than the feedback from the policy makers on the same programme. For example, interviewee C03 from BAPTEC, stated that the NSEP had 'a huge impact. It has been a positive influence and has provided us with more funding to hire employees over a longer period of time'. C04, also from BAPTEC, added that 'it gave us financial support at a time when we needed it. At the time there was nothing else available. It did allow us to recruit a full-time manager and staff which was most important'. An interviewee from Mulhuddart community centre, C20, noted that 'without the social economy programme we wouldn't have been able to open the centre. The move to CSP may be of benefit to us'. C21, also from Mulhuddart community centre, observed that 'we wouldn't have the staff structure we currently have without it. Not moving people on; as compared to CE or JI; has had a stabilising effect on the centre'. However, the operation of the programme did have its snags from time to time, as one interviewee from North Fingal Rural Transport (C28) commenting that 'we did have good a working relationship with FÁS and the programme helped us employ staff, but we did have problems initially as FÁS placed a recruitment embargo...and I couldn't recruit staff initially'. Overall, the impression from the three enterprises that did receive funding was that it had made a large impact, allowing managers and staff to be recruited and retained. In the absence of any other funding lines, many respondents believed that without the programme, their social enterprises would have been detrimentally affected.

Social entrepreneurship

Interviewees were asked whether a specific individual or small group had been responsible for the establishment of the social enterprise. This question was asked in order to identify the presence, or not, of social entrepreneurs. The most important sector behind the establishment of the individual social enterprise is depicted in Table 8.11.

Table 8.11 - Most important people/organisation in establishing the social enterprise by sector

Case Study	community /volunteers	local development	local authority	not specified	Total
Mulhuddart Community Centre	8	0	1	0	9
BAPTEC	0	7	0	0	7
Blanchardstown Credit Union	5	0	0	1	6
BEAT	1	4	0	0	5
Seamus Ennis Centre	4	0	1	0	5
North Fingal Rural Transport	3	0	0	0	3
Total	21	11	2	1	35

In four cases (Mulhuddart Community Centre, Blanchardstown Credit Union, Seamus Ennis Centre and North Fingal Rural Transport), individual community members and volunteers were identified and, in many of the interviews, individual persons were mentioned by name as being the most important people in establishing the social enterprise. BAPTEC and BEAT were established out of local development processes: Blanchardstown Area Partnership and Balbriggan Enterprise Development Group. In the case of BAPTEC, the social enterprise was established by a small number of BAP project staff that identified a need and developed BAPTEC to meet this need. Thus a small number of individuals were named as being responsible for establishing this company; it did not develop as a result of a consultative process. In BEAT, the company did develop from a 'process' based upon the partnership model.

What can be seen from the above discussion is that several companies were heavily influenced by a small number of community and voluntary people. Most were initiated by a small number of individuals who saw a 'need' and brought other people and agencies together to meet this need. The boards of these companies had a majority of members coming from the community/voluntary sector and all were driven by a small number of committed individuals, be they managers or board members. To cite C26, from Mulhuddart community centre, 'the overall success of the centre has to be attributed to the commitment of the people involved'. C09, from BEAT, stated that their social enterprise 'is an example of where a couple of people can make a real change with the application of commitment and vision. The success of any organisation (either voluntary or commercial) is down to the vision and commitment of people with entrepreneurial flair'. However, a warning was given by C18, from Blanchardstown Credit Union, that although 'the social ethos of helping people is still needed, people are less inclined to give time today compared with the past'. In summary, these social enterprises are being driven from within their board or management and that most of the longest serving board members are drawn from the community and voluntary sector. Subsequently, there is evidence of the presence and influence of social entrepreneurs within most case studies.

When asked a follow-up question regarding the motivations of these social entrepreneurs, responding to an identified community need and altruism were the two predominant answers given to this question. With regard to BAPTEC, there was general agreement that the founders were responding to an identified skills mismatch between the jobs available in high-technology companies and the skills of unemployed people living in housing estates adjacent to these high-technology enterprises. The primary motivation identified was to progress long-term unemployed persons back into the labour market. In BEAT, the objective had also been that of helping people out of unemployment but, in this case, through the provision of enterprise space and general training. There had been no training or enterprise facility in

Balbriggan prior to the establishment of BEAT. In the case of Blanchardstown Credit Union, the organisation was established to respond to changing circumstances, especially the rapid growth in population over a twenty-year period. It was to help those unable to access financial services from other establishments and to prevent moneylenders taking advantage of people. Altruism and a strong sense of community were noted by three of the six interviewees. Mulhuddart community centre also addressed an identified need. In this case, it was the lack of a focal point for the community, especially the youth of the area. There had been anti-social behaviour in the area and the community people involved with the centre's committee wished to provide a positive outlet for the young people in the area. North Fingal Rural Transport met a specific market failure as neither public- nor private-transport providers were not providing a bus service to the rural areas and to those in most need. The promoters were motivated to address this service shortfall. The Seamus Ennis Centre interviewees noted the love of traditional music and language as the primary motivation.

