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Volunteer Sector Forum  
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 Cornwall  
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# Annual Review 2009



**vsf** | voice of the  
 cornwall | voluntary  
 sector





Dame Suzi Leather, Chair of the Charity Commission with Blair Thomson

! £387 million  
: the value of volunteering to the county.

## Foreword

17 years ago the VSF was created in response to the economic downturn and to help organisations support and collaborate with each other. 'Operation Goodwill' came out of a meeting held at Alverton Manor in 1992, pulled together by CRCC and the Rural Development Commission. This informal drive to recruit more volunteers across Cornwall evolved to become the Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum.

Early pieces of work included a submission to the Local Government Review of 1994 and the new Community Care Plan of the same year. With Oliver Baines in the Chair, and with 13 founder members, the VSF's first terms of reference were formally adopted on 8th December 1994.

In April 1998, CRCC was awarded a grant from the National Lotteries Charities Board. Our first

Development Officer was appointed and the first issue of the popular 'The Voice' newsletter was launched. In 1999, the VSF adopted a vision of "a thriving, effective, influential voluntary sector at the heart of a Cornwall that respects its environment, its people and its communities."

**Says Blair Thomson, Chair:**  
**"There have been many landmarks since then, including the ground-breaking study on the impact of the sector on the European Objective 1 programme, 'Valuing the Voluntary Sector', which reported in May 2008."**

15 years on and we are still here, supporting communities and fighting a new wave of economic downturn that brings challenges to our voluntary sector of a magnitude that we have never faced before. In these uncertain times, a coordinating and collaborative body for the Voluntary Sector in Cornwall is more important than ever. We look forward to working with you to make Cornwall a safer, stronger and more sustainable community for future generations!



Mary Cooper,  
Head of Localism  
at Cornwall  
Council, one of  
our partners

## Vision/Values

We promise to advocate on behalf of Cornwall's voluntary sector to the best of our abilities, remaining true to our values to:

- Be open, inclusive and **accountable**.
- Be **responsive**, flexible, proactive and listening.
- Remain **small** and not to seek to deliver services directly, and where possible, to give funds back through sub-contracting to Cornwall's local charities and social enterprises.
- Safeguard our **independence** by maintaining a mix of funding and partners.
- Encourage **collaboration**; focussing on what is best for the sector as a whole, and for Cornwall and its people, especially those suffering from disadvantage.

**! 20,000** the number of people who benefited from Objective  
• **One funded projects in the voluntary sector.**

### Review of performance against our values for the past year

- **Accountability:** The Forum continues to be user-led, with all but two of our Trustees coming from member charities or not-for-profit organisations. Election via membership vote at the Forum's AGM is mandatory. The Forum continues to hold a minimum of four well attended open meetings on issues of topical interest to the sector, and to use these to set and refine its policies and priorities.
- **Responsive:** Topics of our Forum meetings have included the Credit Crunch, the work of the Charity Commission, the new Cornwall Council and its Localism agenda, and collaborative working.
- **Small:** In 17 years we have maintained staffing levels at 3, but continue to collaborate with partners on back-office systems to optimise efficiency.
- **Independent:** Thanks to Big Lottery funding in 2007, we now have a permanent team, with security for 5 years. This puts us on an independent footing. We continue to support and be supported by the Council but there is an important dividing line and we remain their conscience on community matters. We are committed to supporting the sector through collaboration and have no wish to build an empire, where possible we will use local organisations to deliver contracts, distributing funding to strengthen our sector.
- **Collaborative:** We have taken on two projects as the accountable body for a partnership and have acted as local delivery agent for a small grants scheme aimed at encouraging charities to collaborate or merge. We continue to promote the concept of sharing services and infrastructure to maximise efficiency and minimise duplication.

### Our Year

24<sup>th</sup> July '08

Year starts with AGM,  
Bodmin Shire House

Accounts and strategy  
signed off and  
trustees elected.

## Who are we?

The VSF is a small organisation with a broad reach. It is a registered charity and has a Board of Trustees and a small executive team comprised of:



**Mark Richardson** Chief Executive  
With a track record in community leadership Mark brings immense experience to this post and a strong sense of collaboration.



**Lydia Billson** Partnership Officer  
With a background in 'on the ground' community engagement, Lydia brings a fantastic hands-on approach to the team.



**Jasmine Sharma** Project Co-ordinator  
With a background in voluntary sector work and a Masters Degree from the University of Edinburgh, Jasmine will have the responsibility of co-ordinating our Take Part and Convergence Matters projects. A big challenge, but an exciting one!



