
The Senscot Story

1999-2020

SENSCOT

Late in 1998, the Big Issue in Scotland hosted a gathering of community activists from different parts of the country. The gathering identified the potential benefits of a mechanism that would enable them to keep in touch and connect with each other on a regular basis. This objective has remained a core purpose of Senscot during its initial 20 years; developing a national network to connect and support community activists and their social enterprises.

Along with informing, connecting and facilitating the development of social enterprise networks (SENs) – ever since 1999 – Senscot has also worked to put in place a support infrastructure for a strong and sustainable social enterprise community in Scotland.

In pursuing this mission, however, there has been a conscious effort not to create a large centralised ‘intermediary’ organisation. To achieve this, certain key principles have been applied. These included:

- letting the ‘network’ determine what might be required next.
- taking and developing initiatives only in areas with no existing ‘players’.
- forming coalitions and partnerships wherever possible.
- relinquishing ownership and control of new initiatives – by spinning them off into independent companies - as soon as practicably possible.
- offering unrestricted access to our materials on ‘open source’ principles.

Senscot consistently sought to resist growth beyond a maximum of ten staff; this approach, it is believed, has allowed Senscot to co-ordinate, with others, the development of new services – whilst not seeking to build an ‘empire’ of its own.

Senscot’s activities can be summarised under three broad headings – and these have remained central to its activities for the last two decades. These are:

Connecting and Informing:

At the heart of Senscot’s founding has been the intention of connecting up fellow social entrepreneurs across Scotland – to share learning, information and experiences – and to promote their work within their respective communities. Senscot chose to focus on two main vehicles – a weekly bulletin and a website with a supporting database.

The Senscot Bulletin started off in late 1999, with an initial circulation of around 200 subscribers. By 2020, the Bulletin was going out to around 4,500 ‘subscribers’ – around 10% of whom lived and worked in other parts of the UK/Ireland – with a further 5% coming from international subscribers.

As well as providing news and information on developments in and around the social enterprise community in the UK and beyond, the Bulletin sought to take a clear editorial line; supporting developments that, in its view, would be in the best interests of frontline social enterprises; whilst challenging those that were, perhaps, more in the interests of funders, investors etc. It aimed to maintain its independence from the influence of funders – and, from 2006, began to raise funds separately via subscribers and Senscot members to support this activity.

By the time of Senscot's merger with Social Firms Scotland in July 2020, over 1000 Bulletins had been produced - being circulated to members and subscribers each Friday morning.

Senscot also put a lot of store in the role of its website – as an 'open source' of news, information and contacts – all available to the wider network. In 1999/2000, there was no central source for such information for frontline social enterprises in Scotland. During this period, Senscot built up a database of social and community enterprises which remained the most comprehensive in Scotland until the first SE Census in 2015.

Developing Support Infrastructure:

Senscot was aware of the limitations to what a single organisation could do – particularly one that did not wish to become a 'large, centralised intermediary'. However, it was also conscious that for social enterprise to establish itself as a model that could make a significant contribution to the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities across Scotland, it would require a support infrastructure that could be responsive to the varying needs of a developing and maturing sector. Importantly, support services would need to be tailored to particular 'constituencies' – providing relevant and appropriate support in keeping with their development needs as they progressed from start-up to post start-up – and on to becoming more established.

In recent years, the support infrastructure (or '[eco-system](#)') in Scotland has gained an international reputation as being at the forefront of social enterprise development. Many of the key organisations that make up this 'infrastructure' today were established by Senscot in collaboration with other partners, both within Scotland as well as UK wide.

Facilitating Social Enterprise Networks (the SENs):

As the Senscot network grew electronically, it was also becoming clear that this type of 'networking' was no real substitute for face-to-face engagement – and that real or physical networks at a local level provided a far more effective means of offering peer support and to facilitating joint working.

Senscot first explored this idea via the Sensor Project – funded by the Robertson Trust – that sought to identify 'agents' across Scotland, with a view to establishing social enterprise 'hubs' around the country. As this idea evolved, thinking moved towards establishing place-based Social Enterprise Networks (SENs).

