‘A massive contribution!’

New economic report shows massive contributions from faith groups to civil society

As David Cameron places so much trust in the ‘Big Society’, a new independent report shows that at least 200,000 people of faith already work voluntarily to very significant effect both socially and financially for Civil Society in South East England.

This report by SEEFF (South East England Faiths Forum) focuses on the economic impact of faith groups of all kinds in the South East of England showing that the conservative estimate of time given by volunteers equates to an astonishing £95million each year.

There are an estimated 3,800 faith groups across the South East of England, helping to target many issues in local areas. These volunteers are unknowingly saving the economy large amounts of money, time and resources.

The SEEFF report by consultants, West Midlands Enterprise puts a faith perspective to the idea of ‘Big Society’. Through this report, SEEFF delves into the idea that as more organisations and faith groups come together, a huge impact can be made upon local communities, helping to build confidence and provide relatively low cost care to many.

SEEFF stresses that if people work *“face to face and side by side*” so much can be achieved.

Canon Chris Rich, Director from the Anglican Diocese of Guildford’s Department of Social Responsibility and Chair of SEEFF said *“churches are well placed…the way we work is one that will save money and deliver better. Lots of commitment makes communities different and problems can be overcome in new partnerships.”*

It is extremely difficult to measure the impact of faith groups in communities. Some of the activities undertaken by faith groups include working with individuals who require shelter, employment, care for the disadvantaged and disabled, setting up of community groups and providing a tourism outlet for the local economy.

The volunteers in the report, whether they come from a church, or are faith driven, or from a related organisation, do not work for evangelistic or promotional purposes. By uniting people of faith and communities, SEEFF highlights that the public respond well to non-governmental, non-evangelistic, high-quality, voluntary work given by people who clearly care.

Faith groups are already part of every local community and with the right resources could be the key that government needs. The summary of the report can be downloaded at www.se-faithforum.net

Ends ~ 380 words.

Notes to the Editor: