

## **Rural Enterprise Development East Devon**

**July 2007- March 2009**

### **Introduction**

#### **Business Support and Training Organisations in East Devon**

##### **Business Link (B/L)- Solutions for Business**

1. BL offer an Information, Diagnostic and Brokerage service for businesses, this comprises a one to one meeting or telephone conversation to analyse the businesses enquiry, from this an action plan is drawn up with possible referrals' to potential deliverers. This service has recently commenced in East Devon with clinics being offered at Honiton every two months. Each clinic assists 4/6 businesses.

2. For people thinking about starting or with businesses under 12 months of age B/L offer a series of ½ and 1 day workshops. These are held every couple of months in Exeter centres.

3. On going mentoring and support will become available for "High Growth" businesses, through the ERDF funded High Growth Coaching Service currently being tendered by the SWRDA, eligibility for this is the potential to grow to £250,000 -£500,000 turnover in 12 months.

##### **Train to Gain**

Funding for training for NVQ and management training is available through the Learning and Skills Council. The service is accessed through brokers employed by Business Link. The management training is limited to businesses that employ over 5 employees. Delivery of training will be through organisations like East Devon College and Bicton, these tend to focus on vocational qualifications for the care sector and service sectors as well as the 19-25 age bracket.

##### **Business Information Point (BIP)**

BIP has been operating as an Enterprise Agency in Devon for 16 years, offering business support, training and consultancy to rural businesses throughout the South West under various programmes.

To ensure that BIP continually improves it's delivery the company is accredited under a number of quality standards. Investor in People status has been held for 8 years with 3 successful assessments by Quality South West. Processes and audit systems are authenticated through a ISO 9001/2000 system which is subject to six monthly audits. Recently BIP passed a two day assessment for "matrix" the national standard for information, advice and guidance, being one of only two enterprise agencies operating in the South West to gain this recognition.

All the trainers are SFEDI assessed and are qualified NVQ assessors.

##### **Support for Micro Businesses (under 5 employees)**

There is limited support for this size of business which comprises the majority of the business stock in East Devon. Apart from the B/L offer which comprises the diagnostic and brokerage model there is no funded on going mentoring and business management

training available to small businesses. Private consultants operate in the district, however these tend to operate in a different model to BIP. BIP's ethos is to empower business owners by teaching them the skills that reduce their need for support in the future. The numbers of businesses in the area are such that with limited resources it is only possible to support a small % of the businesses at any one time, being able to move on rather than becoming a "prop" is very important.

### **Rural Enterprise Development**

The concept for the project was developed following the successful delivery of a similar project in West Devon, Torridge and North Devon. The original plan was that existing business support organisations would deliver the activity, HODEA and South Devon Enterprise Agencies with BIP acting as the managing contract holder. However during the application phase HODEA ceased trading and following discussions with EDDC EDO Nigel Harrison it was agreed BIP would deliver in the district. During the life of the project Enterprise South Devon also ceased trading and BIP were forced to pick up the delivery in the Teignbridge District at short notice.

### **Project Delivery**

The project offered businesses two elements of support in Mid Devon, East Devon and Teignbridge. The following targets were set;

1. Workshops that delivered generalised business support to a minimum 315 businesses and represent initial engagement, as well as the facility for detailed business needs diagnosis and training/support brokerage;
2. Intensive business support for 63 businesses with potential for productivity improvements determined through the detailed business diagnosis undertaken within the first element of the project.

The workshops offered business advice and training incorporating the following subject areas:

1. Sales and Marketing;
2. ICT in Business;
3. Business Planning;
4. Business Finance;
5. Business Management;
6. Environmental Management;

The outcomes from the project were increased skills within the participating businesses, which will lead to job creation opportunities.

