

Media release

All aboard for Europe Day

As an early start to celebrating Europe Day, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) hosted an event in Cardiff Bay. Aboard Challenge Wales' newly acquired, European funded, 60ft vessel, guests and social businesses celebrated and showcased the impact European Funding is having across Wales.

The event saw the new vessel moored alongside the existing Challenge Wales boat outside the Senedd and gave guests the opportunity to look around both, above and below deck. Skipper, Andy Hall gave an overview of the charity, which provides adventure residential and day voyages to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping broaden their horizons and enabling them to reach their full potential. Challenge Wales received over £60,000 from Social Business Growth Fund (SBGF), which is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), towards the purchase and refit of their additional sea-going vessel, to strengthen the charity's current activities in West Wales. This also enables the expansion of service into North Wales and Ireland as well as other ports around the UK.

The keynote speaker of the evening was Professor Mark Drakeford, Cabinet Secretary for Finance.

He said: 'Helping social businesses develop is an important goal of the Welsh Government. This is an expanding sector providing jobs and volunteering opportunities to around 100,000 people in Wales and worth an estimated £2.4bn to the Welsh economy. It's fantastic to see how EU funds are helping support our goals, raising the aspirations and prospects of so many young people, particularly those from marginalised backgrounds for whom these experiences can be life-changing.'

The event was marked by the raising of an ERDF flag especially made for the occasion by another South Wales based social business, Red Dragon Flagmakers, hoisted by two young people to have sailed previously with Challenge Wales.

This all provided further evidence of the legacy of previous rounds of European funding. WCVA's Communities Investment Fund helped Challenge Wales buy its first vessel and has again supported them, alongside SBGF in the acquisition of the second. Red Dragon Flagmakers is another to have benefitted from such investment, helping WCVA achieve its aim of establishing an evergreen loan fund for

the sector, continuing to finance social businesses long after the original European funded project finished.

The waterside event was followed by a reception at Caffi Sïo (Chapter in the Bay), another social enterprise to benefit from SBGF with nearly £40,000 towards the cost of creating a second home for Chapter's award winning cafe bar. Andy Eagle, CEO of Chapter Arts welcomed guests and spoke of the impact of the funding in supporting Chapter's sustainable business model, which allows the ongoing delivery of its arts programme, community and education work and artist development.

Michelle Noble and Roxane Dacey, co-founders of The Food Shed CIC, another award winning social business providing meal delivery services across much of south Wales also told their story. They spoke of the difference to people's lives, particularly the elderly and isolated, that they will be able to achieve as they expand their business with £60,000 from SBGF. Yet another success story, previously backed by loan funding from Development Bank of Wales delivered through WCVA

Among the guests was a range of local social businesses all of whom took the opportunity to demonstrate what they have achieved through their own hard work and a helping hand via financial assistance from SBGF

Professor Drakeford said: 'This is another example of the positive impact EU funds are having in Wales and are crucial to the third sector. More than £55m of EU funds have been invested in projects led by the sector, making a major contribution to tackling poverty and creating a stronger and more inclusive labour market. This demonstrates the vital importance of replacement funding from the UK Government following Brexit so we can continue to target investments for the benefit of our people, businesses and communities across the nation.'



**For more information, please contact Catrin Davies or Simon Dowling
on 0800 2888 329.**

Notes to editor

- The Social Business Growth Fund (SBGF) supports social businesses in Wales financially to enable them to grow and create job opportunities. SBGF is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Welsh Government and is added to the suite of investments administered by Social Investment Cymru at Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). For more

information visit <http://www.wcva.org.uk/funding/social-investment-cymru/social-business-growth-fund>

- WCVA is the national membership organisation for the third sector in Wales. Our vision is for the third sector and volunteering to thrive and improve well-being for all. We do this by *influencing, connecting and enabling*.

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