

Issue 31

Hartlepoolenterprise

Dedicated to supporting business in the Hartlepool community

geegee couture

New equestrian store opens for business

chance to change

Making the move from employee to self-employed

health & safety heroics

Hartlepool firm secures top international contract

welcome

Welcome to the 31st issue of Hartlepool Enterprise, the town's monthly business newsletter.

The publication aims to bring you up-to-date with news from the business community, along with success stories, company profiles, top tips and development opportunities. Read by over 1400 enterprises in the town, it's the number one way to keep on top of all the latest business going-on.

In this month's edition, we announce the launch of Chance to Change, a free regional event to support people considering a career move into self-employment. To be held on 22nd February in Newcastle, it comprises a number of sessions to help attendees take control of their future, hear others' stories and benefit from expert guidance in order to set up their own enterprise.

Also, learn about the small Hartlepool business that has

made it big on international soil thanks to its North East Chamber of Commerce membership. A local networking event led local firm DP Consultancy to win a significant Health & Safety contract in Libya, opening doors to further new opportunities and considerable business growth.

We also extend one final reminder to get your entries in for the Hartlepool Business Awards 2010 – the deadline is 8th March. Need help with

your application? Then see our special feature on page 6 of the magazine.

For all enquiries relating to the newsletter, including contributions, how to advertise and mailing list additions, please contact Hartlepool Enterprise Centre on **01429 867677**.

Alternatively you can email our brand new email address **enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**.

forumforecast

With the panel representing a diverse range of industry sectors, attendees will be able to directly relate the accounts told with their own business situations

Hartlepool Business Forum's 2009-2010 programme continues this month with its next seminar, and as always, Hartlepool Enterprise can provide a sneak preview into what attendees can expect.

To be held on Thursday 25th February, this month's event is named "Question Time" and features a panel of "Hartlepool's Dragons" to face the audience. Listen to how they have led their business through the recession, achieving success and long-term sustainability, and discover what help is available to pursue your individual business needs.

With the panel representing a diverse range of industry sectors, attendees will be able to directly relate the accounts told with their own business situations.

The Hartlepool Dragons will comprise:

- Trevor Howe, Store Manager of Tesco Hartlepool (retail sector)
- Janice Auton, Proprietor of Poppies Group (service sector)

- James Robson, Managing Director of Exwold Technologies (export sector)
- Derek Muirhead, Managing Director of Deepdale Solutions (manufacturing sector)

Following a short presentation by each of the panellists, attendees will have an opportunity to put the Dragons on the spot with their own questions about business success and survival. Find out the **what, why, when** and **how** to help build a future strategy for business success. This is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to ask relevant questions to people who have been in exactly the same situation as attending enterprises, and are living proof of how adverse business conditions can be overcome.

Sponsored by local company Altered Images, the seminar will be held in the regular venue of Hartlepool Maritime Experience's Sir William Gray Suite, commencing at 5.15pm with a buffet tea. The event itself gets underway at 6pm, running until approximately

7.30pm, when attendees have the chance to network with other local businesses, build contacts and share ideas.

January's Forum event, the popular "Business Networking Safari" was once again a great success, with many new leads generated for attending enterprises, and appointments made to potentially acquire new clients or suppliers. The 2010 Forum agenda has two seminars remaining after February's Question Time, to be held in March and April, followed of course by the prestigious Hartlepool Business Awards held on 20th May at the Town's Borough Hall.

If you wish to attend February's event please contact Hartlepool Enterprise Centre on **tel: 01429 867677**, fax: 01429 264304 or e-mail: **enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**. This will confirm your attendance and help finalise catering numbers. Please feel free to bring along a colleague.

a fresh start

The Tones family has operated a series of successful car showrooms across Hartlepool for a number of years, but grandson Mark has chosen to return to where the family originally made its name, in the horse industry.

Gee Gee Couture stocks everything for riders and their horses including feeds and supplements; boots and riding wear; show equipment and accessories. The shop is situated on the Stockton Road entrance of the Tones Garage.