**Examples of workshops delivered in East Devon**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Workshop title</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Speakers &amp; Deliverers</b>	<b>Marketing</b>
19.02.2009	Getting your website in the top ten of Google	East Devon Business Centre	Deborah Turner- BIP	Distribution of newsletters via WOM and Blackdown Hills Association
24.02.2009	Working together event for food producers & accommodation providers  The objective of this event was to allow tourism businesses to source local produce for their businesses, and small local food producers to find new outlets for their products.	Wallace's Farm Shop	Graeme Wallace – Wallace's Farm Shop Adrian Innocent – Helpful Holiday Catherine Broomfield – Blacklake Farm Val Grainger – The Woolly Shepherd	Distribution of newsletters & flyers via Blackdown Hills Association, East Devon Business Forum, East Devon Business League, Business Link Claire Edgecombe for inclusion on their website and e-alert, Penny Bond Business Link, Julia Reed Devon Farms Group, DCC Food database provided by Kathryn Edwards, as well as extensive follow up telemarketing campaign
26.02.2009	On-line selling for accommodation providers  This event allowed small independent accommodation providers to share in the on-line marketing tactics employed by large and successful businesses in the South West.	East Devon Business Centre	Simon Tregoning – Classic Cottages Jacqui Gulliford – Classis Cottages Matt Bowkett – ex SW Tourism now Eviivo	Distribution of newsletters via Blackdown Hills Association, East Devon Business Forum, East Devon Business League, Claire Edgecombe Business Link for inclusion on their website and e-alert, Penny Bond Business Link, Julie Reed Devon Farm Groups, TIC's in east & Mid Devon, Sidmouth Hospitality Association, Visit Devon membership via Nicola Poultney, mail shot to Marketsafe database of B&B businesses as well as extensive follow up telemarketing campaign

<b>date</b>	<b>Workshop title</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Speakers &amp; Deliverers</b>	<b>Marketing</b>
11.03.2009	Smarketing (smart marketing for small businesses)  Run in collaboration with Blackdown Hills Association		Catherine Broomfield – Broomfield Solutions	BIP was involved to register attendees as new RED clients
18.03.2009	Smarketing part 2 ( as above)		Catherine Broomfield – Broomfield Solutions	Via Blackdown Hills Association and Business Link
	Event to identify new small local businesses for two hour surgery sessions		Geoff Birch Joe Glanfield Jeremy Filmer-Bennett EDDC – Re: business rates Hugh Croad – Moda Design & Marketing	Orgained in partnership with Exmouth Town Manager, Tony Collins at Devon Cliffs Exmouth
	Working Together  presentation on how small businesses can provide products and services to Devon Cliffs, the largest local business / employer			FSB, EDDC, Business Link, Exmouth Chamber of Commerce, Exmouth Business League, Exmouth Town Council local mail shot
24.03.2009	Working together event for food producers and accommodation providers	Lakeview Manor	David Kittow Adrian Innocent Donna Lucking Val Grainger – The Woolly Shepherd	via distribution of newsletters and flyers/ Blackdown Hills Business Association/ East Devon Business Forum/ East Devon Business League/ Claire Edgecombe Business Link/ Penny Bond Business Link/ Julie Reed, Devon Farms Group/ DCC Food database provided by Kathryn Edwards/ on-line directories/ extensive follow up telemarketing campaign.

## **Results**

### **Complete Project (East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Districts)**

#### **Workshops- 83 workshops have been held with 561 attendees**

At project completion we supported 304 businesses with a total of 417 individuals.

302 businesses have been assisted to improve their performance against a project target of 315.

69 businesses have been supported in marketing, product development and business development plans against a target of 63.

61 businesses have achieved SME Assisted status (3 days of intensive assistance) against a target of 63.

## **Evaluation**

Participants that receive support whether through intensive support or workshop attendance are asked for their feedback through an anonymous evaluation form.

### **Intensive Support Results**

80% said they had increased skills, 20% reduced costs, 62% increased sales, 70%, improved systems, and 26% improved cash flow, 94% of those surveyed said they would use BIP again.

### **Workshop Results**

94.5% of workshop attendees rated the workshops as Excellent or Good, 94.5% rated the presentations and training as excellent or good. 80% said they would recommend BIP to others.

