

THE CREATION of a national Congress of all voluntary sector support organisations in Scotland is one of the key recommendations of a major report into the future of the third sector.

The Supporting Voluntary Action Think Tank report on the creating a more united infrastructure for Scotland's voluntary organisations suggests regular meetings between Councils for Voluntary Service, Volunteer Centres, national umbrella bodies, social enterprise support bodies, local networks and local social economy partnerships. The congress would provide an opportunity for local infrastructure organisations in the voluntary sector to communicate and collaborate even more effectively.

The report followed a series of Think Tank discussions amongst a range of local infrastructure groups and meetings between national umbrella bodies.

It also suggested the creation of an information technology portal, which would act as a directory resource for local and national support services, and a new quality mark brand to unite the sector.

Helena Coxshall, chief officer at Uist CVS, was involved in the local infrastructure group discussions. She said: "The most important piece of evidence and research in Scotland that no one else has managed to achieve on the infrastructure of the third sector is simply that by working through our barriers together – our judgments, fears, personal agendas – an agreement can be reached by all and a shift in change can take place with all parties buying into the process.

"The Think Tank turned out to be a pilot run for a congress as giving people the space to come together over a period of time can enable change to take place. A brand, similar to the 'Fair Trade' logo would enable people on the ground to know who we are and what we can do for them. A portal is simply a way to support us to support the people on the ground."

Supporting Voluntary Action is now calling on all voluntary sector groups to respond to report and its recommendations at www.scvo.org.uk/sva

Ian Hood, chief officer of Learning Disability Alliance Scotland, provides TFN's Analysis column this week on the Think Tank process. See p 7.

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