In 2004, Senscot received its first tranche of funding from Scottish Govt to develop this area of activity – helping to establish the first Social Enterprise Network (SEN) in Fife later that year. A [blueprint](#) for local SENs was quickly agreed upon, and focused on the following core criteria.

SENs would provide members with opportunities to:

- Access peer support; resource sharing; joint working and development of markets.
- Provide a focal point for issues specific to social enterprise.
- Provide a collective voice both locally and nationally.
- Raising the awareness and profile of social enterprise both locally and nationally.

In addition, a number of ‘Guiding Principles’ were agreed to underwrite Senscot’s approach to the development of place-based SENs. These included:

- Responding to local demand – helping to set up SENs only when asked to do so by local social enterprises.
- Preserving a focus on frontline social enterprises.
- Ensuring that SENs worked for the benefit of their members and that any services provided would be strictly for the benefit of their membership.
- Ensuring that the structure of any SEN should be wholly dependent on the aims and objectives of its members.

As the number of local SENs began to grow, SEN members began to express a desire to engage with others within similar fields – health, sport, culture etc – and, in 2010, Senscot secured further Scottish Govt funding to support the establishment of Thematic SENs – which was matched respectively by sportscotland and Creative Scotland.

Today, there are [19 place-based SENs](#) (covering 21 local authority areas) and [7 thematic SENs](#) – with over 1400 social enterprises engaged or members.

The Senscot Story charts in detail the journey taken over the last two decades as Senscot sought – along with others – to support and promote the work and value of social entrepreneurs and their enterprises across Scotland.

The story is broken into four sections:

- The Early Years – 1999-2004
- Gaining Traction – 2005 – 2008
- Building Momentum – 2008 – 2016
- Strategy, Action Plan and Merger (2016 – 2020)

The story shows how an idea in 1999 to connect like-minded individuals and their enterprises across Scotland – supporting one another; sharing ideas; and exploring possible collaborations – evolved into a project that has helped shape the landscape and direction of travel for social enterprise in Scotland over the last 20 years.

With the support of others, Senscot was able to build a ‘network of networks’ across Scotland - with over 1400 social enterprises by 2020; it was able to promote and raise awareness of social enterprise as a credible and legitimate arm of the wider third sector; and, with others, helped to shape a support infrastructure that lies at the heart of the sector today.

Senscot has managed to achieve many of its early objectives. Several initiatives have proved successful and are now well-established parts of the support landscape in Scotland. Others did not prove to be so successful – maybe just the wrong idea at the wrong time.

Throughout it all, Senscot has tried to provide a service or services that would be in the best interests of locally-based, frontline organisations – and in a manner that accurately reflects the values and behaviours of the social enterprise community in Scotland.

The Early Years – 1999-2004:

Senscot’s early work is supported by a small grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation and sponsorship from bodies such as Big Issue in Scotland, BT and other individual contributions. This allows Senscot to start producing its fortnightly bulletin, to host a series of meetings and events across Scotland, and to connect with other groups and organisations with a similar interest in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship.

In 2000, an application to the European Social Fund is successful, with match-funding coming from Scottish Enterprise. These funds cover the period 2001-2004 and, importantly, enable Senscot to create a small staff team and to build upon the initial connections made during 1999/2000.

Senscot begins life as an Unincorporated Association.

Founding Committee

Mel Young; Rodney Stares; Steven Whitton; Liz Thomas; and Laurence Demarco

Staff Team

Laurence Demarco; Simon Cattle; and Shri Shrikumar.

2001 With a staff team in place, Senscot actively engages with six partner organisations across the UK to establish - [UnLtd](#) (The Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs) to provide seed capital in the form of grants to emerging social entrepreneurs and their social enterprises. As a direct result of Senscot's involvement, Scotland secures a ring-fenced awards budget, its own staff and delegated decision-making processes. **Scotland UnLtd** is set-up – under the aegis of Senscot but with its own board to oversee and run the local programme.

The Senscot Bulletin moves from fortnightly to weekly, going out every Friday to a growing band of subscribers.

In addition, a website is set up, with a supporting database of individuals and organisations with an interest in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship.

Jim Bennet takes up position as Director of Scotland UnLtd – with Barry Ayre as its founding chair.