Business owner Mark Tones, 26, says: "My granddad Harry first started off by selling fruit from the back of a horse and cart in Wingate and in Hartlepool. He then began breeding horses and dealing in them at the fairs and shows.

"He once sold the most expensive ever horse at Appleby Fair – he'd imported it and I think it went for about £2700, which in the '70s was a massive amount."

Granddad Harry swapped horse dealing for horse power when he opened H. Tones

and Sons garage on Oxford Road in Hartlepool, where son Harry jnr, Mark's father, now runs the used car operation. And dad was quick to help with premises for Gee Gee Couture when he handed over a section of the Oxford Road showroom for the new shop.

Mark explains: "My dad helped me a lot by letting me turn part of the showroom into an outlet. Things are going pretty well and we are starting to build a good local customer base – I just hope it continues to grow and people start to learn where we are."

The former High Tunstall pupil worked in a clothes shop in the town before joining the family car sales business.

He says: "I have always loved customer-facing jobs and I enjoy having a good chat with the people who come into the

shop. I rode horses a lot when I was younger and both my partner Annalee and my daughter Summer are keen riders, so it's something I enjoy talking about to the customers."

"We have a quite a large range of stock and it is growing all the time, but if we haven't got it in we will certainly try our best to order it. We have also just set up our own website and one day we hope to launch our own range of riding wear."

Gee Gee Couture is located on Stockton Road (opposite St. Aidan's Church) and can be contacted on **01429 866 766** or at **www.geegeecouture.com**.



Things are going pretty well and we are starting to build a good local customer base – I just hope it continues to grow and people start to learn where we are



one-2-one successes

Got something to shout about? Tried getting your stories in the newspaper to no avail? Then get in touch with us and let us promote your news.

DP Consultancy Ltd did just that via their contact at the North East Chamber of Commerce – you can see the resulting story on page 12. Congratulations go to Mick Stephenson on this fantastic achievement.

Simply give us a call or send an email and let us know what's happening in your business. This could include:

- A recent success, new contract or award you have achieved
- A new recruit or promotion within your team
- How your business has fought against the recession and come out on top
- A new product launch or campaign you are looking to promote

By getting in touch, you will receive **FREE** coverage of your story, along with brief details on who you are, what you do and your contact details.

Not a writer? Don't worry, Hartlepool Enterprise can put the article together for you – just let us have the basic details and we will do the rest!

Call now on **01429 867677** or email **enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**.

one-2-one

Involving your business and your ideas for your newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of One-2-One, the magazine's dedicated page of interaction between us at Hartlepool Enterprise and you the reader. The idea is to encourage your thoughts on the monthly publication, your news and stories, and to ensure that your business is personally benefiting from the opportunities the newsletter presents.

One-2-One features competitions, offers and a chance to interact with Hartlepool Enterprise – in return you could win business prizes and opportunities to raise the profile of your company. See below for this month's fabulous offer.

Contact us now on **01429 867877**
or email **enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**

buy one advert & get one free!

Hartlepool Enterprise is the ideal platform in which to advertise your business, with a circulation of over 1400 businesses in the town, and a high readership rate amongst recipients. Not a business-to-business provider? All of our business readers have their own homes and lifestyles too, so advertising your retail business in the newsletter can also have a great impact!

Simply call the Enterprise Team to book a quarter, half or full page advert and receive an advert of the same size in a following issue of your choice. A free design service is included if required. Full advertising rates are available on request – they may be cheaper than you think!

All adverts are subject to available space at the time of booking. Offer valid for bookings placed up to Friday 5th March 2010. To take place of this fabulous offer, call **01429 867677** or email **enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**.



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hartlepool**2010** businessawards

Hartlepool Business Awards 2010

Not got your entry in yet? Then help is at hand!

With the **deadline for entries on March 8th**, there is still time to get your application in for the Hartlepool Business Awards 2010.

If you're not sure what it's all about, think you don't stand a chance of being shortlisted, or you don't know where to start with your application - then speak to Hartlepool Enterprise Team today!