Here are just some of the responses from participants

- "I will be re-thinking huge areas of my business now" – Marketing and Labelling with Catherine Broomfield, Hoop Associates
- "Have taken some ideas away to implicate in my own business" – Marketing Trends in Rural Tourism with Annette Cole, South West Tourism
- "Greater understanding of what is possible to do re websites and the confidence to do it" – Optimising Your Website with Deborah Turner, BIP
- "Has made me focus on what I need to do to improve my business" – Breakeven to Profitability with Graham Sindle, Thomas Westcott
- "Very useful and informative – hope my computer will now have more years of life" – Maintain the Performance of Your Computer with Deborah Turner, BIP
- "Will be more confident in selling to retailers and will have a defined pricing structure in place and a concise sales pitch" – Selling At the Coal Face of Your Business with Catherine Broomfield, Hoop Associates
- "Use telephone marketing to find out who to send information to and also as a follow up to mailings" – The Art of Telephone Marketing with Deborah Turner, BIP
- "Looking into ways of keeping my business going successfully forward in this current climate" – Cracking the Credit Crunch with Catherine Broomfield, Hoop Associates
- "Save a lot of money by doing my marketing materials myself" – Creating Marketing Materials with Deborah Turner, BIP

## **East Devon Results**

167 businesses have engaged with the support from RED, 38 businesses have been supported in marketing, product development and business development plans, 35 businesses have received 3 days of intensive support. 293 training sessions have taken place in East Devon.

We are aware of 6 new full time equivalent job creations in East Devon.

## **Funding**

The final funding package for the project covering three local authority districts, Mid Devon, Teignbridge and East Devon totalled £211,000 to cover a two year period, following delays in receiving approval from Devon Renaissance the project delivery period was shortened to 21 months.

Devon Renaissance provided the bulk of the funding, £100,000, Teignbridge DC, £24,000, East Devon DC, £84,000, and £5000 from local businesses that used the services of the project.

District	East Devon	Teignbridge	Mid Devon	Unit Value	Total
Businesses Supported	167	73	64		<b>304</b>
Business receiving 3+ days support	35	10	16		<b>61</b>
Hours 1:1 Support	1366	285	539	£66	<b>2190</b>
People Recruited	232	97	88		<b>417</b>
Training places	330	97	134	£100	<b>561</b>
Jobs Created	6	0	0	£15000	
Public Funding	£113,000	£48,000	£45,000		<b>206,000</b>
<b>Value ££ by District</b>	<b>£213,156</b>	<b>£28,510</b>	<b>£48,974</b>		<b>290,640</b>

### Value for Money

East Devon have provided £82,000 as matched funding for the project, this has drawn a further £31,000 in Devon Renaissance funds to support the East Devon Businesses. Of these funds £2823 were spent with East Devon District Council for hire of rooms at the East Devon Business Centre.

Using Unit values that are comparable to payment rates for Business Link consultants and training costs acceptable to other publicly funded training events (Natural England, SWREG, Duchy College VTS) the project has provided a cost effective delivery mechanism. The six jobs created from project activity in themselves, using SWRDA figures of £15,000 per job created (a total of £90,000), demonstrates that the project has delivered good value for money.

### Additional Support Activity for East Devon Businesses from BIP

Further to the support described previously BIP have been supporting the agricultural sector through a project part funded by Devon Renaissance, Natural England and BIP's own resources. 68 businesses have been supported with business planning support, environmental support, and computer and marketing training. The environmental support will generate an additional £50,000 of income annually for the next five years.

### Future Activity

The success of the RED project and ongoing demand from businesses in the light of difficult trading conditions means that BIP are seeking to develop a future project. The availability of funding through the Making It Local (Local Action Group) and the Economic Challenge Fund, to add to local authority and businesses own contribution has seen BIP Manager Stewart Horne working on two bids for funding. The Economic Challenge Fund has verbally offered funding for a combined project covering two LAG areas, this would be worth £14,000 in the Making it Local area. The initial project proposal submitted to the Making it Local has been approved and a full application will be submitted in the last week of May. The project is intended to continue the successful model developed under RED with the addition of an element of certificated training and assessment, all business sectors employing 5 and under will be eligible for support. Business owners will be asked to continue to contribute to the costs of the project but a contribution from EDDC would complete the funding package.

In the interim period, April to July 2009 the BIP advisor in East Devon is continuing to support businesses as they require and is undertaking a consultation exercise with EDDC tenants to gauge the effects of the economic downturn on their future prospects.