The Sensor Project gets underway, funded by the Robertson Trust. Sensor seeks to identify social enterprise ‘agents’ across Scotland with a view, in time, to setting up local SE hubs.

Committee

Mel Young; Rodney Stares; Steven Whitton; Liz Thomas; Jim Bennett; and Laurence Demarco

Staff Team

Laurence Demarco; Aidan Pia; Simon Cattle; and Shri Shrikumar.

2002 Senscot begins work on developing its own ‘hub’ in premises at Manor Place in Edinburgh. The intention is to create a space where like-minded organisations can benefit from a collaborative and supportive working environment. The Manor Place ‘hub’ is also used as a ‘social enterprise incubator’ - providing a number of rooms for rent – along with common services such as kitchen, meeting space and Wi-Fi etc. Examples of organisations to benefit from the Manor Place ‘incubator’ include: [Scotland UnLtd](#); [DTA Scotland](#); [Social Enterprise Academy](#); [Firstport](#); [Challenges Worldwide](#); [The Melting Pot](#); [Social Firms Scotland](#); [Re-Union](#); [Edinburgh Social Enterprise](#); [Scottish Community Alliance](#); [Scottish Communities Finance Ltd](#) - as well as a number of Scotland UnLtd's early awardees.

Committee

Mel Young; Rodney Stares; Steven Whitton; Liz Thomas; and Laurence Demarco

Staff Team

Laurence Demarco; Aidan Pia; Simon Cattle; and Shri Shrikumar.

2003 With support from Communities Scotland, Senscot – working in partnership with the Association of Small Towns in Scotland (ASTIS) - establishes the [Development Trust Association Scotland](#) (DTAS) in 2004. DTAS will act as the umbrella body for development trusts in Scotland, supporting local communities in taking greater control and ownership of local assets via the creation of robust local ‘anchor organisations’. Today, over 300 communities across Scotland are now either full or associate members of DTA Scotland, with many owning and managing significant community assets.

Angus Hardie becomes DTA Scotland’s first Director in May 2003 – with Tom Sneddon (ASTIS and Carluke Development Trust) taking on the role of Chair.

Committee

Liz Thomas; Rodney Stares; Steven Whitton; Liz Gardiner; and Laurence Demarco.

Staff Team

Laurence Demarco; Aidan Pia; Simon Cattle; and Emma Margrett.

2004 Following the establishment of DTAS, Senscot collaborates with Scotland UnLtd and CEiS to replicate the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) model that, at that time, was operating in Fife with support from [BRAG Enterprises](#). The initial idea - The Praxis Project - is based on ‘action learning’ – involving social entrepreneurs learning from one another. The significant difference between Praxis and the SSE model is that Praxis would not be ‘time limited’ with individuals being able to dip in and out of programmes over a period of years.

This work results in the formation of the [Social Enterprise Academy](#) (The Academy) - to provide training and professional development to boards and staff in the social enterprise and wider third sector with action learning as its central feature.

Jackie Scutt becomes the Academy's first Director – with Graham Bell of Kibble becoming Chair.

Today, The Academy has a series of learning programmes reaching over 1200 learners each year across Scotland. It operates the highly successful [Schools Programme](#) – engaging with hundreds of schools across the country – as well as establishing international 'hubs' in 10 different countries.

Although Scotland UnLtd provides seed capital, it is limited in the amount of business advice and support it can offer its awardees. To fill this gap, Senscot launches – on a pilot basis - the Senscot Exchange as an in-house business advice and support service to social enterprises on a peer-to-peer basis – more experienced practitioners supporting start-ups.

Senscot's database has now grown to over 1000 individuals and organisations in Scotland – with those listed subscribing to our weekly bulletin.

These 'early years' see Senscot begin to establish its presence on the Scottish third sector landscape. Although the terms 'social enterprise' and 'social entrepreneurship' remain unfamiliar to many, there is a growing acknowledgement amongst civil servants, in particular, that the 'social enterprise model' has considerable merit – and is worthy of ongoing Govt support.

Committee

Liz Thomas; Rodney Stares; Steven Whitton; Liz Gardiner; and Laurence Demarco.

