

Edinburgh Community cafe uses crowdfunding

✘ An Edinburgh based community café is one of a number of projects signed up to take part in new online approach to fundraising used by President Obama's campaign team in the United States.

Crowdfunding connects communities online by allowing projects or causes the chance to appeal directly to the public – or crowd – for funds for a specific campaign over a 60-day period.

Borders based project SoLoCo, which launches today, is the first ever dedicated crowdfunding website for the Third Sector – and its founders want it to revolutionise how communities and charities are funded in this country.

And Leith community café Punjab'n De Rasoi' has come on board to crowdfund for money to employ its long time volunteer chefs and waitresses to run the café. (3)

Trishna Singh, Acting Manager of Sikh Sanjog, which is looking to raise a total of £23,778 through its SoLoCo campaign, said:- "We thought it was perfect for us as there's no outlay involved. So it's a win win situation. Employing them would take us to the next level and help to drive our vision and become a respected, sustainable centre of excellence for the development of Black and Minority women within British culture."

To view Sikh Sanjog's SoLoCo profile and make a donation visit www.soloco.co.uk/findoutmore.html

SoLoCo Founder Kirsty Burnham said: "We believe SoLoCo can help revolutionise the future of funding in the UK. We want to make it easier to raise funds, and in time make it easier for

organisations to become less reliant on the 'traditional' funding bodies. We also want to help improve the visibility of our communities and all the amazing work happening on the ground every day. Crowdfunding has already made a huge difference to the arts, music and even, Obama's political campaign – now we want it to change communities.”

The SoLoCo launch comes as the Third Sector faces an increasingly tough financial climate, battling reduced income from statutory funding against increased demand for services in some areas. Recent figures highlighted a worst case scenario loss to the sector of £200 million over the next spending review period, if austerity measures at Westminster were mirrored in Scotland.

Five other projects across Scotland have already signed up on the SoLoCo website to crowdfund for donations, worth a total value of £124,976. These include

- The launch of a new Scottish online newspaper, the scottishtimes.com
- Scotland's first Digital FABlab based at Scotland's Centre for Design and Architecture, The Lighthouse, Glasgow
- Renovation of Glencanisp Walled Garden by The Assynt Foundation to create a local enterprise
- Crowdfunding for audio-visual equipment for the hugely successful Youth Football Scotland project
- A multimedia project at Duns Youth Centre in the Borders, to help young people develop skills in film-making & radio production

Kirsty added: “The 'virtual doors' are now open for projects across the UK to start their own crowdfunding campaign through the SoLoCo site, giving them access directly to the public, a wider network than they have already, and without having to

organise any sponsorship activities.”

The idea is that a project uploads its crowdfunding campaigns to the SoLoCo website in a few easy steps. They then have 60 days in which to fundraise, with a heavy focus on social media. Projects reaching their target keep all the money, while those who don't do keep the money raised and can use it to apply for match funding. (6)

The official launch of the project's site onto a worldwide stage takes place in Glasgow on September 19 as part of the largest social media event in the world, Social Media Week.

But the site goes live today, giving charities, voluntary sector groups, social enterprises, in fact any group that benefits the communities, and potential donors a chance to start crowdfunding ahead of the worldwide launch. Visit www.soloco.co.uk/findoutmore.html

As well as the live launch, Social Media Week will also see SoLoCo leading a special crowdfunding workshop on September 20. The day will see collaboration between many of the UK's pioneering crowdfunding platforms, including Unbound, where the focus will be on producing one or more viral adverts to help promote the notion of crowdfunding.

Successful crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter in America have seen hundreds of thousands raised for arts projects. Obama used crowdfunding to contribute to his election campaign. And a most recently in the UK, Brewdog, successfully

launched its second Equity for Punks crowdfunding campaign, after the first one proved such a success.