The influence of social partnership on social enterprises

Table 8.12 outlines the broad responses concerning the influence of social partnership on the case-study social enterprises. As can be seen, 22 believed social partnership to have a positive influence (62.8%), with 9 thinking it had a neutral or no effect on their social enterprise (25.7%) and 4 interviewees (11.5%) unsure as to its impact. It is noteworthy that interviewees drawn from social enterprises which engaged in local development structures and local partnership structures (BAPTEC, BEAT, Mulhuddart Community Centre and North Fingal Rural Transport) tended to rate more highly the importance of social partnership than the two social enterprises with the least connection to local development and partnerships (Blanchardstown Credit Union and the Seamus Ennis Centre).

Table 8.12 – The influence of social partnership on the case studies

		Social partnership			Total
		Positive	Neutral	Unsure	
Case study	Mulhuddart Community Centre	7	2	0	9
	BAPTEC	6	0	1	7
	Blanchardstown Credit Union	1	4	1	6
	BEAT	4	0	1	5
	Seamus Ennis Centre	1	3	1	5
	North Fingal Rural Transport	3	0	0	3
Total		22	9	4	35

Further investigation of respondents' answers revealed that there appeared to be three streams of thought on social partnership: it was important because of the structures and access to agencies, it was important because funding was accessed through 'partnership' offshoots (Partnership companies, RAPID, Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund, social economy programme), or it was not that important because the agencies would have gone ahead with the project in any case, having been driven by local factors. C08, an interviewee from BEAT, believed that social partnership, 'has had an indirect influence...is a three-way partnership between the community, private and public sectors, but evolved alongside partnership processes. To what extent the public sector was being influenced by social partnership is hard to say'. C31, a respondent from the Seamus Ennis Centre, stated that 'it has played a role. The partnership model is at the core of the centres activities and it has been a successful use of the model'. C24, of Mulhuddart community centre believed that social partnership had, 'created a situation where the pressure from the community was brought to bear on the statutory sector. Without BAP, RAPID etc. progress would have been lessened'. These comments indicate the importance of the 'framework' of social partnership, giving the community and voluntary sector access to public-sector agencies and their management and prioritising public-sector involvement. Other comments emphasised the importance of the funding-role of social partnership. C20, also from Mulhuddart community centre, stated that funding associated with

social partnership 'was highly important. The centre was built by using Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund that is a direct spin-off of social partnership. This is also what funds...and affects how we access our funding'. Other comments mirrored C25's view, that 'what has happened would have happened anyway!'

Thus, it would appear that there are several understandings as to what social partnership is and there is some debate as to what its influence has been, if any. Overall there would seem to be a balanced view. Social partnership ensured that agencies and public bodies engaged with community-based projects. It gave a template for bringing the three sides (public, private and community) together and it gave a template for the working of these relationships. C12, an interviewee from BEAT, summarised this succinctly, noting that 'social partnership assisted as a process as it allowed all local organisations to come together and ensured regular consultation with the agencies. However, I believe that the project would have happened... as the agencies we engaged with would have worked together anyway.'

None of these social enterprises was set up as a simple response to social partnership, although BAPTEC and BEAT emerged from social-partnership processes. However, they were all set up to meet an identified need. Social partnership in many cases provided a template for working with agencies and other bodies to get work done. To this end, social partnership facilitated and supported the work already being done, but the community and board members drove the projects.

Social changes and their influences on social enterprise

27 respondents (77.1%) answered that they had observed social changes over the past few years, with the remainder stating that they had not seen any social changes affecting the operation of their social enterprise (22.9%).

