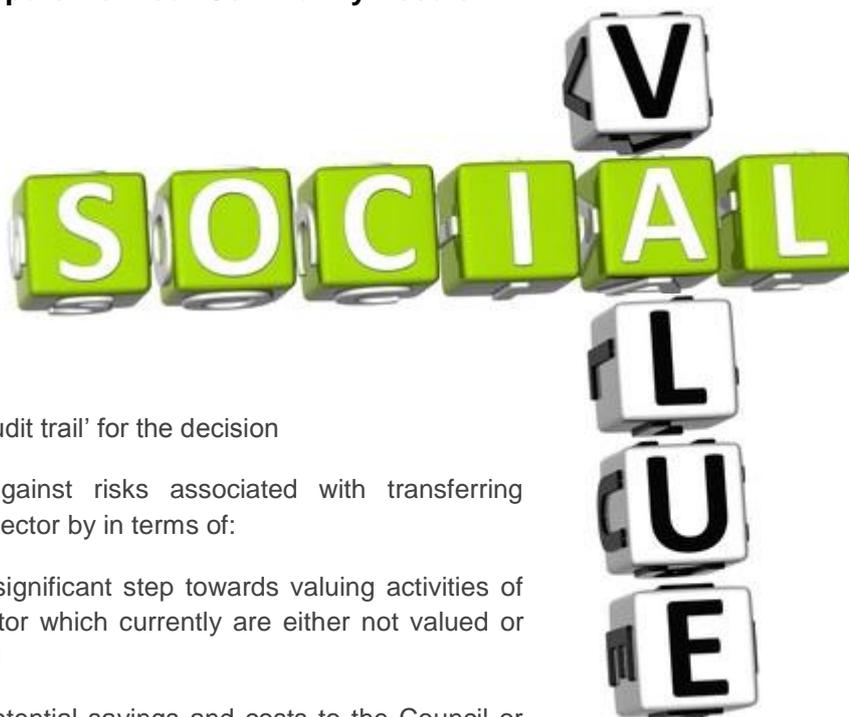


## Measuring the Social Outputs from our Community Assets

There are clear benefits to measuring the social value of community asset transfer such as:

- To help build the case to decision makers for asset transfer
- To provide a clear 'audit trail' for the decision
- To help mitigate against risks associated with transferring property to the third sector by in terms of:
  - Providing a significant step towards valuing activities of the third sector which currently are either not valued or under-valued
  - Identifying potential savings and costs to the Council or other transferring body of asset transfer
  - Allowing proposals to project future outcomes and impact rather than one year, taking a longer term view of the social returns on investment



The UK Government's preferred approach to measuring the impact of the third sector is Social Return on Investment (SROI). In 2008 the Office of the Third Sector commissioned research to develop an agreed approach to SROI and a set of shared performance indicators. To date, however there has been little attention given to measuring the social return generated through community management and ownership of land and property assets.

Research completed by Birmingham City Council's Community Asset Transfer Development Programme <sup>1</sup>[1] suggests that the process of measuring the social value of community asset transfer is highly complex;

"There remains a mismatch between the academic theory underlying some of the approaches and the practical application. The academic underpinnings of some approaches have not yet been able to cope with the somewhat messy reality of asset transfer. In addition in the case of two of the approaches (SROI and Measuring Added Value), the approaches were found to be complex and resource-intensive to apply. Put simply, if the approaches suggested are too complex and costly third sector groups will be put off from applying them".

What DTNI is spearheading in NI is a consultative approach that will ultimately be more easily applied and therefore attractive to public bodies seeking to dispose of assets. It is acknowledged that it must also be meaningful and make sense to all of the parties involved in the asset transfer. To this end DTNI has engaged in a series of facilitated conversations with key public agencies across the region around what a Social Outcomes Framework should look like in a Northern Ireland context. It is important that we understand the types of social outputs that are important to those who need to take decisions around the disposal of assets, so that they can feel comfortable that the value being created

<sup>1</sup>[1] <http://communityassettransfer.com/valuing-worth/>

at least equals the potential capital value which could be realised if the asset were sold. An understanding of what public bodies see as the key risks in asset transfer is vital and a mature discussion between all parties on how this risk can be mitigated is required. The exercise in creating a Social Outcomes Framework in N.I. is about highlighting how the needs and aspirations of communities can be fully aligned to the corporate goals of government departments and those working in partnership to help public bodies achieve their overarching strategic plans. The decision to transfer an asset to a competent community organisation in support of its continued growth and sustainability requires a competency based outcomes assessment framework.

However more long term thinking is required where public sector providers are enabled to see that their investment of an asset transferred to a community in need, will have significantly greater return in the long run than the quick sale of that asset on the open market. This requires a change in mind-sets and how people traditionally think of outputs and returns. DTNI aims to create a platform for those discussions by the development of its Social Outcomes Framework for Asset Transfer and to help those used to a more traditional way of working to feel safe in making decisions to work with key community stakeholders.