



Regenerating & Supported by the Parishes of:  
Arlecdon & Frizington, Cleator Moor,  
Ennerdale & Kinniside, Lamplugh and Weddicar



## **Business Forum**

### **Minutes of meeting Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010**

**Meeting Commenced:** 1300hrs

**Apologies:**

**Present:** Richard Mulholland (Chairman), Sarah Mitchell (Locality Manager), Alan Hurton (RNEC), Mike Morris (Chamber of Commerce), Andy Barnard (WCDA), Ian Wrigley (WCDA), Judith Brew (Bowness H.R.), Diane McCracken (WCDA), Adam Ross (AS Design), Ian Topping (KBC Ltd), Yvonne Wilkinson (H.F.T. Gough), Ryan Reed (Goughs Solicitors), Lesley Canfield (One 2 One), Jane Bruce (One 2 One), Pat Drake, Peter Hathaway-Jones (Low Mill Ranges), Chris Whiteside (CBC), Jillian Rush (Petals & Parties), Tony Dalton (Petals & Parties), Marjorie Dalton (Petals & Parties), Joanne Hunter (Harvey's Building Contractors), Chris MacLeod (Oaktree Accountants), Elaine Simpson (Home), Karen Kenmare (Kenmare Tyres), Sam Lyon (Burnetts), Catherine Whitfield (West Lakes Laundry Service), Jim Youdale (Credit Union), Dave Whitefield (Tonlin Guest House), Carole Mulholland (Graphskill Ltd), George Bruce (George Bruce Associates), John Bruckshaw (Parkside), Nigel Goddard (WISE), David Farrell (Farrell Sports).

**Introduction:** Richard welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Mike Morris from the Chamber of Trade, Andy Barnard as guest speaker from WCDA and Sarah Mitchell as Locality Manager and Regen North East Copeland Manager.

Richard requested of Mike that he pass on the heartfelt thanks and good wishes for the future to Don Graham from the Business Forum. Don recently left the Chamber of Trade to take up a new venture after being a close working partner to the Business Forum for some time. His involvement will be missed.

**Chamber of Trade:** Mike Morris thanked Richard and explained that Don had forwarded his best wishes to the Business Forum and wished for every success in the future.

Mike explained that the West Coast program involving assistance to Business Forums is coming to a close on 31<sup>st</sup> March of this year and at this time it is not known whether it will be re-introduced.

Mike highlighted that the Chamber have a large number of events taking place this year. One of their successful ventures was the networking, speed/networking events that are held monthly throughout the county, thus allowing businesses to get together in a networking format. These have proved to be very popular indeed. The Chamber held over 300 various events last year and the number is increasing this year through demand. There is a new format program Network 5 lunch time event that is being regaled as exceedingly popular. . At this businesses have the opportunity to showcase their business in a short space of time over lunch in an informal networking gathering.

### **Regen Update;**

Richard introduced Sarah Mitchell (Locality Manager) to the meeting to give an update on Regen North East Copeland.

Sarah gave an update saying that since the last forum, Phase two of the Phoenix Enterprise Centre has now been refurbished with help from a grant by the NWDA. The work is almost complete, though the building has been taken over by the new tenant Gen II, and should be finished shortly. Restoration work is being carried out on St Kevin's Hall, (the old Conservative Club), this work will give more meeting space and office accommodation and a bespoke drop in and advice centre for the unemployed. This work will also be completed shortly.

Feasibility funding has been gained from British Nuclear Partnership to carry out a study at Ehenside with the thinking along the lines of extreme/outdoor sports centre and also funding for the town square where a major re-vamp and return to a service delivery centre is hoped for.

### **The Chairman's Report.**

Richard commenced his report by highlighting the Business Forums own website at [www.necopeland.co.uk](http://www.necopeland.co.uk). Richard invited all those businesses not already using the service, to contact Alan Hurton (RNEC) 01946 816708, if they would like to take advantage of the free service provided. The site is expanding and is now being used by many as a source of information as well as business reference. There are articles regularly being put onto the site and as an information site it is very up to date.

Richard pointed out that one of the purposes of a business forum is for the interaction of businesses and the passing on of and the gathering of information to assist in the

development of individuals businesses. With this in mind Richard introduced a number of people in the audience giving an insight into their businesses and extolled the virtues of inter facing with other folk in attendance. Explaining that after the various presentations and questions to the speakers then this was the time to network and take advantage of the expanse of knowledge and diversity of businesses present.

Richard asked if anybody would like to freely advertise their businesses to the meeting, they had a minute to speak.

Nigel Goddard (Ways into Successful Business Enterprise), stood up and explained that he has taken over at Cleator Moor From Trish Cairns and that his role is to advice people going into self employment and social enterprise. The advise is free of charge and is delivered from six offices on the West Coast from Wigton to Millom.

### **Andy Barnard.**

Richard introduced Andy Barnard who is a business advisor with the West Cumbria Development Agency who was to launch a new project in our area titled "Backing Business in Copeland".

