**The SOSE Spotlight podcast**

**Series 1, Episode 1 transcription**

**Host – Lesley Forsyth**

Hello and welcome to the SOSE Spotlight podcast.

Wherever you are in Dumfries and Galloway, the Scottish Borders are beyond. If you're a business entrepreneur, community enterprise or aspiring to be one, this is for you. We're South of Scotland Enterprise and we're all about helping people in the South of Scotland to thrive, grow and fulfil your best potential.

Today's topic is innovation and entrepreneurship. If you're an entrepreneur, innovator or just have a cracking good idea – how can SOSE help?

Call him women entrepreneurs and young entrepreneurs - What's an offer just for you?

And Hawick’s brand new business centre and the free services and training you can access.

Hello and welcome to the SOSE Spotlight Susan.

**Guest – Susan Harkins, SOSE Head of Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

Hi Lesley.

**Host**

So, Susan, you're head of innovation and entrepreneurship. I'm someone in the Borders or Dumfries and Galloway with a great idea, maybe something new for the area. An inventor and entrepreneur, a community activist. How do I make happen?

**Guest**

SO SOSE offers a lot of support and advice to anyone thinking about starting up their business right through to existing businesses. We're there to support individuals and existing business and communities through their business journey.

So SOSE can help with 1-2-1 support, whether that be coaching, we can help with starting up as well. So we can provide all the tools. We also work with existing business as well.

So we have a team of advisors and business specialists who can help you explore what your ambition is for your business, where you want to go with your business and work with you. We're also great at bringing in connections with other businesses, if that's what you want to do in terms of networking or bringing in specialist support. We also have a very good knowledge of what additional supports there, funding specialist support and we can make connections to the right places for you.

**Host**

People might already be forging ahead on the business path.

Others not yet started, thinking what can I do right on the doorstep? There's such a huge diversity of rural enterprise, different scales and specialisms.

**Guest**

Yes. And we've also got a fantastic entrepreneurial region as well. So that really helps. So bringing the two together is great.

So within so say we have lots of people who have set up their business and who have run their own businesses, who've worked in public sector business support. We have a real wide variety of people worked in community enterprises.

So they can bring that expertise to the table to help individuals and that can be it's a start up. So you know how to get my business started you know how to look at finance, how do social media, digital. So we have fantastic digital specialisms as well and business specialists who have finance backgrounds who worked In the bank, manufacturing experience, who've worked with innovative companies, and they may have worked with those companies and or for those companies in the region, they may have had their own business or they may have worked in national and global. So we have a fantastic array of individuals in SOSE who can come in and help.

**Host**

It sounds very exciting. Say though, I've never started a business or community enterprise before. Maybe I’ve just left school, or I am wondering if its for me. What would you say to those listeners?

**Guest**

Get in touch with us. Phone us, find us on social media. So that's in South of Scotland Enterprise. If you've got an idea or even if you don't have an idea what you just think, what's business about? I think I'd like to explore that further, get in touch with us. We have a fantastic coaching team. We've just pointed some new place based coaches through our pathways Pilot, which is about representing individuals who want to start up in business. So the idea would be that you would get a coach, a coach would work with you over certain amount of time dictated by you needs that would be about.

Do you want to start business? Why do you want to start a business? What's involved in it? And then from there we would then connect you in to the tools that you then need to start that business. So not everyone needs a business plan. I would like to think about that as business planning. So what do you need to do to start your business? Do you need any finance? A business can be started with very little finance.

Who's my customer base? Who's my competition? All that kind of stuff to work through. Then we would look at if you need any additional support. So do you need digital support? We run a lot of workshops and seminars and then, your connections as well, cause it's really good to get a network around you so you can get your access to networking as well.

**Host**

South of Scotland is a large region to cover. Can you tell us a bit more about the events you're running and what's on offer for people who can't or prefer not to travel? Thinking here about the Net Zero actions which we spoke about in the last podcast.

**Guest**

So SOSE has got a commitment to deliver place based support. So what we've done over the last few years as we've gone out to the communities.

So we've been across the breadth of the South of Scotland taking our enterprise pop-up sessions. So they could be a combination of networking events with a local speaker or there could be some learning which could be around how to get the social media up and running, how to sell, that kind of thing. It's a lot of practical support as well. They've been really successful. So we've been going out and about to and local communities and we're continuing to do that.

We also have virtual workshops and seminars as well if anyone wants to access them.

And we've started to run for example, online selling workshops which are much more in depth around how you selling certain platforms and all the background to that. So we're doing that.

We're also in that innovation space of really trying to get our knowledge from our digital specialist about AI and what that means for businesses and automation. So it's quite a fast moving pace.

So what we've been doing is running workshops and small events so that businesses can understand what that means to their business and if they want to adopt it, how they can adopt it in a a really practical way.

**Host**

Recently we saw the opening of the new business centre in Hawick. A partnership led by Scottish Borders Council, with funding from the Scottish Government, SOSE and UK Levelling Up Fund. SOSE is now running a number of free services from there. Can you tell us a bit more about what Hawick Business Centre offers to businesses and entrepreneurs and the local community.

**Guest**

Yeah. So Hawick business centre is a fantastic space. It's on three floors. The ground floor is for drop in’s. So businesses, communities and entrepreneurs can pop in, they can set up and take some meetings in our community space. We also have three meeting rooms that businesses and communities can use on our first floor, we have a digital lab and we have virtual reality headsets.

We have live streaming. We have a podcasting suite and we also have room for about up to 30 people to run training courses. It's really exciting because businesses can come in and start to, for example, use the virtual reality headset and get an idea of how they could use it for their business.

The top floor, we have 15 desks and more meeting space. We're running an accelerator programme which is looking at taking cohorts of businesses and really just working with them to understand where they want to take their business and how they can then drive that ambition forward.

**Host**

Finally Susan, for anyone listening who thinks they can benefit from working with your team, what is your message?

**Guest**

Message would be to get in touch by picking up the phone, using the internet, using social media and come and speak to us. We will speak to anyone that's looking to start a business. There's no wrong question. There's no wrong pathway. It's your business. It's your idea. But we're there to support you and get you connected to the right people.

**Host**

Thank you Susan for coming along today and sharing inspiring stories of what South of Scotland businesses and South of Scotland Enterprise are doing to support entrepreneurs and innovation.

And if you are looking for support with a business idea or community project, 1-2-1 coaching, practical learning, or you’re interested in networking events across the South of Scotland, then please get in touch, and come and meet us.

Our website: south of scotland enterprise dot com

Our email address:
client hub at sose dot scot

Or call us on 0300 304 8888. That’s 0300 304 8888.

We’d love your feedback, and please subscribe so you don’t miss our next episode.