**Chris Augarde** Admin Assistant  
Chris is already a vital cog in the forum and provides all our back office support.

Trustee Tracey  
Roose talks to  
a reporter at  
our event on  
20<sup>th</sup> March



### VSF Board 24th July 2008 – 6th July 2009

Name	Sponsoring Organisation	Position
Blair Thomson	None	Chair
June Hackett	None	Vice Chair
Tarn Lamb	Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change	Treasurer
Mary Baldwin	Volunteer Cornwall	Secretariat
David Carter	Learning Plus	Trustee
John Ede	Citizens Advice	Trustee
Andrew Green	Cornwall & IoS Learning Partnership	Trustee
Sue Guard	Penwith Community Development Trust	Trustee
Anna Hoyle	East Cornwall CVS	Trustee
James Shepherd	Groundwork	Trustee
Tracy Roose	Age Concern Cornwall and the IoS	Trustee
Ian Jones	Volunteer Cornwall	Trustee
Jon Rolls	ReZolve	Trustee
Louise Knox	Pentreath Ltd	Trustee
Andrew Yates	Cornwall Faith Forum	Trustee
Gerald Haines	Cornwall Young Farmers Club	Trustee (resigned 26/2/09)

**! 17,120:** number of people employed in VCS.

## How do we work:

### Advocacy:

Providing strategic leadership as the voice of the sector. Liaising with and bringing influence to bear on local, regional and national government.

### Brokerage:

Being the catalyst for, and facilitating, partnerships and joint working.

### Communication:

Providing internal links within the sector, and being the gateway to other sectors, statutory bodies and government. Helping to co-ordinate sector marketing and public relations.

### Development:

Initiating and commissioning research into issues affecting the sector and identifying gaps in provision.

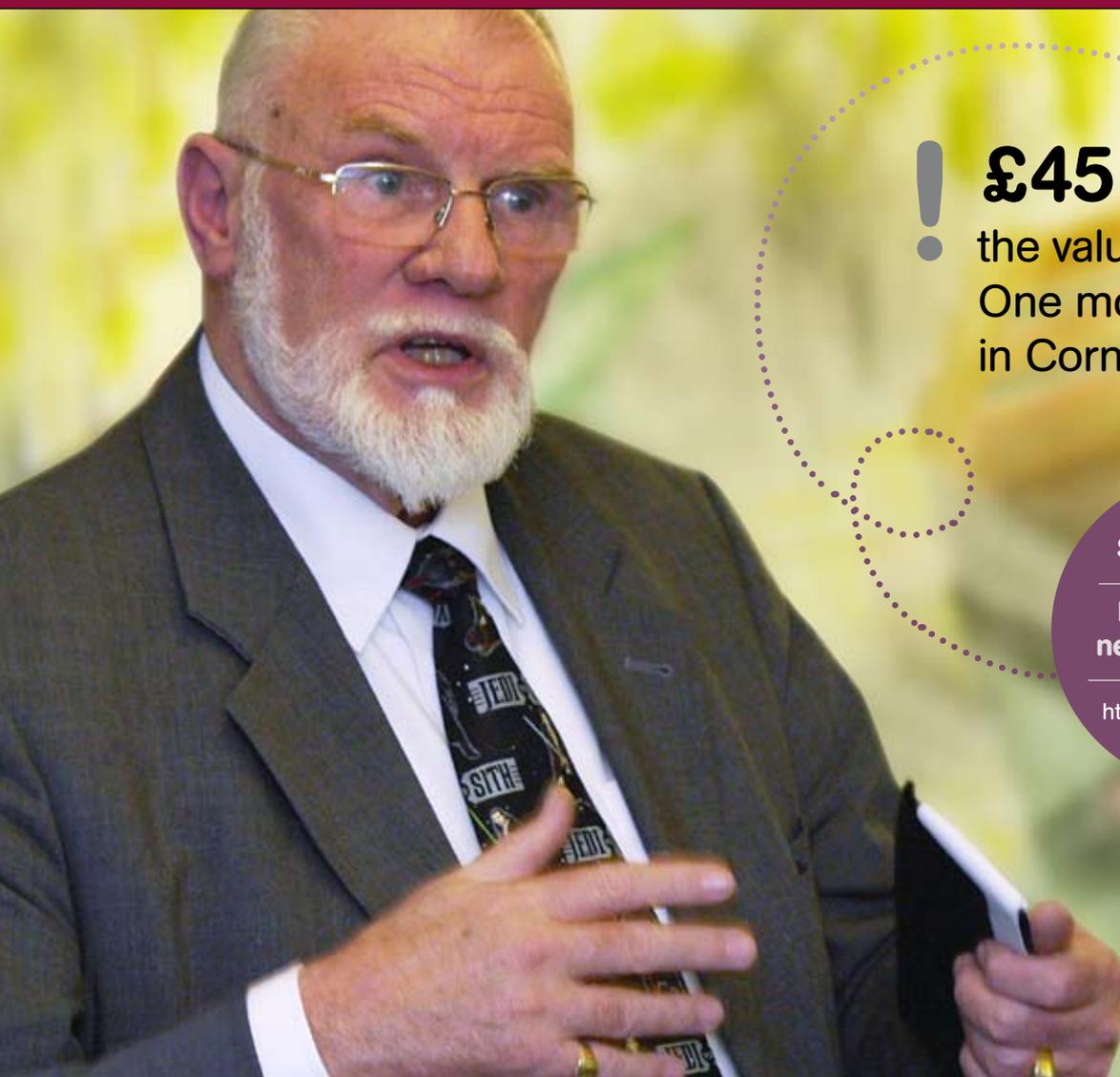
**! £390 million:**  
● combined income of VCS in Cornwall.

