

IN THIS ISSUE: Society Bank, Saltburn Gill, RCVDA Support Services, RCVDA Volunteer Centre, User Led Organisations (ULOs), The Big Lunch, Pro Bono support.

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THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF RCVDA

The **Big Society Bank** will be independent of government and will have freedom to decide its own investment strategy, according to a new government social investment strategy. *Growing the social investment market: a vision and strategy* has also confirmed that the bank will act only as a wholesaler, meaning it will not make direct investments in organisations, and will not give grants.

The bank will be self-sufficient, will have the power to raise more capital on its own and will cover its operating costs with the yield on its investments, the strategy said. It is likely to start with about £300m of assets, including £200m invested "on a commercial basis" by the four high street banks.

The remainder will come from dormant bank accounts, expected to total around £400m but with between £60m-£100m available during the first year.

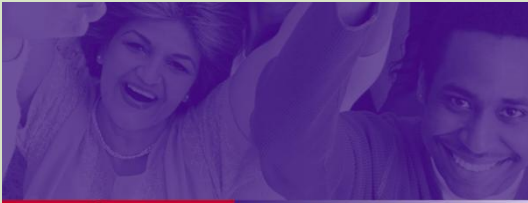
**BIG
SOCIETY
BANK**

The strategy says the bank is expected to make investments to front-line social funds, capitalise social intermediaries, and invest to develop new social finance products, such as the social impact bond and "social ISAs" for everyday savers.

The bank could potentially act as an underwriter or guarantor, reducing the risk of social investment products while potentially investing little of its own capital.

"The Big Society Bank will massively expand finance for social ventures, creating a new source of finance alongside philanthropy and public service contracts," said Francis Maude, the Minister for the Cabinet Office. "It's unthinkable for businesses to grow and thrive without capital finance, but this has too often been the reality for charities and social enterprises."

Source: Third Sector



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RCVDA

Since it was formed in 1984, RCVDA has been at the heart of community activity in the borough of Redcar & Cleveland playing a significant part in the development of the many community and voluntary groups throughout the borough.

Redcar & Cleveland Voluntary Development Agency is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, governed by a board of Trustees. We are an independent organisation supporting the development of the voluntary and community sector locally.

RCVDA provides a wide range of support and services to groups, helping those who are starting up as well as groups that are well established. We are committed to equal opportunities and to making our services relevant and accessible to smaller, community based groups.

In addition to support for groups, some of our services are directed to individuals, particularly volunteers and we help recruit and place volunteers within local organisations.

Saltburn Gill: The river legislation forgot

Saltburn Gill Action Group (SGAG) was formed in 2005 as a community action group working in partnership with a number of organisations. In 1999 Saltburn Gill turned bright orange when a new discharge from abandoned mine workings found its way into the Gill. Over a 100 tonnes of iron is washed into the North Sea every year. This pollution has reduced the quality of the Gill from grade B (good) to grade F (bad). This has meant that the quality of wildlife in the area has declined and birds such as Kingfishers and Dippers are no longer seen in the area.

In 2009/2010, again working in partnership, the group undertook a number of investigations to establish the feasibility of building a treatment plant for the minewater. Findings included:

- the mine water level was 10m higher than the discharge point. This raised concerns that there was a risk of a significant outbreak, especially as the discharge is in an area of very shallow workings through unstable drift material on the edge of the river which is prone to landslide.
- the recharge area for the mine was much larger than expected and there was a very large reservoir of minewater that would have to be lowered to stop the minewater discharging.

Laboratory and field tests have shown that up to 99% of the iron could be removed in a treatment plant. The group also looked at the economic benefits that could be achieved by treating the mine water and raising the quality of the Gill and the foreshore. The study has shown that over the next 25 years the local economy could benefit by as much as £10.5 million. A sum which exceeds the predicted lifetime cost of building and running the treatment plant.

SGAG is working with Tom Blenkinsop MP, to attempt to bring about a change in the terms of reference for the Coal Authority to enable them to tackle non coal issues. If this is successful it will enable them to utilise their own resources in dealing with this problem.

SGAG has produced a video *Saltburn Gill: the river that legislation forgot* which can be viewed on Youtube by searching Saltburn Gill. To support this campaign please write to your MP, and request that they support Tom Blenkinsop's proposal.

Jim Wingham

RCVDA

We also have an intermediary role, supporting and facilitating group working between voluntary and community groups with statutory bodies and helping ensure that the interests and concerns of the voluntary and community sector are properly represented.

We promote consultation and policy involvement by the voluntary and community sector through a wide range of local partnerships including the Local Strategic Partnership. We liaise with a range of statutory bodies such as the local authority and health agencies and influence policy development at a local and regional level.