Of the 27 respondents who noted a social change, five main issues were identified, some respondents having noted several issues:

- Issues relating to the new ethnic minority communities (thirteen respondents)
- The effects of increased economic affluence (nine respondents)
- The levels of employment/unemployment and the subsequent needs of long-term unemployed (eight respondents)
- Other demographic changes including the population increase in society (eight respondents)
- Changes in government social/employment policies (especially relating to changes in CE, JI and the NSEP/CSP) (two respondents)

The credit union members noted that economic affluence has had a negative effect on them, as had the fact that the banks were now targeting their traditional markets. With regard to unemployment, respondent C06 from BAPTEC, argued that 'over time, the needs of people has changed. The skills required by employers and employees are changing rapidly...the long-term unemployed are a smaller cohort of clients but their needs are greater and they have a longer road to travel'. Thus the increased economic affluence has generated challenges as well as advantages. A majority of respondents noted the rise in the size of ethnic minority communities. Most noted the rise but very few commented on the social implications. C24, from Mulhuddart community centre, commented that 'there is a huge diversity in the population now. We have to fight against huge levels of discrimination. Anti-social behaviour hasn't really got worse, but with the lessening of pressure of economic issues, they have raised up to the top of the agenda', later going on to add that in relation to ethnic minority communities that 'what could happen is the generation of two disadvantaged groups, indigenous and ethnic minority, who have competing needs and become antagonistic to each other'.

Overall, the responses acknowledged a growing population with increased economic affluence. There were new ethnic minority communities who were meeting the economy's current need for employees. All of these factors were

increasing the demand for community-based services and, in an economic slowdown, these same factors could create new disadvantaged groups. The existing indigenous disadvantaged groups were having more resources expended on their needs, but the multi-faceted challenges they faced were proving harder to resolve, and there was still a cohort of long-term unemployed even within an economy with a high level of demand for employees.

The influence of market failure on social enterprises

An issue that regularly surfaced in both the policy interviews and theory review in relation to the social economy was its role in meeting market-failure situations. However, for all bar one of the social enterprises, the respondents indicated that this was not a major issue (Table 8.13):

Table 8.13 – The importance of market failure to the case studies

		Market failure			Total
		Yes	No	Unsure	
Case study	Mulhuddart Community Centre	0	9	0	9
	BAPTEC	1	4	2	7
	Blanchardstown Credit Union	1	4	1	6
	BEAT	2	2	1	5
	Seamus Ennis Centre	1	3	1	5
	North Fingal Rural Transport	3	0	0	3
Total		8	22	5	35

North Fingal Rural Transport was unquestionably meeting a market failure. Mulhuddart Community Centre and the Seamus Ennis Centre were in niche markets where private-sector companies would not enter the market, while BEAT, Blanchardstown Credit Union and BAPTEC all provided services to their target groups but were also in direct market competition with the private sector in other areas of their businesses. BEAT was an interesting example as because when it started up it was the only enterprise space in Balbriggan.

However, since then the market there has expanded and, despite starting up to meet a market failure, it is now in open-market competition, albeit providing niche services to start-up businesses.

There was a distinction made by some interviewees between market failure and having a 'niche' in a market. An interviewee from Blanchardstown Credit Union, C13, argued that 'we have our niche in the market and we service our niche'. This is an interesting argument but cannot be sustained as if another competitor in the market decided to target this segment, or adopt the same 'holistic' approach, then the niche disappears. There is a difference between market failure and unique selling point. This would be the better-understood position, to quote C06 'I am not sure...is meeting a need that exists in a different way to the private training companies. In some ways we are in direct competition...in other ways we are not doing exactly the same'. Or as a respondent from Blanchardstown Credit Union (C15) put it, 'no, we are part of the market. It is our ethos that makes us different'. In relation to NFRT, a company that would appear to be meeting a clear market failure, it appears that the market is taking a close look at the situation. C29 commented that 'the private sector was, and are interested, but they couldn't operate efficiently as they could not access the grant subsidies we do. I am sure the private sector is watching us'.

The future of social enterprise in Ireland

As can be seen from Table 8.14, 33 interviewees (94%) saw a positive future for their social enterprise, 2 (6%) were unsure as to the future with no respondent answering that the future would be negative.