Staff Team

Laurence Demarco; Aidan Pia; Simon Cattle; Emma Margrett.

Gaining Traction – 2005 – 2008:

In April 2004, Senscot secures a three-year funding package from Scottish Govt - replacing the funding from Scottish Enterprise and 'matching' the ESF funding for the period 2004-06. A specific element of this funding is to develop and help establish place-based Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) – with Senscot employing a co-ordinator to oversee this work.

A [blueprint](#) for Senscot's approach to this is developed and, during this period, 10 local SENs are established:

- Fife SEN
- Argyll & Bute
- Aberdeen SEN
- Edinburgh SEN
- East Lothian SEN*
- Dumfries and Galloway SEN
- SEN Dundee SEN
- Glasgow SEN
- Clacks SEN*
- Scottish Borders SEN

* denotes those that are now dormant

Each SEN chooses a structure to suit their own local circumstances; some wish to remain informal – while others become constituted. By 2008, over 350 local social enterprises are actively engaged with or are members of (those constituted) a place-based SEN.

Whilst Senscot continues to explore, with others, the development of new services and the building of its database of social enterprises, the work with place-based SENs becomes the bedrock of its activity.

2005 With the emergence of local SENs in 2004/05, Senscot decides to host a national gathering of SENs and their members. This takes place in November 2005 – with the first annual Senscot Ceilidh at New Lanark – bringing together, for the first time in Scotland, over 100 frontline social enterprises. The Ceilidh continues to run until 2019 – and becomes one of the main events in Scotland's social enterprise calendar. From 2005 until 2019, the Ceilidh is supported by the Royal Bank of Scotland through the auspices of Eric Munro, a long-term Senscot member.

Senscot acts as a founding member of the Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition (SSEC) which later evolves into [Social Enterprise Scotland](#) (SES). The intention is that SES becomes an umbrella body for the social enterprise community in Scotland.

In 2005, Senscot becomes a Company Limited by Guarantee – with Charitable Status.

Board of Trustees

Liz Thomas; Liz Gardiner; Steven Whitton; Rodney Stares; Laurence Demarco. Sophy Green was co-opted onto the Board during the year.

Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Colin Campbell; Pat Bowie; Simon Cattle; Emma Margrett; Varda Mehrotra; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2006 Senscot's AGM agrees to merge the business advisory work of the Senscot Exchange with the grant-making function of Scotland UnLtd into a new entity - [Firstport](#).

Senscot works with DTA Scotland, CRNS (now [Circular Communities Scotland](#)), the Community Woodlands Association and others to promote the Local People Leading (LPL) campaign to raise the profile of the 'community agenda' in Scotland. LPL later becomes the [Scottish Community Alliance](#).

Board of Trustees

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Staff Team

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2007 [Firstport](#) is formally established through the merging of the [Senscot Exchange](#) and Scotland UnLtd to create an integrated one-stop shop for funding and advice for start-up social entrepreneurs and their enterprises. Firstport has gone on to establish itself as Scotland's leading development agency for start-up social entrepreneurs and their enterprises - with the [Social Entrepreneurs Fund](#) (SEF) becoming its flagship programme. Subsequent programmes include: [LaunchMe](#); [Boost It](#); and [Build It](#).

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By 2008, social enterprise in Scotland has an emergent support infrastructure – nationally, through organisations such as Senscot, the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS), Firstport, the Social Enterprise Academy and Social Firms Scotland – as well as other more established bodies such as [CEIS](#) and [Community Enterprise](#) - and, locally, via the SENs.

The social enterprise model is growing in profile both locally and nationally. The number of social enterprises actively engaged or members of local SENs is now over 350.

Its position as a key part of the third sector landscape is becoming accepted – as one leg of a three-legged stool, along with the voluntary and community sectors.

In May 2007, following the elections to the Scottish Parliament and SNP, as the largest party, forming the new administration - the profile and support for social enterprise begins to progress further.

Building Momentum – 2008 – 2016

2008 sees three particular developments that help to raise the profile of and increase support for social enterprise in Scotland.

