

ENTREPRENEURIAL

Cumbrian women

STORY: TRACEY ERRINGTON



Hazel Duhy - A new face supports women in business

Hazel Duhy is a self employed business woman based near Wigton who is passionate about supporting women in business. She has enormous drive and enthusiasm to ensure our Cumbrian business women have a voice.

As a registered SPARK Women's Enterprise Ambassador, Hazel is promoting the women's enterprise agenda in Cumbria. In September 2008 she was appointed to the Northwest Women's Enterprise Forum (NWWEF) to represent Cumbria and micro businesses in the North West.

SPARK is delivered by Make Your Mark and managed regionally by the RDAs and the NWDA.

Hazel was an obvious candidate and became one of the 150+ Ambassador representatives in the North West. Sadly, there are only eight in Cumbria, but with her new position it is only a matter of time until there are more.

The NWWEF was established in 2004 to develop the number of female start up businesses in the region. It tackles issues at the heart of the women's enterprise and is the key regional policy advisory body for women's enterprise.

In March 2008 the government released its national Enterprise Strategy Unlocking the UK's talent. This recognised the important contribution women's enterprise can make to the economy and announced several initiatives to increase the numbers of women in business – ensuring there is appropriate access to advice.

These strategies underpin the NWWEF Action Plan which sets out the priorities for women's enterprise and outlines the actions that will progress the women's enterprise agenda.

Hazel said: "The aim of the Forum is to empower business women to make an equal contribution to economic prosperity of the region. More than one million women in the UK work for themselves and women-owned enterprises contribute £70 billion to the national economy.

"We want to ensure women have the same access to business and financial support provided to businessmen, as well as the chance to develop their skills and self confidence. At any one time in the UK there are said to be 160,000 women dreaming of running their own business. I would like to think that I can support a few in Cumbria to follow their dream as I have."

Hazel always wanted to run her own business and moved here in 2002 to do just that. It took several years before the opportunity arose and she launched Web Work@Woodrow offering administration support and graphic design services.

Work spiralled, the company rebranded as Woodrow Services and now supports a range of businesses from start-ups to multinationals in Cumbria and abroad.

Hazel: "Purely built on networking and word of mouth, my business has benefited from supportive women in business. I joined the Rural Women's Network early on and have seen how

Cumbrian business women have grown in confidence and ability as a result of support from fellow female entrepreneurs.

"I now help run The Network of Enterprising Women in Solway based at Wigton and run the Ripple Effect which disseminates information to support Cumbrian businesses. The power of networking is amazing, and it's satisfying to help other businesses."

Tracey Errington from Market Sense is coordinator for the Penrith Women in Business Network group: "Hazel is one of the county's most valued assets in promoting female entrepreneurship. She is establishing links with Young Enterprise, The Princes Trust and local schools to encourage and inspire young women.

"After all, self employment was never a lesson we were taught at school.

"Her new role on the board of NWWEF means Hazel is working even harder to motivate Cumbrian females to be the best."

NWWEF Chair Sylvia Philips: "Hazel is a welcome addition. As a strategic body it is important that all aspects of women's enterprise are represented by the Forum members. Her appointment will ensure the voices of women in business in Cumbria are heard and enable the NWWEF to engage more with the business community and stakeholders in that area on the Women's Enterprise agenda."

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Visit the Northwest Women's Enterprise Forum to download a copy of the NWWEF Action Plan.

WOMEN'S AMBASSADOR CAMPAIGN

In July 2007 the NWDA launched the Northwest region's Women's Ambassadors Campaign. It promotes a culture of women's enterprise whether by starting a business or social enterprise, or by making an innovative idea happen at work.

It is an inspirational and ambitious campaign, backed by a coalition of business, charities, education bodies and government. It's women-focused, business-led and government-backed. For more information about SPARK visit:

www.makeyourmarkconnect.org/spark_womens_enterprise_ambassador_network