How we can help

- Informal one-to-one meeting to explain the Awards and the different categories
- We will provide all the forms you need to enter
- Tailored guidance on what to include in your entry
- All the support you need to make the most of this opportunity!

Feedback from previous winners

- "We never for one moment actually expected to win it"
- "The award has led to a real boost in staff morale"
- "It has raised our company profile and increased enquiries"
- "It proves to our customers that we're a credible company"

You have to be in it to win it!

**Call Hartlepool Enterprise Team on 01429 867677
or email enterprisecentre@hartlepool.gov.uk**

Further information on the Hartlepool Business Awards 2010 can also be found at: www.hartlepoolbusinessforum.co.uk/awards.htm

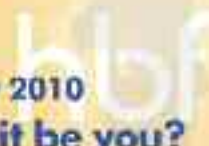


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total prize fund **£11,000 - could it be you?**





hartlepool indoor market

bags of bargains

Our special focus on Hartlepool's Indoor Market initiative continues this month with another dedicated four-page supplement.

Read on to find the latest news on the programme and more views from the tenants themselves on what the project means to them.



market initiative just the beginning

Since summertime last year, Hartlepool Enterprise has followed the progress of the town's pioneering initiative to breathe new life into its Indoor Market. As the initial six-month campaign comes to an end, we look back at the achievements made and how this simply marks the beginning of a long-term commitment to the future of the market.

Footfall at the Indoor Market has increased by 10% and traders enjoyed one of the busiest Christmas periods in years

In August 2009, Hartlepool Council announced plans to revitalise the town's Indoor Market, which had become tired and under-used. The two key aspects of the project were to firstly physically refurbish the market hall and secondly to give fledgling or expanding businesses a chance to try out their ideas on one of the 20+ vacant plots.

The market hall, based in the upper reaches of Hartlepool's Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, underwent a full redecoration programme courtesy of Hartlepool College of Further Education's students, while new signage and repair work took place on all of the stalls.

A range of new businesses populated the empty stalls as part of the initiative, providing a more diverse choice of goods for existing shoppers and attracting many new visitors too. As a result, shoppers can now purchase hand-made

jewellery, gifts, clothes, flowers, fine art and homeware, along with all the existing stalls that sell fresh food, newspapers, toys, greetings cards, make-up and confectionery.

With the backing of Mayor Stuart Drummond along with other partner agencies, the new-look market hall was launched at a special event held on Saturday 5th September 2009, when shoppers turned out in their droves to take a look around.

Since then, footfall at the Indoor Market has increased by 10% and traders enjoyed one of the busiest Christmas periods in years. Furthermore, many of the new market tenants have agreed to stay beyond the initial six-month trial period, having experienced good results from their presence in the hall and establishing a strong customer base.

There are new stallholders trying out their business ideas in the market all of the time and Hartlepool Enterprise

Centre has been fielding enquiries from new and existing businesses on how they can get involved.

The initiative has also attracted interest from other local authorities across the country who too have suffered a decline in their indoor markets and are looking to implement a similar rejuvenation programme.

Under the banner of its Buy Local campaign, Hartlepool Council is working hard to continue the early achievements of the Indoor Market initiative, looking at how to sustain the improvements and entice more shoppers through the doors. The ultimate aim is to extend the success of the campaign to the outdoor market, the entire shopping centre and the town's economy as a whole.

To view the transformation of the Market Hall, watch our video on You Tube. Simply go to www.youtube.com and search for 'Hartlepool Buy Local'.



market stall is way ahead for bedfellows

Two good friends are the latest entrepreneurs to set up stall at Hartlepool's thriving Indoor Market Hall.

Best buddies Debra Proudlock and Jo Dyer have launched Bed, Bath and Beauty, which specialises in bedding, towels, bath mats and accessories. The pair met in the 1980s whilst working at Blonde's Wine Bar in the town's Church Square and never dreamed that one day they would run their own business.