The first is the introduction of the [Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan](#) that, for the first time, allocates equitable funding for social enterprises as well as to the voluntary and community sectors. The Action Plan is to cover the period 2008 - 2011. Senscot plays a key role in consulting with the social enterprise community on what type of initiatives they would like to see supported and results in our support infrastructure securing, for the first time, a three-year funding agreement.

The second development sees the beginning of discussions around the establishment of the [Third Sector Interfaces](#) (TSIs). Initially, this is to be a coming together of the Council for Voluntary Services and the Volunteer Centres which exist in each local authority areas. However, in areas such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee, constituted SENs also become partners in the new TSIs. One of the key remits of TSIs is to provide support to social enterprises in their local area.

The third development to raise the profile of social enterprise – not just in Scotland but beyond – is the inaugural [Social Enterprise World Forum](#) (SEWF) – organised by [CEiS](#) - which sees more than 400 delegates from 29 countries congregate in Edinburgh. The SEWF continues to be held annually – and returns to Edinburgh in 2018 for its 10th anniversary.

Senscot organises a ‘Fringe Forum’, with a series of free workshops and events, to make the SE World Forum more accessible to frontline organisations.

In both 2011 and 2014, Senscot engages in discussions with Social Enterprise Scotland with a view to creating a single intermediary voice for the social enterprise community in Scotland. On both occasions, however, agreement proves elusive.

This period also sees the establishment of further local SENs and, importantly, the emergence of [Thematic SENs](#), acting on a national level.

It is becoming evident that a number of place-based SEN members – active in specific thematic areas e.g. sport; health, culture etc – are keen to make connections with colleagues in other parts of Scotland. Furthermore, they are keen to engage directly with Scottish Govt and other public agencies on national policy issues.

A particular element of thematic SENs that differs from place-based SENs is the establishment of Roundtables – bringing together thematic SEN members with Scottish Govt and other public agency representatives. Each Roundtable works towards developing its own, respective ‘position paper’ where thematic SENs can layout core objectives for their area of activity and, in doing so, seek to influence policy development, both locally and nationally.

Bespoke funding to support thematic SEN activity begins in April 2010.

The following SENs are established during this phase. Again, some become constituted while others remain more informal. Some survive – others, in time, become dormant and, in some cases, re-emerge at a later date.

These included:

- *Health SEN*
- *Moray SEN*
- *Inverclyde SEN*
- *Community Food SEN*
- *South Lanarkshire SEN**
- *Falkirk and District SEN*
- *Employability SEN*
- *Cultural SEN*
- *Sport SEN*
- *Stirlingshire SEN**
- *Aberdeenshire SEN**
- *Midlothian SEN (SEAM)*
- *Renfrewshire SEN*
- *North Ayrshire SEN*
- *Coalfields SEN**
- *Youth SEN**
- *West Lothian SEN*
- *Start-up SEN**
- *South Ayrshire SEN*
- *Perth and Kinross SEN*

* denotes those that are now dormant

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Staff Team

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2009 As part of the Enterprising Third Sector Action Plan, Senscot partners with Social Firms Scotland and CEIS to establish [Ready for Business LLP](#) - a web portal and advisory service - to deliver the Scottish Govt contract, "Developing Markets for Third Sector Providers".

The [500th Senscot Bulletin](#) is published – going out to over 2,500 people.

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2010 Sencot seeks to establish a Scottish version of the [Social Enterprise Mark](#) - however, withdraws its support for the 'Mark' towards the end of 2010 over the principle of dividends to private shareholders. Sencot, with the support of many across the sector, believes that the principle of the 100% asset-lock for the social enterprise community in Scotland is fundamental.

During 2010/11, Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) are established across Scotland's 32 local authority areas. Most see the merging of Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Volunteer Centres (VC) into single entities. Other areas – such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee – see the TSI operating as a partnership between the CVS, VC and the local SEN.

In addition to its 'hub' in Manor Place in Edinburgh, Sencot secures a new base in Bath St, Glasgow.

Board of Trustees

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Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Colin Campbell; Kim Wallace; Karina Maiden; Varda Mehrotra; Victoria Pearce; Diane Cameron; Anna Roscoe; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2011 Continuing its work to develop new services that would support a growing social enterprise community, Sencot establishes [Sencot Legal](#) - to provide accessible and affordable legal support to the social enterprise and third sector in Scotland. Sencot Legal is set up as separate entity with its own Board – chaired by Foster Evans. Alan Dunipace is appointed to lead Sencot Legal – with Karina Macleod as paralegal. Since it began trading in March 2011, Sencot Legal has provided services to over 1200 social enterprises and third sector organisations.