Around 18 months ago a program was launched by the WCDA in Copeland and Allerdale called "Backing Business West Cumbria", that program was funded by a number of sources. Last year Copeland Borough Council got together with WCDA and agreed to fund a similar program calling it "Backing Business in Copeland". Andy explained that the program had been rolled out in Whitehaven in November of last year and had proved to be a success. The follow on launch throughout the rest of Copeland has been delayed due to the problems with flooding and the demands on the resources at WCDA. These problems aside the program was now being rolled out in the remaining areas and is funded until March 2011. The project is eligible to any business that has been running for twelve months or over and employs less than 250 workers. The aims of the program are to help any business maximise its potential, secondly to help any business extend its sales and its profitability and thirdly to identify areas of growth. The original thought behind this project was to help businesses through the recession.

"Backing Business in Copeland" offers the business owner a range of support commencing with a review of the business called "A Fresh Look Review". With the consent of the owner an advisor will come in and sit down and go through a series of questions to get a feel of the business, of what it is doing and what it might do in the future. As a result of that the advisor will go away and produce a Fresh Look report or review which will be honest and objective. The next step after the report will be to offer advice and guidance. This may mean

that there is a financial outlay. That is where another part of "Backing Business" comes in to play. There is a pot of limited grant funding to a maximum of £1,500 and this can be used in three key areas, Equipment, Marketing and Training. The reason there is a limit is to allow for more businesses to take advantage of the scheme. Funding can also be sought for specialist consultancy. Where a business has identified a need for expert advice that can't be given through the advisors, then funding can be made available, though the business may be asked to make a contribution.

Since the commencement of this scheme in Copeland advice has been given to over 50 businesses, 46 of which have had a Fresh Look Review and report, 27 have applied for and been successful in gaining grant funding and 13 businesses have received Specialist help. WCDA are not only helping businesses they are also on the lookout for other ways and means of increasing this help. One new idea that is coming to fruition later this year is another joint venture with Copeland and that is to compile a Copeland Business Directory and WCDA are at this time sending out to businesses in the borough asking if they would like to be included. The directory is totally free there are no hidden costs attached and this will be launched in the summer. The objective is to produce a directory that can be distributed throughout the borough and beyond to help businesses work with each other within the community and to seek custom from outside. Another idea being considered is to have a Business Showcase event whereby businesses will be invited along to show off their wares, their products and their services. Finally the WCDA is looking into the possibility of running a customer service award that could be reviewed over a number of months and whereby awards could be given to those businesses that are providing the highest levels of customer service. The aim being to show off to the wider community that Copeland does have some excellent businesses and they should be highlighted and given recognition.

Andy then introduced Adam Ross to the meeting. Adam runs a business using graphics and design from vehicles to banners and on to clothing. Adam stated that when he was first made aware of grant funding being made available he was very pessimistic. He expected the process to be long winded and arduous. This was not the case however. The process is pleasantly straight forward. The Fresh Look Review is very thorough and straight talking, and should your idea be flawed in any way then this is the stage that it will be identified, but providing that your idea is well researched, sensible and above all realistic there should not be a problem. Adam ended by thanking the WCDA for all their help and the help gained through the grant funding and highly recommended the programme to the forum.

Andy then introduced Catherine Whitfield from West Lakes Laundry Services. Catherine outlined the nature of her business which is based in Egremont. Catherine regaled details of contacting the WCDA and of being visited by Andy and being taken through, stage by stage, the "Backing Business in Copeland" process. Catherine successfully applied for grant funding which allowed her to sign her delivery van, review and increase marketing and make an overall revamp of customer service delivery. As a result of these changes business

has increased, as has the identity of her business. Andy is still in touch with Catherine to advise her and guide her through the running of a business quagmire. Catherine also thanked the WCDA and Andy personally, for the help and assistance she has received.

Andy then introduced Judith Brew, a business advisor, to give a few words on the process from an advisors point of view. Judith explained that she has been in business as a business advisor for four years and was asked by WCDA to work with them to help deliver business advice and H.R. advice. "Backing Business in Copeland" is a good system and very satisfying to deliver. As business owners are aware it can feel very isolated out there in the dog eat dog world of business. This program goes a long way to ease that feeling of isolation by offering a vast array of advice and guidance to the business owner. The Fresh Look Review is a great way for the advisor to identify, if any, a weakness in the idea or dream. It also gives the advisor the opportunity to speak boldly to the business owner and point out any flaws or potential pitfalls they may find.

Andy then opened the meeting up to questions.

Elaine Simpson (Home) asked, "What is the time scale for the Business Directory in Copeland?"

Andy replied that the process at the moment is gathering information but that the directory should be launched in the summer.

Richard thanked the speakers for their presentation and again explained that the Business Forum website [www.necopeland.org.uk](http://www.necopeland.org.uk) is a website open to all forms of business and if any information on the website was required to contact Alan Hurton on 01946 816708 who will be happy to assist.

The meeting was closed.

**Meeting closed 140 5hrs.**