Table 8.14 – Future outlook of respondents in relation to their case study

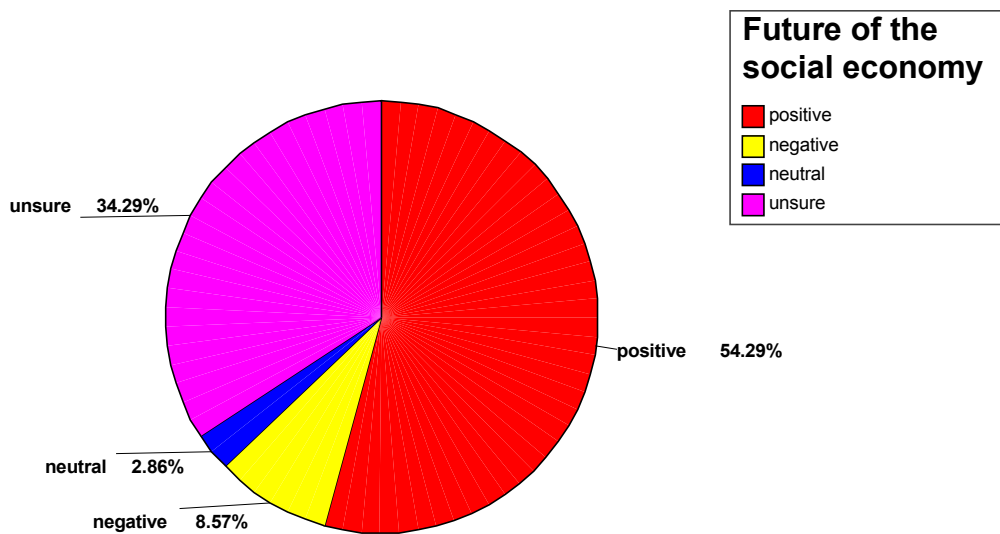
		Future		Total
		Positive	Unsure	
Case study	Mulhuddart Community Centre	9	0	9
	BAPTEC	6	1	7
	Blanchardstown Credit Union	5	1	6
	BEAT	5	0	5
	Seamus Ennis Centre	5	0	5
	North Fingal Rural Transport	3	0	3
	Total	33	2	35

As has already been seen, 82.8% of interviewees felt that they had no cause for concern over medium-term funding. The fact that all respondents felt that their social enterprise was either 'very effective' or 'effective' demonstrated strong confidence in the future.

When asked for their opinion regarding the support government could provide to their social enterprise in the future, in five cases: BAPTEC, BEAT, Mulhuddart community centre, North Fingal Rural Transport and the Seamus Ennis Centre, funding was mentioned by all of the interviewees. In particular, capital funding for building projects was noted by six respondents. In the case of Blanchardstown Credit Union, all the respondents noted the updating of the Credit Union legislation as the sole issue of import relating to this question.

Figure 8.7 outlines the responses to a question on the future of the social economy in general. Whereas a majority felt that there was a positive future for the social economy generally in Ireland, nearly half of the interviewees (45.7%) were either unsure as to the future, or thought the future was neutral (stagnant) or negative.

Fig 8.7 – Respondent’s opinions as to the future of the social economy in Ireland



There was a wide range of comments on this question but they fitted into three general themes: the development of the system, the role of government and what the effects would be of an economic slowdown. In that most respondents had considered that their social enterprise had a positive future, it was interesting that several respondents were less confident about the future of the sector in general. C04 believed that 'there is a need for the third sector and the social economy. But the future is difficult to tell. Systems need gatekeepers, guardians and advocates and at the moment they are few and far between. There is a lack of philanthropy in Ireland, that limits funding to public sector and chasing the funding available at the time'. C01 commented that 'the social economy needs to be clearer as to what it is. Social enterprises generate a benefit as a tangible product or service to a community. The more clear the community is as to the benefit or product being offered the more likely is it to succeed'. These comments suggested that there was a lack of clarity and understanding regarding the social economy as a sector and it had a scarcity of advocates and this was consistent with the findings from the opinions of policy and decision-makers in Chapter 5. C24 made an insightful comment into the future of the social economy, 'it is a necessary process within the community sector. But it needs

to be carefully used and not to generate unnecessary pressure on community groups that are not suited to a 'business model'. It worked well for us overall, but it was not an easy process'. This feeds back to the policy interviews where there was agreement as to the lack of clarity amongst policy makers as to the nature and extent of the social economy. Social enterprises are not a cure-all; they are a form of community-based activity that is particularly good in the delivery of goods and services to specific communities or individuals within communities. It would appear that many who operated within the sector, but not all, understand the nature and potential of the social economy in Ireland.

The role of government was also seen as important to the future of the social economy. On the positive side, C07 from BAPTEC, commented that 'there has to be a future for the social economy. It meets a need. The government has a major role in its future funding and direction'. This would seem sensible as social enterprises deliver goods and services to groups that are categorised by the government as disadvantaged and as a priority for social policy and funding. However, it must be remembered that the policy makers were unclear as to the future of the social economy. Within the sector itself, there was confusion as to the nature of the social economy and the FÁS Social Economy Programme. Respondent C19, from Mulhuddart community centre, believed that the social economy had 'not a very large future. There is still the attitude that the social economy is a 'scheme' rather than anything else'. C03 added that the future is 'hard to say. The current situation looks good. Moving the NSEP to POBAL looks like a good move from our viewpoint. However I do have a fear of a clampdown on funding after the next general election; it happened the last time'. This is, of course, pertinent as FÁS made dramatic cuts in the Community Employment (CE) and Full-time Job Initiative (JI)¹⁵ programmes after the last general election, cutting almost a third of the places out of CE alone. Thus, there was agreement that the role of government was important, but there was a debate regarding the nature of

¹⁵ Both the Community Employment and Full-time Job Initiative programmes are Irish government sponsored intermediate labour-market programmes.

its role. Some saw the government's role as positive and some feared a cynicism based upon political expediency. However, the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs had stated that it had secured extra funding for the Community Services Programme for the next few years and this gave some degree of security.