RCVDA is a member of the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) and delivers a wide range of services and support under the following core functions:

- Services and support
- Development work
- Strategic partnerships
- Representation
- Liaison

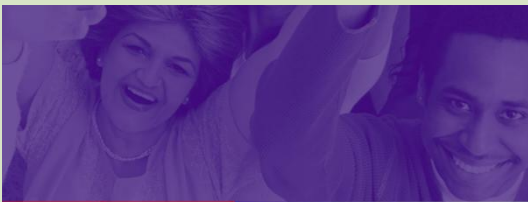


Voluntary and Community Sector Support

It has been a busy year here at RCVDA. We have supported over 170 organisations with a variety of issues from support with funding applications to setting up an organisation, changing the legal structure. We have continued to facilitate the Voluntary Sector Forum and have held a get together for Trustees to look at issues which concern them. Working in partnership with the other VDA's across the Tees Valley we have held a number of training sessions and events. Below are some of the highlights of the year and a look forward to planned activities for 2011.

Staff at RCVDA also sit on a variety of strategic boards. The role they fulfill is to ensure that the wider voluntary and community sector is not forgotten and if possible the right people from our sector are sitting at the table. Our role is often to reinforce to the partners around the table the unique and significant role that our sector can play in a variety of areas. Our sector are often already supporting the "hard to reach" individuals that are the target groups for strategic priorities. We frequently are able to signpost partners to existing initiatives in the voluntary and community sector.

Support groups with charity registration	Talking Trustees	Introduction to Quality Assurance Basic introduction to the wide range of quality systems available to the sector.	Partnerships Jobs & Skills Strategic Task Force Older Peoples Partnership Sustainable Communities
Good Governance Training A 4 week course for new and not so new trustees that take them back to basics.	Partnerships R & C Children's Trust R & C Safeguarding Children Board	Support groups with company registration	Taking the Chair Training Aimed at existing chairs or individuals who are thinking of taking on the role of chair.
Voluntary Sector Forum (VSF)	Funding advice and support to groups	Partnerships LEGI Board Local Strategic Partnership Stronger Communities	Funding Roadshows
Writing a Better Funding application Practical tips on improving the quality of your funding applications	Voices for Volunteers A forum for Volunteer Managers	Voices and Echoes Looking at how influential groups are and how open to influence statutory agencies are.	



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Ask the expert.

PENINSULA BUSINESS:WISE

Q. I am looking at dismissing a member of staff, but I have not gone through this process before and don't want to do anything incorrectly that could land me in legal trouble. Could you provide some top tips to ensure I dismiss correctly?

A. Although the statutory dispute resolution procedures have been repealed in Great Britain, there are still a number of factors that need to be considered to make a dismissal as risk free as possible.

Establish the facts of the situation

Clearly establish the facts before deciding whether formal action is necessary. The facts must be recorded, e.g. documentary evidence, business rationale, written statements, minutes of informal investigatory meetings or formal consultation meetings.

Hold a fair reason

There are specific reasons which are considered 'potentially fair' in employment law for dismissing an employee, such as conduct, capability, redundancy etc. The reason for dismissal must fall into one of these reasons if it is to be found fair.

Follow a fair procedure

The specific procedure will vary dependent on the reason for dismissal. Always take specialist advice when contemplating dismissals to ensure a fair process is followed and that this can be evidenced if necessary. Contractual procedures should also be followed, providing these are legally compliant. Promptness and consistency play a large part in fairness.

Notify the employee of the requirement to attend a formal meeting

Write to the employee, giving them reasonable notice of the requirement to attend a formal meeting, providing details of the reason for the meeting and enabling them to fully understand and prepare to respond. Enclose all supporting evidence and provide the employee with details of any process which has been/will be followed. Make clear that that a likely outcome may be their dismissal.

Advise the employee of their statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting

This right entitles the employee to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official, though, in certain circumstances, you may wish to consider a wider range of companion. Consider postponement of the hearing on grounds that the preferred companion is not available on the scheduled meeting date.

Hold the formal meeting

Ensure the purpose and reason for the meeting is re-stated and understood and allow the employee the opportunity to fully state any response. The employer may question the employee if necessary to establish further details. Allow contribution by the companion where appropriate. Do not communicate any decision regarding any decision during the meeting or make any comments which indicate the outcome has been pre-judged and take full minutes.

Adjourn the meeting before decision is communicated

After the meeting had been adjourned, consider carefully any submissions or comments made by the employee or their companion. Consider whether dismissal is within a reasonable range of responses to the circumstances.

Check any statutory or contractual obligations

Where dismissal will take place, check the contractual or statutory notice period the employee requires and whether it is a requirement/appropriate that the employee works their notice period. Calculate holiday pay due/owed and any further statutory payments e.g. statutory redundancy pay.

