

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STUDIES NETWORK

Annual Report and Accounts

for the period

1 August 2004 – 31 July 2005



www.vssn.org.uk

Address for official correspondence:

VSSN Secretary, Open University Business School, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

ANNUAL REPORT

Legal and Constitutional Details

Name of organisation:	Voluntary Sector Studies Network
Legal form:	Unincorporated charitable association governed by Constitution adopted 21 May 2003
Charitable status:	Excepted charity in England & Wales (body with charitable objects but income below £1000)
Objects:	<p>The objects of VSSN are the advancement of public education concerning the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) by the promotion and diffusion of knowledge; and(2) by the publication of research; and(3) by the encouragement of contact between workers in relevant fields of enquiry; and(4) by undertaking such other activities (being charitable in law) as shall be conducive to the attainment of these objects.
Trustees:	<p>The trustees of VSSN are the Steering Group. The following persons were elected to the Steering Group at the Inaugural Meeting on 21 May 2003 and have served for the full period of this report. (Affiliations are given for information only – all Steering Group members serve as individuals.)</p>
Chair:	Prof Peter Halfpenny (University of Manchester)
Secretary:	Dr Jill Mordaunt (Open University)
Treasurer:	Dr Gareth Morgan (Sheffield Hallam University)
Membership Secretary:	Dr Helen Cameron (Oxford Brookes Univ & LSE)
Web Officer:	Dr Nick Plant (University of the West of England)
Other trustees:	<p>Dr Angela Ellis (Institute of Volunteering Research) <i>from 8 May 2005*</i>. Dr Jeremy Kendall (LSE) Dr Duncan Scott (University of Manchester) Dr Meta Zimmeck (Home Office Voluntary and Community Research Section) <i>until 27 Oct 2004 and from 18 May 2005*</i>.</p>
<p>There were no changes in the trustees between the dates covered by the Annual Report and the date on which it was signed.</p>	
Appointment of trustees:	<p>The Constitution allows for up to 10 trustees, up to 8 of whom are elected by the VSSN members at the Annual General Meeting, and two may be co-opted (marked * above). All trustees stand down at the AGM but are eligible for reappointment.</p>

Report of the Steering Group on the Activities of VSSN 1.08.04 – 31.07.05

This has been a year of consolidation for VSSN. Despite being a voluntary activity for all involved, the organisation has continued to refine its basic structures in order to ensure that it has a firm foundation on which to build future developments.

The formal membership of the group continues to grow and stood at 100 in May 2005. Additionally the email discussion list has 229 people subscribed, including a significant number from Europe and beyond who have an academic interest in the UK voluntary sector. There is positive feedback about the list that indicates that it has become a valued resource for subscribers, and that the level of traffic and most items posted meet members' requirements.

For the first time we jointly organised the highly successful annual research conference with NCVO, held at Sheffield Hallam University in September 2004. Both organisations were involved in refereeing papers, planning the conference programme and recruiting plenary speakers. It is pleasing that we have established this mutually beneficial partnership, with a shared commitment to developing the voluntary sector research community. Given that VSSN does not currently have the capacity to administer a conference, we are grateful to Stuart Etherington, Karl Wilding and the research staff of NCVO for undertaking the administration of the event, bearing the full financial risk, and bringing insights and ideas from the sector. For its part, VSSN brought academic input and assistance in accessing a wider constituency of scholars and researchers.

Thanks to excellent work by Nick Plant, we were able to register the domain name www.vssn.org.uk and launch our website. We use this for news about events, to post abstracts of papers and to provide links to members' homepages. We are pleased that our website comes top of a Google search for VSSN.

There have been two network meetings during the year, one in Milton Keynes at the Open University in October 2004 and the second in Birmingham at Aston University in May 2005. Five presentations were given at each to audiences of about 30 people. We are grateful to our hosts for gifts in kind of staff time and the use of meeting rooms.

In order to keep expenditure to a minimum and because of substantial demands on its members' time, we limit face to face Steering Group meetings to dates that coincide with network meetings. This means that there have been two meetings during the period under review. The Steering Group also meets virtually via an email discussion list and this has proved an effective means of maintaining dialogue about key issues of concern to the network.

This year the Steering Group undertook a review of the mission and strategy of the network and considered what might be the realistic aspirations for the network's pace of growth. Whilst recognising that it could be desirable to have a more developed organisation to represent research interests in the sector, the Steering Group is very conscious of the constraints within which it operates. With this in mind, the Steering Group decided not to undertake substantial development of current activities but rather to consolidate and build capacity. Plans include exploring the possibility of using some of our accrued financial resources to employ post-graduate students to provide assistance and to investigate the potential for charging a small subscription. The latter would require an amendment to the constitution.