The role of the social economy in an economic slowdown appeared to be important to respondents. C29 noted that 'when the economic boom peters out and unemployment rises, there will be a greater need for the social economy'. C10 added that 'in a downturn the social economy will become more important in delivering services to marginalized groups'. The fear was outlined by C08 as 'the future of the social economy is closely tied to social partnership. In a future slowdown the social economy may suffer as public and private sectors retrench and leaves the social economy isolated, even though this is exactly the time the social economy is needed most'. There appeared to be a consensus that in an economic slowdown the social economy will become more important.

Thus, there appeared to be some hope as to the future of the social economy in Ireland. Most social enterprises surveyed felt that they were secure individually and the majority felt that the system had a positive future. However, this was predicated on three things: the social economy clarifying its role and promoting its role and benefits, and the ongoing commitment of government.

Final comments

Only three interviewees did express extra comments. C09 noted that 'BEAT is an example of where a couple of people can make a real change with the application of commitment and vision. The success of any organisation (either voluntary or commercial) is down to the vision and commitment of people with entrepreneurial flair. Robert is both a manager and a driver'. C25 noted in relation to Mulhuddart community centre that 'the centre was

initially driven by local people and many local people now work in the centre. There needs to be a maintenance of this local ethos and maintain the voluntary nature of the activities within the centre'. C26, also in relation to Mulhuddart, noted that 'The overall success of the centre has to be attributed to the commitment of the people involved. The community centre is conscious of the needs in the community. The centre is aesthetically pleasing and well fitted into the plans for the area. Community centres need support (financial and personnel) especially at the beginning. Agencies need to be more supportive in their outlook, they are not just there to audit the projects, but support and nurture them. Some projects still have a fear of some agencies and the agencies need to promote themselves as supporters, not just regulators'.

Specific lessons from the individual case studies

Having examined the commonalities that exist across the case studies, it is useful to look at them separately and examine lessons from each type of social enterprise. Each social enterprise will be examined along the lines of the research questions described at the beginning of this chapter.

Baptec

Baptec was formed with the single mission of providing IT training for those unemployed or on labour-market programmes in the Blanchardstown area. It is an example of a more recent breed of more commercially-focused social enterprise. Baptec has a slight majority of its income generated from trading sources. Baptec was formed out of a social-partnership process when programme officers in a local area partnership company identifying a need for locally-based IT training and working in unison to bring resources and the target group together to address the identified need. This was a 'bottom-up' approach initiated by the Co-ordinator of the Full-time Job Initiative Programme in Blanchardstown.

The primary motivation of the initiators of Baptec was to assist unemployed or labour-market programme participants gain the necessary training in IT skills and so allow them to access the available jobs in ICT companies in the late 1990's. From its humble beginnings in a quarter of the training rooms of the Blanchardstown Area Partnership, Baptec evolved into a medium-sized IT training company. It now has its own 300 square metre training centre, with several training rooms. It outsources external training from public bodies yet still delivers the core training to the unemployed and labour-market programme participants for which it was established. C06 noted that 'traded income has been expanding and will now grow gradually over time. The company has to balance between providing training to private-sector clients and continuing with our primary social objective of meeting the training needs of the target group'.

Baptec has existed for ten years and has grown from strength-to-strength. It still maintains the primary goal of providing training to the disadvantaged in the Blanchardstown area whilst developing a range of other training programmes, many profitable, to subsidise the primary goal. According to C02 when asked about the success of Baptec in meeting its objectives he asserted that Baptec was successful and delivered 'increased student throughput, successful attendance and completion results...[and] relevant courses to industry'. C03 added that 'Baptec has surpassed all its performance targets in 2005, both social and economic'. Baptec have not as much developed new objectives over time but rather the range of IT training programmes and services offered have expanded.

Baptec is probably a good example of a social enterprise established to meet an identified need that suited the social-economy model. Training for unemployed persons and labour-market programme participants was needed and there were training budgets available to meet those needs. As it developed, Baptec was able to offer additional fee-paying courses which

assisted it in generating other traded revenues. As C03 noted, 'Baptec is a true social enterprise and was set up to be self funding and sustainable. Baptec identified itself as a social enterprise before there was a social economy programme'.