Debra, who lives in the West Park area of Hartlepool, said: "We've been best friends for years but lost touch when we both moved away from the town. We got back in touch through Facebook and had a lot to catch up on.

"It's great running a business with Jo, we know each other so well and bounce ideas off each other. From the very start we have had our heads together working well and discussing different ideas."

The pair have ideal backgrounds for setting up in business, with Debra having years of experience in retail and quality control, while Jo worked as an office manager for a property company. They both shared a desire to work for themselves and sought help from Hartlepool Enterprise Centre where staff were able to tell Debra and Jo about the Buy Local campaign and the incentives for new traders at the Indoor Market.

Setting up a stall is the ideal testing ground for Bed, Bath and Beauty, and the owners are confident their range of quality products represents great value for money.

Mum-of-two Debra added: "My last job was in a similar store so I know the products well and we have been able to work with three very good companies to provide an excellent range. Our

memory pillows are selling really well. The market is a great location for us. People come here looking for a bargain and hopefully that's what we can provide. I love working with the public, you get so much job satisfaction from meeting all of these different people."

Jo, who has three teenage sons and lives at Hartlepool Marina, added: "We had a lot of support from the Enterprise Centre and are pleased to be part of the Buy Local campaign. We've had lots of advice and information about grants and funding and we're really excited about working for ourselves.

"As for the future, we're happy to see how things go on the stall and hopefully we can eventually expand with an additional stall for our children's bedding range and employ some local people".



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The market is a great location for us. People come here looking for a bargain and hopefully that's what we can provide
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chancetochange

Last month saw the launch of Chance to Change, a free event to support those across the region who are rethinking their career options, whether they've been impacted by or are under threat of redundancy or are making a proactive choice – and want to take control of their own future.

Chance to Change will provide the perfect opportunity to start conversations that could be the key to unlocking the future for many of the delegates – a chance to take stock, reflect and understand how best to move forward and who they can turn to for guidance and inspiration

As recent figures show, more and more people are starting business in the North East and the region is making progress at a time when others are standing still.

Building on this, Chance to Change will be held on February 22nd at Newcastle Civic Centre and is being organised by the Entrepreneurs' Forum in partnership with One North East and the backing of key organisations from all parts of the region.

Hosted by author and columnist, Guy Browning, the conference will be exactly the starting point many need, offering the opportunity to hear from those who have already been through the experiences, be guided by experts through the barriers and challenges, meet like-minded people to stimulate thinking or develop collaborations with and be signposted to the region's extensive support network.

Guy is a familiar face in the region and has been inspired by previous engagements with the Entrepreneurs' Forum to set up his own film production company.

Amongst those sharing their own experience of making the change from paid employment to setting up their own business will be entrepreneurs from across the region who have signed up to

www.ifwecanyoucan.co.uk – a campaign to inspire others to follow in their footsteps and benefit from the knowledge they have acquired along the way.

During three lively one-hour sessions delegates will learn more about themselves, uncover valuable details of the support they can access and be able to discuss opportunities with their peers.

Carole Beverley, Chief Executive of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, said: "No-one is ever going to suggest that starting a business is the easy option – such a step into the unknown can be daunting or even intimidating. But there has never been a better time to give it a go because you're not alone. There are plenty who are in the same position and plenty who've been through it, come out the other side and once they've worked through the doubts and challenges never looked back. And their stories are always inspirational."

Ian Scott, founder of Enterprise Island, said: "Chance to Change will provide the perfect opportunity to start conversations that could be the key to unlocking the future for many of the delegates – a chance to take stock, reflect and understand how best to move forward and who they can turn to for guidance and inspiration."

Margaret Fay, Chairman of One North East, said: "The

current economic downturn has affected many individuals across the region who have previously not been impacted, including those at a senior and middle management level, from an apparently 'safe' corporate, professional or public sector background.

"There is a general consensus that entrepreneurs have an increasing role to play in the future success of the economy and we should see this as an opportunity to transform the economic make-up of the region by creating more entrepreneurial businesses."