Confirm the decision in writing and advise of right of appeal

Advise the employee they have the right of appeal. The grounds for the appeal must be put in writing, along with the name of person they should appeal to and the timescale within which the appeal must be received.

Hear the appeal

Where an appeal is lodged, the person who hears the appeal meeting should, wherever practicable, have not been involved in the original decision to dismiss. Again, the employee should be informed in writing of the appeal hearing and of the right to be accompanied. The outcome of the appeal should also be communicated to the employee in writing.

Before dismissing any employee, irrespective of their length of service, it is advisable to ensure that the employee has no grounds to bring a claim against the company on grounds that they were dismissed for any discriminatory or automatically unfair reason, as the right to bring such claims are not restricted by the employee's length of service. Therefore specific advice in every instance is recommended.

If you need any more advice regarding dismissals please contact Russell Smith on 0797 692 2314 or via e-mail, Russell.Smith@Peninsula-uk.com



The Big Lunch is an annual one-day get together with your neighbours - wherever you live. This year's event will take place on Sunday 5th June 2011

Why do it?

- To stoke up community spirit
- To make the third of us who live alone feel happier, closer and... friendlier.
- To show how local people can change a neighbourhood for good, forever.
- To conquer our natural shyness, to open our curtains, doors and minds and look out for one another the way we used to.
- To share stories, skills and tools, so we all end up richer in every sense.
- To discover common ground across age, class, faith, race and the garden fence, and to remind ourselves that charity begins at home, or at most, a couple of doors away.

For more information and to register for a start-up pack visit the Big Lunch website at www.thebiglunch.com



Volunteer Centre



Neil addressing Volunteer Manager's

Voices for Volunteers

Neil Walker from Job Centre Plus came along to our recent meeting to talk about the latest initiatives from Job Centre Plus including work programme, work clubs and working together. You can download DWP guides to these initiatives on our website www.rcvda.org.uk

Volunteer Recruitment Fair

Following the huge success of last year's Volunteer Recruitment Fair when 35 groups had the opportunity to promote the work they do and attract new volunteers we are again joining with Middlesbrough Volunteer Centre to host this year's event. The fair will be held on Thursday 17th March from 12 noon to 4 pm at Middlesbrough Town Hall Crypt. If any organisation/group would like to come along and take part stalls are free and on a first come first served basis. Booking forms will be emailed out shortly.



Volunteer Fair 2010

February sees the start of our **Volunteer Award** event planning. Bearing in mind the current climate of uncertainty we have put some positive thinking into action and booked Gisborough Hall (provisionally) for Friday 17th June. What better time to celebrate volunteering and the voluntary sector and we are urging all organisations to support the occasion by recognising their volunteers for the wonderful work they do for our borough.



Barb Rankin receiving her Lifetime Achievement Award

CASE STUDY 1

Carol was advised to do voluntary work in 2006. After her husband died she suffered depression and lost her confidence. She came to the volunteer centre for a chat and was sent to Helping Hands for You where she began volunteering at their Friday coffee morning. Carol felt her confidence growing and asked for more work – she did some admin but found she enjoyed visiting service users and assessing their needs. "Through Helping Hands I gained my NVQ level 2 Health and Social Care and I am currently studying ECDL computer course and NVQ level 3 Health & Social Care". Carol went on to say "when the 16 hour post for assistant coordinator became available I felt confident enough to apply for it, I was successful and started work on 1st February". "Volunteering has changed my life – it's given me back my confidence – I now have a reason to get out of bed on a morning".

CASE STUDY 2

After being made redundant from Corus in April 2010 Stuart contacted the volunteer centre to enquire about doing some voluntary work. He was referred to Helping Hands where he began doing a few hours a week gardening, shopping and generally befriending elderly members of Helping Hands who often suffer isolation and loneliness. Caroline Cave Manager at Helping Hands said "as our organisation has grown, so has our bank of volunteers and to make it more manageable we were advised to appoint team leaders to supervise a team of volunteers – Stuart was an ideal candidate for the role". The organisation is now expanding their service into East Cleveland and Stuart has been appointed as the Assistant Coordinator for East Cleveland. Stuart said "Volunteering is very rewarding and I have made some great friends in the past year – I could return to the steelworks in the future but I am much happier doing this type of work".



A WORD FROM CLAIRE...

As Finance Officer at RCVDA, my primary role is to look after the Organisation's Finances. This involves the day to day bookkeeping, and keeping an eye on cash flow. To keep this as accurate as possible I have to forecast when we expect to receive funds and look at the timing of our expenditure. Over the last 12 months I have assisted a small number of groups with setting up simple tools in order to keep their finances in order. This can be as small as helping to introduce a petty cash system using Excel. In the future, I would like to have more participation with groups to try to make a difference with how they account for their finances!