Beat

Beat was established as a response to the long-term unemployment issue in Balbriggan and to give opportunities for the unemployed to start a small business or access training. Beat is one of over 100 community-enterprise centres funded by the Community Enterprise Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland (Forfás, 2007, 75-76). Beat is fully self-sufficient financially. The need for Beat was outlined by C08 when he noted that Beat was established 'primarily to address a perception within the community that there was a lack of initiative in local job creation...at the time there was high levels of generational and structural unemployment. Beat was set up as an employment generator within Balbriggan. This was to be achieved through the provision of enterprise space, training and retraining services'. Beat was established as a partnership between the Balbriggan Enterprise Development Group (BEDG) and Fingal County Council. The primary motivation of BEDG and Fingal County Council was to alleviate the effects of long-term unemployment in the Balbriggan area of north Dublin. According to C08, the people who established Beat were motivated by 'the realisation that there was the vision, ability and resources present to bring the project to completion. There was commitment from all at the very start'.

BEAT was established as a social enterprise to build and manage the community enterprise centre in Balbriggan. The Centre has maintained a very high level of occupancy since its opening and plans are currently underway to initiate the building of a second phase on land adjoining the current site. According to C12, Beat was established as a social enterprise as it 'seemed to be the most suitable model to achieve the aims and objectives

of the organisation. BEDG, although community based, had a strong business ethic and was run with a business mentality. How BEDG was ran influenced the establishment and model used by Beat, with strong roots in both community and business'. Beat has met its original social and economic objectives. The enterprise centre has been successful and it also provides an environment for the delivery of a wide range of training courses for the people of Balbriggan. To note the comments of C10, Beat is 'very effective. We have high occupancy rates in the enterprise units and our training courses are developing nicely'. It is less that Beat has developed new objectives over time but rather that the original objectives have evolved as the needs of the community has changed. According to C09, 'the original objectives have changed due to a change in the economic circumstances. Housing social activities was not in the original idea...Beat is now a valuable point of contact for start-ups in the area'. C11 commented that 'I think we are still meeting the needs of the target groups'.

C09 concluded that 'Beat is an example of where a couple of people can make a real change with the application of commitment and vision. The success of any organisation; either voluntary or commercial, is down to the vision and commitment of people with entrepreneurial flair'.

Mulhuddart Community Centre

The community centre in Mulhuddart was built to service the significant lack of community, especially youth, services in a highly disadvantaged area. To cite C20, the centre was build 'to provide a meeting place, a community facility, in an area that has no social facilities; an area that had nothing'. C25 added that 'the primary focus was on providing youth facilities and services as Mulhuddart has such a large youth population'. The Centre is an example of a highly demand-deficient social enterprise with only 16.7% of its income generated by traded services.

The initiators of Mulhuddart community centre were local development agencies, community activists and the local authority. C21 observed that the original project was driven by 'community activists, people involved in other projects in the area' and that 'Blanchardstown Youth Service (BYS) played a major role in identifying the need'. The initiators were motivated to fill a significant identified gap in community services and address anti-social behaviour in the area. C26 believed that 'all the people around the table had a common vision. There was nothing for kids to do. Criminal activity was happening and the community perception was that the area was not as safe as desired. The people involved were motivated to address these issues'. Since its inception the centre has been fully completed and is running successfully. An additional extension is planned and an all-weather pitch has been opened.

The main objectives of building a community centre, opening it, staffing it and getting community 'buy-in' have all been achieved. C21 believed that the community centre was 'very successful in some respects. Youth services have improved dramatically in the area. In some areas there have been disappointments; there was an expectation that local residents would use the facility to develop new initiatives however the centre is predominantly used by pre-existing groups'. C24 generally agreed and believed that the centre 'has been very successful at engaging youth and it is proactive with the community. It is a very open and welcoming centre. If there is a negative it is that we may have set our initial ambitions too high. The committee feels that there is a lack of community involvement'. In general, the centre has not developed new social objectives above the ones originally set. This is asserted by C20 when she noted that 'on balance we knew what we were going to do and have done so. There is still a huge emphasis on youth. 90% of the people who work in the centre are locals and there is a strong commitment to the community as a result'.

Community centres will always be demand-deficient social enterprises. C20 summarised the point when she commented that 'the centre will never be commercially viable. The social objectives are being met through the crèche, the youth project which now has 4 youth workers, there is a vibrant senior citizens group and the coffee shop is a place for social interaction'. C25 added that 'as a community centre we are meeting and exceeded our expectations. The centre is always full, we have dedicated staff and there is a great atmosphere when you go into the centre. The coffee shop and catering services have not expectations and the centre does not generate the percentage of traded income desired. But overall, the centre is successful'.