Many leading organisations across the region have already lent their support to the event including Newcastle City Council, Tyne and Wear Development Company, Business and Enterprise North East, Business Link, North East Chamber of Commerce, Project North East, Enterprise UK, Newcastle University, Northern Pinetree Trust, Young Enterprise, a:design, Be Enterprising, Go Wansbeck, Enterprise Island, University of Teesside, Actif, Sunderland City Council, Five Lamps, Learning and Skills Council, Institute for Digital Innovation and Fastforward Now.

To register for the conference visit www.chancetochange.co.uk, call **0870 850 2233** or email info@entrepreneursforum.net.



Chance to Change

Take a chance. Make a change. Change your life.

22nd February, 10am – 11am
Civic Centre, Newcastle
FREE
All sponsored and informative sessions
hosted by One North East. For more details, go
to www.chancetochange.co.uk or
call 0870 850 2233 or email info@entrepreneursforum.net

collegeconnections

This feature brings all the updates and news from the new partnership struck up between the Hartlepool Enterprise Team and Hartlepool College of Further Education.

The collaboration aims to encourage self-employment in the town and boost numbers of new business start-ups. Find below details from Hartlepool College's Business Development Centre of a new course available to help managers develop their financial knowledge.

financefor non-financialmanagers

Hartlepool College of Further Education is delighted to offer a course to business managers to fulfil a growing need for financial skills.

All too often, an entrepreneur's performance is measured by how effectively they grow sales revenues. However, particularly in today's business climate, it is essential that they also have a good knowledge of financial principles.

Hartlepool College of Further Education has worked with many local business leaders in facilitating them with key business concepts such as marketing and the formation and implementation of successful growth strategies. However, more recently there has been much greater demand for assistance with the principles of financial management.

The main aim of this course is to transform financial and accounting concepts into decision-making tools business managers can use successfully every day. This enables them to learn to apply the fundamentals of finance to improve budget management, increase potential profits, improve cash flows and assess the financial performance of business activities generally.

This training is delivered by Stuart Butler from Hartlepool College of Further Education and is funded by the Economic Challenge Investment Fund via the OneDoor Network. OneDoor is a partnership between Teesside University and the Tees Valley colleges including Hartlepool College of Further Education.

In addition to higher-level training, OneDoor hopes to help the local economy through business innovation, as well as careers advice, subsidised work placements for recent graduates, mentoring services for business start-ups and higher-level skills progression for apprentices.

To find out more, please call Dominic Vizzard from the College's Business Development Centre on **01429 292888**.

help isat hand

As part of the new partnership, members of the Hartlepool Enterprise Team are holding business surgeries at the College's Business Development Centre, with the intention of offering a more coordinated service between the two parties.

The support provided includes:

- Professional business advice in setting up and developing your business
- Training and development to build key enterprise skills
- Support from a local business mentor for guidance and assistance
- Financial support from a variety of local enterprise delivery partners
- Help to legally constitute your business to provide opportunities and protection
- Marketing advice to help attract new and retain existing customers
- Information on personal and family benefits that you may be entitled to
- Advice on registering your business with various regulatory organisations
- Help to develop a credit rating to enable access to financial support

To book your free, no obligation appointment with the business support team, please call the College on **01429 292888** or Hartlepool Enterprise Centre on **01429 867677**.

NECC networking opens new door for Mick

A Hartlepool business is celebrating a lucrative new contract thanks to the North East Chamber of Commerce network.

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This whole experience just goes to show what membership in the NECC can lead to, and I'd certainly recommend it to other local businesses

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In March this year, DP Consultancy (NE) Ltd will commence an 18-month contract in Libya to deliver its highly reputable Health & Safety Services. As a result, owner Mick Stephenson is taking on new staff and hoping the contract will stand him in good stead for similar opportunities in the future.

Operating from a home-based office in Hartlepool, DP Consultancy offers all aspects of Health & Safety provision to small and medium enterprises, including documentation, management systems, site audits, accident investigation and on-site training.