2011 also sees the emergence of the [SE Voluntary Code of Practice](#) Steering Group – to explore the values and behaviours by which social enterprises in Scotland can recognise each other. The Code is, in part, a response to the Social Enterprise Mark in England which allows, what many see, as the potential encroachment of 'private profit' organisations into the sector. Again, Sencot works with a range of partners representative of the wider sector in Scotland to agree on the criteria for the Code.

Discussions take place between Sencot and Social Enterprise Scotland (SES) with a view to creating a single representative body for the sector in Scotland – but fails to get the support of the SES board.

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Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Karina Maiden; Kim Wallace; Diane Cameron; Tariq Ali; Sarah Cameron; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

- 2012** The [SE Voluntary Code of Practice](#) (The Code) launches in March 2012 – and becomes the ‘benchmark by which social enterprises in Scotland recognise one another’ – with [five core criteria](#). Each year, the steering group meets to consider any amendments that can be made to these criteria. Importantly, the Code is voluntary - and is not intended to play a regulatory role.

The Code has remained the benchmark for social enterprise in Scotland over the years and been used as the core criteria for the SE Censuses 2015, 2017 and 2019.

Later in the year, Senscot begins to explore the possibility of establishing a community banking facility ‘for and by the sector’ – initially in partnership with Airdrie Savings Bank.

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- 2013** A Steering Group is set up to explore the potential for a Scottish Community Bank – working in partnership with Airdrie Savings Bank (ASB). ASB is the last remaining ‘mutual’ in Scotland. This leads to the creation of the [Scottish Community Re:Investment Trust](#) (SCRT) – with the objective of seeking to recycle third sector financial resources for re-investment within projects and communities in Scotland.

Also, in 2013, due to changes in legislation, Senscot Legal adapts its structure to become solely a paralegal service.

Board of Trustees

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Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Karina Maiden; Kim Wallace; Diane Cameron; Tariq Ali; Danielle Trudeau; Sarah Cameron; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2014 There are now 17 local SENs, with over 500 social enterprises as members.

There are also 5 Thematic SENs, with over 400 social enterprises actively engaged.

In autumn 2014, Scottish Govt announces that it is interested in exploring a bespoke strategy for social enterprise in Scotland. In response, Sencot, along with Social Firms Scotland, establishes a steering group to formulate a 'Vision for Social Enterprise in Scotland' through consultation with the sector itself.

Further discussions take place between Sencot and SES re the creation of a single representative body - but, again, proposals fail to get the support of the SES Board.

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Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Karina Maiden; Kim Wallace; Danielle Trudeau; Diane Cameron; Tariq Ali; Sarah Cameron; Sarah Duley; Rachel Smillie; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2015 Sencot continues to convene the SE Steering Group – leading to the publication of the [SE Vision 2025](#). The [SE Vision 2025](#) – developed by the sector itself – becomes the cornerstone of the [Scottish SE Strategy \(2016-26\)](#) – which is published in 2016.

After 15 years in Manor Place, Sencot moves to new premises at 21 Walker St, Edinburgh. Sencot's new base continues to act as a 'hub', but on a smaller scale – becoming the base for the Scottish Community Alliance, Scottish Communities Finance Ltd and the Community Transport Association (Scotland)

The 10th SE Conference and Ceilidh takes place at the Westerwood Hotel in Cumbernauld.

Sencot participates in the steering group around the first Census of social enterprises in Scotland ([SE Census 2015](#)). Using the [Code](#) as its benchmark for recognising social enterprises, the Census identifies 5,200 social enterprises in Scotland – and includes comprehensive statistics on the sector covering size, locations, turnover, employees etc. The Census will now take place every two years – to chart the growth and development of the sector.