9<sup>th</sup> September '08

**VSF Seminar,  
Kingsley Village**

With the credit crunch already beginning to bite and issues such as commissioning and the proposed Community Networks also needing to be addressed, we put together a high profile seminar under the title "Threats and Opportunities – Can we handle them?"

**! 13%:**  
● proportion of Objective One funding given to VCS.



**! £45 million:**  
● the value of Objective One money invested in Cornwall's VCS.

16<sup>th</sup>  
September '08

**Launch of the  
new VSF website**

<http://cornwallvsf.org>

Blair Thomson,  
Chair of Trustees,  
speaks about the  
Credit Crunch



**! 1 in 3:**  
the number of  
adults engaged  
in voluntary work.

## Who do we work with?

- Official affiliated sub-groups, Cornwall Infrastructure Partnership and Cornwall Youth Work Partnership.
- Cornwall Charity Executives Group (e.g. on Dame Suzi event).
- We hope to increase links with IVO (Independent Voluntary Organisations) regarding training for voluntary sector staff and volunteers.
- Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Cornwall Council regarding Strategic Representation of the voluntary and community sector.
- Have representatives on the eight Thematic Partnerships that make up Cornwall Strategic Partnership, namely Economic Forum, Environment Kernow, Cultural Partnership, Health and Wellbeing, Community Safety, Inclusion Cornwall, Home & Communities and Children & Young People.
- Work directly with our members. Which includes a database of 3,000 voluntary and community organisations.
- Work with commissioners, looking at issues and problems, future requirements etc.
- Work on a regional level with Creating Excellence, South West Forum, Government Office South West (GOSW), Learning & Skills Council (LSC), and Regional Development Agencies (RDA).
- Work on a national level with National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), Capacity Builders, Community Development Foundation.

1<sup>st</sup> October '08

### Convergence Matters Project

The formal start date for our European Social Fund technical assistance project to support the participation of voluntary and community organisations in the European Convergence programme for Cornwall.

**! 3,000:** the number of VCS groups in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

# What have we achieved in the past year?

Steve Clark  
Operations  
Director, Cornwall  
Neighbourhoods  
for Change.

14<sup>th</sup> November '08

## Joint VSF/Charity Bank Seminar, Kingsley Village

In November 2008 we encouraged the sector to attend a seminar on "Financing and Sustaining Growth" with the message that "Not all banks are in free fall...and one is even willing to invest in the VCO sector!" Joining forces with the Charity Bank on the basis that evaluating and financing projects and, more importantly, sustaining them over time will require effective partnership working with investors.

9<sup>th</sup> February '09

## Dame Suzi briefs sector on 'Credit Crunch'

Dame Suzi Leather, Chair of the Charity Commission, the independent regulator for charitable activity in England and Wales, visited Cornwall to discuss the impact of the Credit Crunch with local charity managers.

Anna Hoyle, East Cornwall CVS

20<sup>th</sup> March '09

## Localism Seminar

Over a 100 Charities and community groups had a chance to say how they wanted to be involved in the plans of the new Cornwall Council thanks to an all day event at the Royal Cornwall Show Ground, facilitated by the VSF.



David Chadwick, Cornwall Council



John Edey, Citizens Advice

# The future

Cornwall faces huge challenges as it manages the transition to a new unitary authority, implements the convergence programme, copes with the economic downturn and adopts strategies to address environmental sustainability.

The VSF has a crucial role to play in helping Cornwall address these issues. Here are some of the things we will be doing over the next year:

- Strengthening the core team.
- Developing the national pilot 'Charity Builders' web tool for customised Human Resource advice for the sector.
- Managing 'Take Part', two year pathfinder project.
- Acting as Local Delivery Agents for the Capacity Builders Modernisation fund, to enable local organisations to collaborate or merge.

- Championing work around various strategies, including the Voluntary and Community Sector part of the Cornwall Climate Change Plan, and Cornwall Council's Community Engagement Strategy.
- Convergence Matters, a three year project about the Voluntary and Community Sectors involvement in Convergence, the European Funding programme.
- Undertaking further work to address the impact of the credit crunch and recession on local Charities.
- Delivering training programmes for voluntary sector representatives on public sector partnerships.
- Developing the Local Area Agreement outcome about a "Thriving Third Sector":-
  - Including a review and revision of the Compact, commissioning, grants, and training.
  - Areas for improvement: including resilience of the sector, relationship between the sectors, and support for the sector.

20<sup>th</sup> March '09

## VSF reduces carbon footprint

Working closely with Cosmic, the VSF in Cornwall was provided with a video conferencing suite, helping individuals and groups across the county to get connected and reduce travelling costs.

26<sup>th</sup> June '09

## 'Real Help for Communities' event, Kingsley Village

A free workshop for voluntary and community groups was held to explore collaborative working and the impact of the economic downturn and to signpost members to useful resources and funding. The workshop was held by the VSF acting as the Local Delivery Agent for the Government's NEW Grants Programme Modernisation Fund.



Sarah Sims,  
Community  
Network  
Manager