Mick officially launched the business in November 2008 and now boasts an extensive client list within the Hartlepool area that includes Able UK, Wynyard Golf Club and a range of potential sub-contractors to the Building

Schools for the Future project. The company also serves the entire North East region, with clients as far north as Newcastle and down to Boroughbridge in the south.

Formerly a police officer for 28 years, Mick opted for a change in profession following a serious work-related injury, and identified that his key skills perfectly matched a career in the Health & Safety industry. He completed his NEBOSH qualification and gained employment with a local company before setting up his own business where he could ensure better standards, quality and customer care.

Mick is now also fully IOSH qualified, the business is on the NE England Service Provider Register and is a member of the NE Safety Health & Environmental Partnership. With the "DP" of the company's name denoting "Dependable Professionals", Mick strives to deliver the very best service to clients but at the most competitive rates.

Mick says: "The whole Libya scenario first began with my enrolment as a member onto the North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC) at Easter time last year. It was at one of their networking events that I was first introduced to the director of another company in the H&S industry, an immediate competitor to myself really.

"After bumping into this contact at several other NECC seminars, just before Christmas he asked me whether I was interested in a Health & Safety contract in Libya that his company was not able to commit to. Not too sure to begin with, I attended

several interviews and before I knew it, on Christmas Eve 2009, I had secured the deal."

The work is sub-contracted via the TTE Technical Training Group, which has bases both in Middlesbrough and in Dubai, but also has offices within Libya. Commencing this June and running until August 2011, the contract will consist of a cycle of four weeks' work in Libya followed by four weeks back at home. At the close of the contract, Mick hopes it may either be extended or it may open doors to other similar opportunities in that part of the world.

So what of his UK operations whilst abroad? Mick's wife has come on board to manage the office and business, with the addition of a new part-time member of staff to deliver the Health & Safety services. Mick explains: "We have identified a young man seeking a change in career, and he is ideal for the role we have in mind. He is NEBOSH qualified but fresh into the industry although he has experience in a variety of work environments, which means I can train him my way and to my standards, and hopefully he will eventually go full-time."

"This whole experience just goes to show what membership in the NECC can lead to, and I'd certainly recommend it to other local businesses. Although I must admit the size and speed of my resulting success was more than I ever could have imagined!"

DP Consultancy (NE) Ltd can be contacted on **07702 249564** or alternatively visit **www.dpcne.com**.

workshopwonder

A thriving needlecraft business has recently expanded its provision of group workshops, with owner Linda Archer already experiencing overwhelming demand from customers.

In 2 Stitches is a popular local enterprise that sells materials for needlecraft enthusiasts including yarns, fabrics, patterns and accessories. With its main premises at Hartlepool Enterprise Centre on Brougham Terrace, it also runs a successful stall in Middleton Grange Shopping Centre's indoor market hall.

Ever since its inception in 2007, In 2 Stitches has run regular workshop sessions from its unit within the Enterprise Centre, bringing together members of the community to enjoy their hobby, share ideas and socialise with others.

The business has recently increased the workshops offered, to include patchwork quilting, beading and introductory sessions to knitting and crochet, with early interest proving extremely high.

Owner of the business, Linda Archer says: "It has always been part of the business plan to eventually offer the

patchwork quilting workshops, but the beading sessions were completely customer led, and that is something they really wanted.

"The two new introductory workshops are already filled to capacity, and we've actually had to start a waiting list. The other sessions still have places at the moment but are proving really popular too."

With specialist teachers sourced to deliver the sessions, attendees receive expert tuition in their chosen workshop to learn the best techniques and develop their skills. They are also welcome to attend the patchwork quilt sessions to learn about general sewing and how to use their sewing machine which can be very baffling to understand.

But Linda points out that the groups are so much more than just the needlecraft: "There is a big social and therapeutic element to it too – it has helped people who don't get out of the house much or who have

suffered long-term health problems – the groups are a fantastic source of support, friendship and are great for a good giggle too.