Board of Trustees

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Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Karina Maiden; Kim Wallace; Mary Sinclair; Tariq Ali; Sarah Cameron; Alan Johnson; George McConnachie; Sarah Duley; Rachel Smillie; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2016 After running a two-year pilot, Sencot receives continued funding to establish a new service – [Partnership for Procurement](#) (P4P) – in partnership with [Social Firms Scotland](#), the [Scottish Community Alliance](#) and [Co-operative Development Scotland](#).

In December, a [Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland](#) (2016-2026) is launched at the [Grassmarket Community Project](#) in Edinburgh. The SE Strategy will be supported by three 3-year Action Plans – the first commencing in April 2017.

By the end of 2016, the number of social enterprises engaged or members (constituted SENs) has reached 1200.

Subscribers to the Code now number over 800.

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Staff Team

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The period between 2008 and 2016 has seen social enterprise in Scotland reach a new level of maturity. The support infrastructure organisations are becoming more established – refining services to meet the needs of a growing sector – and building a strong track record via a number of new initiatives.

Most significant of all is the decision of Scottish Govt to support the introduction of a bespoke Strategy for Social Enterprise in Scotland – re-enforcing Scotland’s claim to be one of the most supportive environments for social enterprise across the globe.

Strategy, Action Plan and Merger (2016 – 2020)

Between 2016 and 2020, a number of new SENs are established:

- 2017: Tourism SEN.
- 2018: Angus SEN; and Forth Valley SEN.
- 2019: North Lanarkshire SEN and the Rural SEN.

Since 2004, around 25 place-based SENs have set up in some form; some have survived and others have not. The pattern of some becoming constituted, while others choose to remain less formal, continues. This is in keeping with the original ‘blueprint’ – that stated that the form and activity of a SEN should be decided by the local SEN members themselves.

Similarly, a number of other thematic SENs have been established since 2010. Some, however, do not quite manage to get the traction across the sector or find it difficult to access the funding support needed to sustain them. Notably, these include the Youth SEN and the Coalfields SEN.

By 2020, there are [19 local SENs](#) and [7 thematic SENs](#) active across Scotland. Working together, they seek to represent the interests of just over 1400 frontline social enterprises.

This period also sees, perhaps, the most significant development for social enterprise in Scotland since the model was newly being promoted in the late 1990s.

The introduction of the [Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland \(2016-26\)](#) – co-produced between the sector and Scottish Govt - results in Scotland being referred to as the ‘most supportive environment for social enterprise anywhere in the world’. Within the international SE community, the term ‘the Scottish Model’ comes to stand for an approach that other countries aspire to – one that reflects a close working relationship between the sector and Govt. Senscot states at the launch that the success of the Strategy will be dependent on its ability ‘to serve the many – not the few’.

The Strategy is followed in the Spring of 2017 with the launch of a three-year Action Plan – setting out a list of 92 ‘actions’ – designed to support the growth and development of the sector in Scotland and to help build closer links with colleagues internationally.

An important offshoot of the national SE Strategy is the emergence of a series of local SE Strategies across Scotland. These include Glasgow; Edinburgh; Dundee; Angus; North Ayrshire amongst others.

It also sees the beginning of a series of national programmes being delivered to locally-based organisations by national delivery organisations.

2017 In March, the first SE Action Plan launches. Scottish Govt also sets up a Reference Group – to oversee the delivery of the Action Plan. The Reference Group is made up of national intermediaries, delivery organisations, public agencies and academia etc.

In an effort to ensure genuine engagement from frontline organisations, Senscot, along with Social Firms Scotland and Scottish Community Alliance (SCA), hosts a series of [SE Action Plan Reference Sub-Groups](#) – specifically for frontline social enterprises and membership-led organisations to discuss and reflect on the progress of the SE Action Plan – and to feed back their views to Govt.

Senscot vacates its office in Bath Street (Glasgow), moving to new premises in George Square in the city.

The SE Action Plan also includes an Intermediary Review, looking at the respective roles of Senscot, Social Firms Scotland (SFS) and Social Enterprise Scotland (SES). Senscot seeks to initiate discussions with both other organisations during 2017.

The [SE Census 2017](#) is published.