Seamus Ennis Centre

The Seamus Ennis Centre was established to meet the identified lack of Irish language and cultural services in North Dublin. C31 outlined the objectives as 'to provide a focus for the activities of Scoil Seamus Ennis. To promote the traditional art forms on a more consistent basis than heretofore. To increase the range of and, availability of, traditional arts and cultural activities'. The Seamus Ennis Centre generates 67.3% of its income through traded services.

The centre was established as an initiative of a social entrepreneur who brought together the differing parties and convinced Fingal County Council to support and advocate the project. The committee were predominantly local community people, residents of the Naul and its hinterland. The social entrepreneur and the committee which he brought together all had an interest in the Irish language, music and culture and were motivated to provide a platform for the promotion of the arts and the language. They were also motivated to provide a multi-purpose facility for the general use of the community in and around the Naul. According to C35, the social entrepreneur involved, the centre was established 'to meet a number of objectives; artistic and community based. The artistic side was the development of a purpose-built traditional arts centre in Fingal. The

community side was to meet community needs through creating local employment and creating a social meeting point for the local community'.

This was an interesting project with the purchase of 2 disused thatched houses and their refurbishment using traditional methods. The centre then purchased a temporary cabin for use as a hall at the rear of these buildings which has subsequently been replaced by a larger and more substantial hall facility. The Centre has developed a coffee shop and runs a wide range of programmes in Irish culture, music and language. The original objectives of the centre have been met and surpassed. C32 believed that 'the centre is achieving its initial aims of promotion traditional music, culture and arts. There is a huge programme of activities happening every week'. C34 added that 'with respect to the programming and educational aspects the centre is the leading music centre in the country, usually being open all-year round and six nights a week. The centre has outgrown the existing space. In relation to the restaurant it has had its problems and we hope to outsource this element of the centre'. Over time the original objectives have been expanded rather than there are new objectives formed.

C32 believed that the social entrepreneur 'is the main driving factor. The fact that he can work full time at the project is a major benefit. The local people on the board also want the centre to succeed'.

Blanchardstown Credit Union

Blanchardstown Credit Union was established 38 years ago to address the lack of financial services available to what was then a rural village community. As C13 noted, Blanchardstown Credit Union was established to 'help people in certain socio-economic groups that might have needed financial assistance and to encourage thrift'. In Chapter 3 it was noted that there are over 400 credit unions in the Republic of Ireland. Blanchardstown Credit Union is fully self-sufficient financially.

It was formed by a number of community leaders, especially the local Catholic parish priest. According to C15 the people who set up the Blanchardstown Credit Union were 'people with social standing; there were 2 Garda, a local schoolmaster and other well regarded people'. The primary motivation of the initial members was to form a self-help organisation for the local community, especially those who did not have access to banking services. C14 noted specific rationales, commenting that the founders were motivated by 'Christian values, charity, compassion and to support others less well off'. C15, a founding member of the union, noted that 'a number of people living in the area had tried to join the Navan Road Credit Union but were unable to do so as we lived outside of their common bond. The local parish priest at the time thought it would be a good idea to set up a local credit union...set up a study group to look at the feasibility'. He also noted that their primary motivation was 'altruism, a desire to help the community'. Since its inception operating out of a parish hall, Blanchardstown Credit Union has grown into a relatively large social enterprise. It has its own premises and considerable reserves.

It would appear that the primary objectives of Blanchardstown Credit Union have been met. However, it must be noted that the intervening time has seen radical changes to Irish society and the banking system which has altered the scope and nature of the services provided. As C18 critiqued, 'the credit union originally helped those who the banks would not. We still provide a unique offering; with compassions and interpersonal relationships, but we are now offering a service to everybody...it is very effective. We maintain the traditional approach to the credit union and keep to traditional core business'. Again, Blanchardstown Credit Union is providing the same types of services but the range of services offered and the manner in which the services are offered, have developed over time. Ultimately, C14 believed that 'Blanchardstown Credit Union is driven by its members. We have a good membership base and a solid minority of members are interested enough to

drive the union forward'. C16 added that 'we are motivated to keep meeting the needs of our members and help members get out of financial trouble'. According to C15, 'there will always be a need for a credit union at some level but credit unions are changing as society changes'.

North Fingal Rural Transport

North Fingal Rural Transport was established to provide a transport service for those living in the rural areas of north Dublin who did not have a regular bus service. According to C30, 'there was transport need. There is still little public transport services in the Nual, Ballyboughal and Garretstown areas. This is still a rural area. So we were meeting an identified need'. North Fingal Rural Transport is one of 26 projects funded under the Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) as discussed earlier in this chapter. Co-operation Fingal; a local development organisation, formed a study group initially to examine the feasibility of setting up a rural transport company under the then new Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) scheme. A voluntary committee was formed of community activists to be the board of this new social enterprise.