Priorities for development are firstly to expand the website, for example by developing a news feature and a wikipedia. However we are very conscious of over-reliance on the time and skills of single individuals. There is recognition of the need to recruit new members to the Steering Group who enhance the existing skill set. Further developments might include developing a network for Ph.D. students, building on the new researchers' session at the annual conference, and developing our partnership with NCVO.

Finally, it might be noted that members of the network were disappointed that the ESRC Non-Governmental Public Action Programme was eventually constituted in such a way that made it extremely difficult to propose projects that focused on the UK voluntary sector. The potential for a programme of research on the UK voluntary sector had been under discussion for several years and therefore this outcome was very regrettable.

Charitable Status

The objects of VSSN are charitable, but historically the income has been below £1000 per annum, and the status of VSSN has thus been as an *excepted charity* – i.e. an organisation with charitable status, but excepted under s3(5)(c) of the Charities Act 1993 from the requirement to register with the Charity Commission. Nevertheless, the trustees are still required to prepare Annual Accounts complying with s42 of the Act, and have elected also to prepare this Annual Report under s45 (even though this is not mandatory for excepted charities).

During the year VSSN become recognised as a charity by the Inland Revenue and is thus able to reclaim tax on donations made under gift aid. This recognition was backdated to 21 May 2003 – the date when VSSN was formed.

Just before the end of the present year, the income went above the £1000 limit for excepted charity status and the trustees are thus required to apply for charity registration. However, the Charities Bill currently before Parliament proposes to increase this limit to £5000. The trustees therefore plan to keep this issue under review, to consult members at the AGM on 30 November 2005, and then to take a decision, depending on the passage of the new Charities Bill at the date.

Financial Review

The trustees have elected to prepare the accounts on a receipts and payments basis in accordance with s42(3) of the Charities Act 1993 and applying relevant recommendations issued by the Charity Commission in relation to the presentation of receipts and payments accounts.

The income of VSSN is not sufficient to require audit or independent examination of the accounts, but the trustees have conducted individual checks on the figures before approving the accounts.

The accounts show that VSSN has again achieved a small surplus of receipts over payments, giving a total balance in hand at year end of £524. The surplus for the year is mainly as a result of members' donations – without these, payments for the year would have exceeded receipts. Income for the year has been helped by VSSN's charitable recognition by the Inland Revenue allowing gift aid tax refunds to be claimed on most donations; however the main tax claim related to gifts in the 2004/05 had been agreed by the Revenue at year end, but not physically received, and thus appears as a debtor on the Statement of Assets and Liabilities.

The main expenditure has been on catering for meetings (the Steering Group is grateful to host universities which have generally waived any fee for room hire), the printing costs of the directory, and the costs of hosting the website.

The Steering Group is seeking to build sufficient reserves to support some significant development work in the coming year, as explained above. The Steering Group wishes to acknowledge the generosity of all those who have made donations and to some Steering Group members who have waived expenses in order to help further the work.

Approval

This Annual Report has been prepared to comply with the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2005, taking advantage of simplifications available to non-auditable charities. It was approved by the trustees (Steering Group) on 10th November 2005 and signed on their behalf by:

Jill Mordaunt (Secretary)

Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT

21 May 03 - 31 Jul 04 £		01 Aug 04 - 31 Jul 05 £
	Receipts	
193.50	Donations	322.50
740.00	Attendance Fees for Events	767.50
0.00	Gift Aid Tax Refunds	11.28
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933.50	TOTAL RECEIPTS	1101.28
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	Payments	
526.57	Expenses of VSSN Events	557.61
72.20	Canadian NVSN/COI Conf Fee	0.00
0.00	Publications Expenses	180.31
69.63	Website Expenses	51.79
5.25	Post and Telephone Expenses	9.35
38.00	Trustees Travel Expenses	0.00
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711.65	TOTAL PAYMENTS	799.06
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221.85	SURPLUS OF RECEIPTS OVER PAYMENTS	302.22
0.00	Balance brought forward 01 Aug 04	221.85
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221.85	Balance carried forward 31 Jul 05	524.07
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STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

31 Jul 04 £		31 Jul 05 £
	Monetary Assets	
221.85	Unity Trust Bank Current A/c	524.07
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221.85	TOTAL MONETARY ASSETS	524.07
=====		=====
	Represented by Funds	
221.85	General Fund (Unrestricted)	524.07
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221.85	TOTAL FUNDS	524.07
=====		=====
	Non-Monetary Assets & Liabilities	
0.00	Debtor: Tax Refund due from Inland Rev	79.68
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0.00	TOTAL NON-MONETARY ASSETS	79.68
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Jill Mordaunt (Secretary)

Gareth Morgan (Treasurer)