With the sudden closure of Airdrie Savings Bank, SCRT is obliged to re-appraise its business strategy and sets up [Scottish Communities Finance](#) (SCF) - to issue Community Bonds to 'citizen investors' on behalf of local projects seeking capital for economically viable social projects. The Linlithgow Development Trust becomes the first project to utilise this novel funding mechanism via SCF – through its [Linlith-Go-Solar project](#).

Board of Trustees

Liz Gardiner; Rodney Stares; Sophy Green; Laurence Demarco; Foster Evans; Les Huckfield; John Halliday; and Jane Churchill.

Staff Team

Aidan Pia; Karina Maiden; Kim Wallace; Mary Sinclair; Tariq Ali; Sarah Cameron; Alan Johnson; George McConnachie; Eddie Nisbet; Rachel Smillie; Yvonne McBride; and Laurence Demarco (p/t).

2018 Senscot proposes the Consortia Model to Scottish Govt as a means of a longer-term funding programme for place-based SENs, based on the Italian Co-operative model.

Discussions begin with SFS and SES as part of the SE Intermediary Review.

New or refreshed Local SE Strategies emerge in Glasgow; Edinburgh; Angus; North Ayrshire; and Dundee.

[Assist Social Capital](#) carries out an impact evaluation (Unlocking Potential) of three place-based SENs (Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow) and one thematic SEN (Health). The pilot seeks to provide a broader understanding of the impact being made by Social Enterprise Networks (SENs) on their members and the wider social enterprise sector as well as the benefits the SENs can bring through demonstrating this impact. See [Full Report](#) and [Summary](#).

SE Code subscriptions reach 1000.

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2019 In May, the Sencot AGM approves plans to re-structure the governance of the organisation to put the SENs at its core. As opposed to the existing Sencot structure where membership was made up of individuals, the new structure will see SENs and their members at the heart of its governance. Sencot, effectively, will become a network of networks.

Discussions with SFS and SES on the SE Intermediary Review continue with Scottish Govt joining in the process.

Again, with Social Firms Scotland and Scottish Community Alliance, Sencot coordinates a series of local gatherings involving around 500 social enterprises in helping to shape the second SE Action Plan (2021-24).

In October 2019, the [1000th Sencot Bulletin](#) is published – going out to over 4,000 subscribers.

The [SE Census 2019](#) is published.

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2020 Discussions with SFS and SES reach an impasse – with the three organisations unable to reach agreement on the core values of social enterprise as represented by the Voluntary Code of Practice for Social Enterprise in Scotland.

As a result, Senscot and SFS agree to merge. The proposal is put to respective EGMs in the Spring of 2020, with both agreeing unanimously to proceed. A target date of 1st July 2020 is agreed.

Following the outbreak of the Covid pandemic – and with restrictions being imposed – Senscot staff begin to work from home from late March 2020.

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On 1st July 2020, Senscot and SFS become a single entity – the [Social Enterprise Network Scotland](#), trading as [SENScot](#), to act as the umbrella body for SENs in Scotland - providing a national, collective voice and representing the interests of over 1400 frontline social enterprises across the country – in effect, a network of networks.

Appendix

Senscot Trustees

Mel Young	Laurence Demarco	Rodney Stares	Liz Thomas
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Neil Young	Claire McLaughlin	Jude Reid	

Senscot Legal

Senscot Legal was set up in 2010 to provide full legal services to the sector. Initially a solicitor (Alan Dunipace) and a paralegal (Karina Macleod) were appointed. With legislation not being approved by Parliament, Senscot Legal was not able to provide the full range of services as anticipated and in 2012/12, amended its services to that of a paralegal service for the sector.

Since setting up, Senscot Legal has provided valuable and affordable legal services to over 1200 third sector organisations.

The Senscot Legal Board is currently made up of: Foster Evans, Sophy Green, Kenny Millar and Lorna Ravell. The staff team is led by Karina Macleod. Over the years, a number of paralegals have supported the work of Senscot Legal, including Helen Turner, Kirsty Noble and Annie Morris.

Significant Others

As well as the Trustees and staff who contributed to the work of Senscot over a 20-year period, there have been countless other individuals who supported Senscot's work, in their own way, as members; supporters; funders; and friends.

These have included:

David Alexander	Graeme Galloway	Yvonne Lord	Peter Rae
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