The overall impression is that NFRT was established as a practical solution to an identified need. C28 identified that 'the members of the working group were very community conscious and they were aware of the huge need in the north Fingal area'. C30 added that NFRT was established 'to meet the identified need. Several people identified the need and the project built momentum'. Since its inception, NFRT has bought and runs 2 fully-fitted transport buses and provides a regular schedule of services for the local community. Broadly, NFRT is meeting its original objectives as it is providing a schedule of services to the local community. However, C28 believed that 'we are hitting only 50-60% of our target market. We carried 11,000 passengers last year. We are quite effective but there are areas we haven't reached yet'. C29 agreed with this assessment and argued that the service delivered by NFRT was 'not bad, on a scale from 1 to 10, I would say a 7.

We are always a little behind the need and playing catch up with the market and where the demand really is'. This is a relatively new social enterprise being established in 2002. To date, the work of the social enterprise has been to deliver the original objectives set out by the board.

Summary

The six case studies straddle the 'spectrum' of social enterprises described in Chapter 2. There were 2 fully self-sufficient social enterprises (Beat and Blanchardstown Credit Union) and one highly demand-deficient social enterprise (Mulhuddart community centre). In between there were Baptec, the Seamus Ennis Centre and North Fingal Rural Transport. Mulhuddart community centre is a classic example of a demand-deficient social enterprise and is never likely to be self sufficient. It is the approach it takes to the running of the centre, as well as its small traded income, that distinguishes it as a social enterprise. Mulhuddart could have gone another route, i.e., adopting Community Employment as the method of funding staff costs but it chose the social enterprise route, although some interviewees felt that it had been forced down this path. Thus, it can be argued that social enterprises are defined by their entrepreneurial approach rather than the level of traded income they generate. North Fingal Rural Transport represents a social enterprise created in response to a funding opportunity. This is not to say that the need did not exist but rather the government's decision to offer a budget to address this specific need spurred the initial developments. However, since its inception it has developed a business model that, although still demand deficient, can be sustainable. In fact Mulhuddart community centre, North Fingal Rural Transport, Baptec and the Seamus Ennis Centre demonstrate another important characteristic of a social enterprise; the funding mix. This allows these social enterprises to mix and match traded income, grant aid, fundraising and volunteerism to meet their requirements so as to deliver their services to their communities of interest. Only social

enterprises that are fully self sufficient can afford to be selective in the types of funding and programmes that they utilise.

Social enterprises appeared to be established to meet an identified need in a community. The six social enterprises examined in the case studies all addressed different social needs, be it a lack of facilities, services or skills. They all have different markets and meet the identified needs in different ways, yet they were all responses to an identified community need. The six social enterprises were established by a variety of people and through a range of mechanisms. In all cases, a voluntary committee was responsible for the formation of the organisation and, in four cases, a specific individual was named as a primary driving force (social entrepreneur). These initial groups were motivated by several factors to promote the social enterprise, of which altruism and the desire to help other less fortunate community members was mentioned most often. Over time, the social enterprises have developed and adapted to the changing needs of the community and in some cases (BEAT, BAPTEC, Blanchardstown Credit Union) the social enterprises were actively competing against the private sector in certain parts of their business. Many interviewees noted recent social and demographic changes that affected their social enterprise and noted how the organisation was responding to these changes. Most interviewees noted that their social enterprises was either 'effective' or 'very effective' in meeting their social objectives, or social mission. In the main, the community and voluntary sector representatives, based upon their initial high expectations of what the social enterprise would achieve, were less impressed by performance. Nevertheless, there was some evidence that these social enterprises were being socially effective. They also appeared to be financially stable. Two social enterprises were self-sufficient and the other four had a funding mix of grant aid and traded income that they believed secure in the medium term.

Two-thirds of the board members interviewed were from the community and voluntary sector, higher than the percentage of community and voluntary

sector board members in the social enterprise survey in the previous chapter. Three social enterprises had received funding under the National Social Economy Programme/Community Service Programme and those approved social enterprises felt that the funding was important for their establishment and secured ongoing existence. The three non-funded social enterprises did not have an opinion on the programme. Five case-study social enterprises considered continued funding as the main support that the government should provide for such enterprises and at least four of the case studies were heavily grant dependent. Market failure was not considered very important overall by a majority of respondents even though many of the case studies were engaged in addressing market failures for some or all of their business.