Pro bono help

Pro bono services (professional work undertaken voluntarily and without payment) to voluntary and community sector organisations are not a new thing and as funding becomes more restricted, then the demand for these services will increase. Legal advice is the most traditional source of pro bono work but there are professionals who offer free services in a wide range of fields including: architecture; accountancy; property valuation; structural surveys; marketing and public relations.

There are many different ways of accessing free services. It may be that you have a trustee on your board willing to undertake some work on a professional capacity for free. Freelance consultants may also offer services for free as a way of developing their profile. There are also organisations that offer brokerage services to match companies who need advice.

Some organisations who co-ordinate or provide professional advice, help and support are:

Tees Valley PSG is a locally based organisation. PSG services cover over 25 professional disciplines of support from building surveying, architectural drawings and commercial property valuations to branding, design and legal advice. Telephone 01642 260870 www.teesvalleypsg.org.uk

Charity Property helpline – Charity Property Help is a pro bono service designed to assist the voluntary and community sector by providing free support and guidance on all property matters in the UK. It will provide registered charities and voluntary organizations a one hour consultation with a RICs member free of charge. Tel 0870 3331600 or visit www.charitypropertyhelp.com

Law Works provides free legal advice to small charities, not for profit, voluntary and community organizations and social enterprises using volunteer lawyers. www.lawworks.org.uk

iT4Communities links professionals with charities for IT related projects such as building databases and websites. www.it4communities.org.uk

The Glass-House offers design advice for community groups. www.theglasshouse.org.uk

Bar Pro Bono Unit links charities with barristers. www.barprobono.org.uk

ProHelp is a general interest pro bono network of 800 companies started by business in the Community. www.bitc.org.uk/community/employee_volunteering/prohelp

Pro Bono Economics brokers economists into the charitable sector to help on short and medium term assignments. www.probonoeconomics.com

RCVDA Website

Over the last year, visits to our website have increased hugely. Each month the website receives in excess of 20,000 hits. The most popular areas are the sections about CRB disclosures, how to become a volunteer, quality assurance and a great number of you have downloaded the two most popular Information Sheets; 'Raising Money from Local Business' and 'Taking Minutes'. Other Information sheets available include: 'Bank Accounts', 'Data Protection', 'Budgets for Community Groups' and 'Health and Safety'. New Information sheets have also been developed to provide updates on the newly implemented legislation relating to company and charity law.

There's a wealth of information available ranging from information on local volunteering opportunities to downloadable Information Sheets.

Over the coming year we are looking to 'refresh' the site and would welcome any ideas and suggestions about what you would like to see on our website. If you would like to suggest any new additions or changes please get in touch – we'd love to hear from you.

www.rcvda.org.uk

Source: NAVCA February 2011



Is your organisation a User Led Organisation (ULO) or have aspirations to be?

Are you interested in receiving support to explore what becoming a ULO entails?

A user-led organisation is one where 'the people the organisation represents, or provides services to, have a majority on the Management Committee or Board, and where there is clear accountability to members and/or service users.'

The Department of Health produced 21 design criteria to describe what a ULO looks like and the sorts of services that it provides. A ULO does not have to fulfill all of the design criteria and, in reality, most do not.

The design criteria cover three broad areas:

- the value base of a ULO: for instance, promoting the social model of disability and independent living
- how a ULO is governed and managed (for example, that 75 per cent of the members of the management committee are service users)
- the sorts of services ULOs provide (such as advocacy and peer support).

ULO's in the Tees Valley

As a result of research commissioned by North East Efficiency and Improvement Partnerships (NEIEP) a joint bid by Redcar & Cleveland Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council to develop and support ULOs in the Tees Valley was successful.

The bid embraced co-production and respecting choice and voice through an innovative process to secure funding to support emerging user led organisations (ULO's) across the four localities.

The Outcomes

The funding will support emerging ULOs in Redcar & Cleveland. The pilot would include:

- identifying barriers to ULO development
- developing meaningful support that has long term sustainable benefits to ULOs
- exploring the costs of removing the most common barrier for future development

What's Happening Now?

In the first instance this will involve the base lining of need for support and the results of this will determine the type of support needed for ULO development in Redcar & Cleveland.

The Future

The second stage will involve developing quality assurance and support with implementation for ULO's.

If you would like to find out more information or would like to talk about the criteria or how your organization could get involved, contact Mal Fitzgerald on 01642 440571

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The information in the Interaction is published in good faith but RCVDA accepts no responsibility for any inaccuracy in the items.

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