"My message would be to come along, switch off and have fun! We welcome all people whether young or old, men or women, beginners or experienced. We don't charge a joining fee so attendees only pay for the sessions they attend, offering flexibility to those with busy lifestyles.

"All the materials needed to enjoy the sessions are available from In 2 Stitches, allowing group members to continue their hobbies at home, which often become terribly addictive!"

For all enquiries relating to In 2 Stitches, its products and its workshops, please call **01429 268800**. Alternatively drop into Hartlepool Enterprise Centre or the indoor market stall.

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The groups are a fantastic source of support, friendship and are great for a good giggle too
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coffee break

This month's coffee break is conducted with **Luc Gueriane, Business Advisor for Business Link.**

Q What does your role entail?

A As Business Advisor, I work with a combination of new and established businesses across the Hartlepool area, providing advice and support with business planning, marketing planning and financial management.

Q What is your perception of business in Hartlepool?

A Since first visiting Hartlepool less than three years ago, I have been truly impressed with the diversity and quality of the town's businesses. I hold strong hopes that in time, local businesses can increasingly trade on a wider geographical base.

Q What is your career background?

A Originally from Switzerland, I completed a Bachelor and Masters Degree at Geneva University and began my working life in a university research department looking at the financial aspects of energy production. I then relocated to the UK where I became involved in various business ventures and subsequently discovered the business support industry where I have been able to work with an exciting range of micro and SME businesses.

Q What do you get up to out of work?

A Recently married, I live with my wife Laura in the Durham area. My hobbies include cycling, playing guitar and dabbling in a few remaining business interests. Most holidays are taken up visiting my large family scattered around Switzerland, France and Italy. Whenever possible I also like to visit places further afield with a particular love of India, which I have visited several times.

Business Link can be contacted on **0845 600 9 006** or visit **www.businesslink.gov.uk/northeast**.

free public procurement for businesses

On 25th January, the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills launched an on-line procurement course, "Winning the Contract". This is a FREE resource to help businesses, and in particular SMEs, learn about public procurement and how to bid for public sector contracts. It can be accessed via the Business Link website at: www.businesslink.gov.uk/procurement.

The course is for people with responsibility for developing their business, such as business owners, managers and business development managers. It is aimed at growing businesses in all sectors. Winning the Contract will be useful to businesses that want to bid for public sector contracts, but are confused by the processes involved. No prior knowledge or experience is needed and there are no formal entry requirements.

The programme covers the following areas:

- identifying the advantages and disadvantages of dealing with public bodies
- understanding how different types of contracts are defined, advertised and dealt with
- understanding approved supplier lists and framework agreements
- searching for and finding public sector opportunities
- identifying the key stages in the tendering process

Following registration, learners can start the course straight away and use it at any time, as long as they have access to a computer with an internet connection. The course is available for six months from the date first accessed.

Winning the Contract contains a wealth of useful information, divided into modules and presented in an interactive and engaging format. There is an optional audio track to aid learning, as well as additional resources such as case studies, a glossary section and a 'Hints and Tips' download.

The course modules are as follows:

- Module 1** – Course Introduction
- Module 2** – The Public Sector
- Module 3** – Challenges and Barriers

Module 4 – Types of Contract

Module 5 – Finding Opportunities

Module 6 – Tender Responses

The Winning the Contract course is part of a wide-ranging programme of initiatives that the government is currently undertaking as part of the recommendations made in a recent report that looked into the barriers faced by SMEs looking to supply goods and services to the public sector. These recommendations are all aimed at making the procurement market more transparent, simple and strategic thus enabling more small firms to access, bid for, and win, public sector contracts.

what's your story?

This month's What's Your Story features Cllr Pamela Hargreaves, Hartlepool Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration, and Partnerships Director for Enterprise UK. At just 34 years old, she has notched many achievements both in her public role and in her own work, but knows there is still much more to come.

As Partnerships Director for Enterprise UK, Pamela Hargreaves is responsible for the delivery of its campaign across the country, managing regional teams and a number of national projects. Funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Enterprise UK aims to develop a more entrepreneurial culture and increase entrepreneurial behaviour to drive economic prosperity and social cohesion.

In her role as a Hartlepool Councillor, Pamela has been involved in a number of significant projects, including leading on the early stages of Building Schools for the Future, being a member of the Tall Ships Programme Board as well as the New Deal for Communities Steering Group and she recently chaired a regional review on how to address Child Poverty in the North East.

With regard to her current role as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Pamela says: "It provides me with the opportunity to shape both the physical and socio-economic landscape of the town and I am always acutely aware of what a privilege this is. With two new colleges being built, investment into primary schools, five secondary schools being rebuilt or refurbished and a new hospital, being part of ensuring Hartlepool people benefit from these

opportunities, particularly our young people, is something that really excites and motivates me."

In addition to her principal roles, Pamela is proud to Chair two local charities, Hartlepool Families First (HFF) and Hartlepool Youth Ltd, both of which broadly exist to support young people in Hartlepool fulfil their potential, and in the case of HFF particularly young people with disabilities.

Very much born and bred in Hartlepool, Pamela attended Henry Smith's School, now St. Hild's Church of England School, followed by Hartlepool Sixth Form College and Durham University to read Law and Politics. She has since had spells living in Newcastle, Manchester and London and even spent a couple of years enjoying the sunshine and bars in Australia, before returning home to Hartlepool in 2001.

One recent project Pamela has been involved with is the revitalisation of Hartlepool's indoor market, led by Hartlepool Enterprise Centre.

She says: "This project is the culmination of a lot of hard work done by Hartlepool Enterprise Team and associated partners, and my involvement now is to ensure that the project's momentum continues. There is no doubt that this type of initiative,

giving people practical opportunities to turn their passions into a potentially profitable business, is vital.

"On a very personal note, I am delighted that this project is helping to breathe new life into a market where I spent four years of Saturdays and holidays working on a stall as a student."

Regarding her approach to work, Pamela believes that ability and results always win eventually. She says: "I would describe myself as quite driven and tenacious – I strive to deliver what I promise and believe in challenging 'the way things have always been done' if they're not working."

Somehow amongst her busy professional life, Pamela does find some spare time for herself, when she loves to play netball, go snowboarding and skiing and in her own words, "contributing substantially to the sustainability of our restaurants and bars!"



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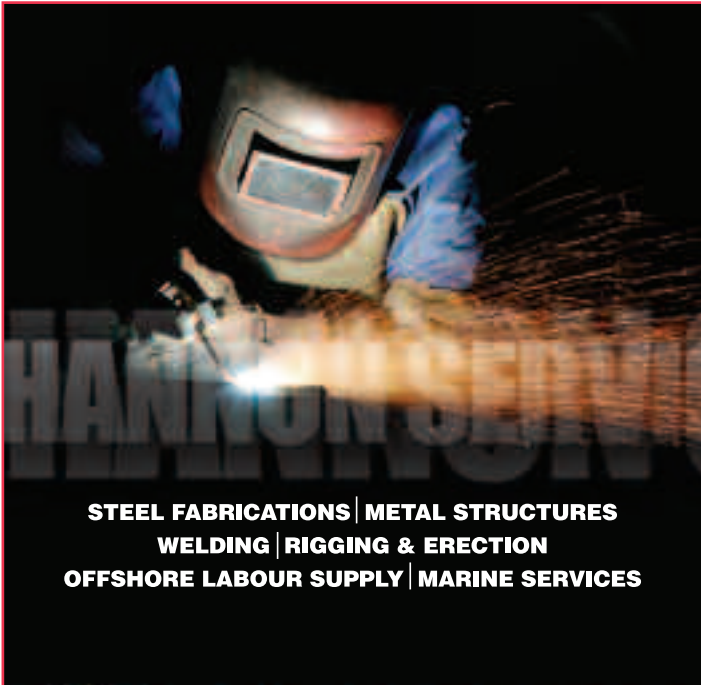
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