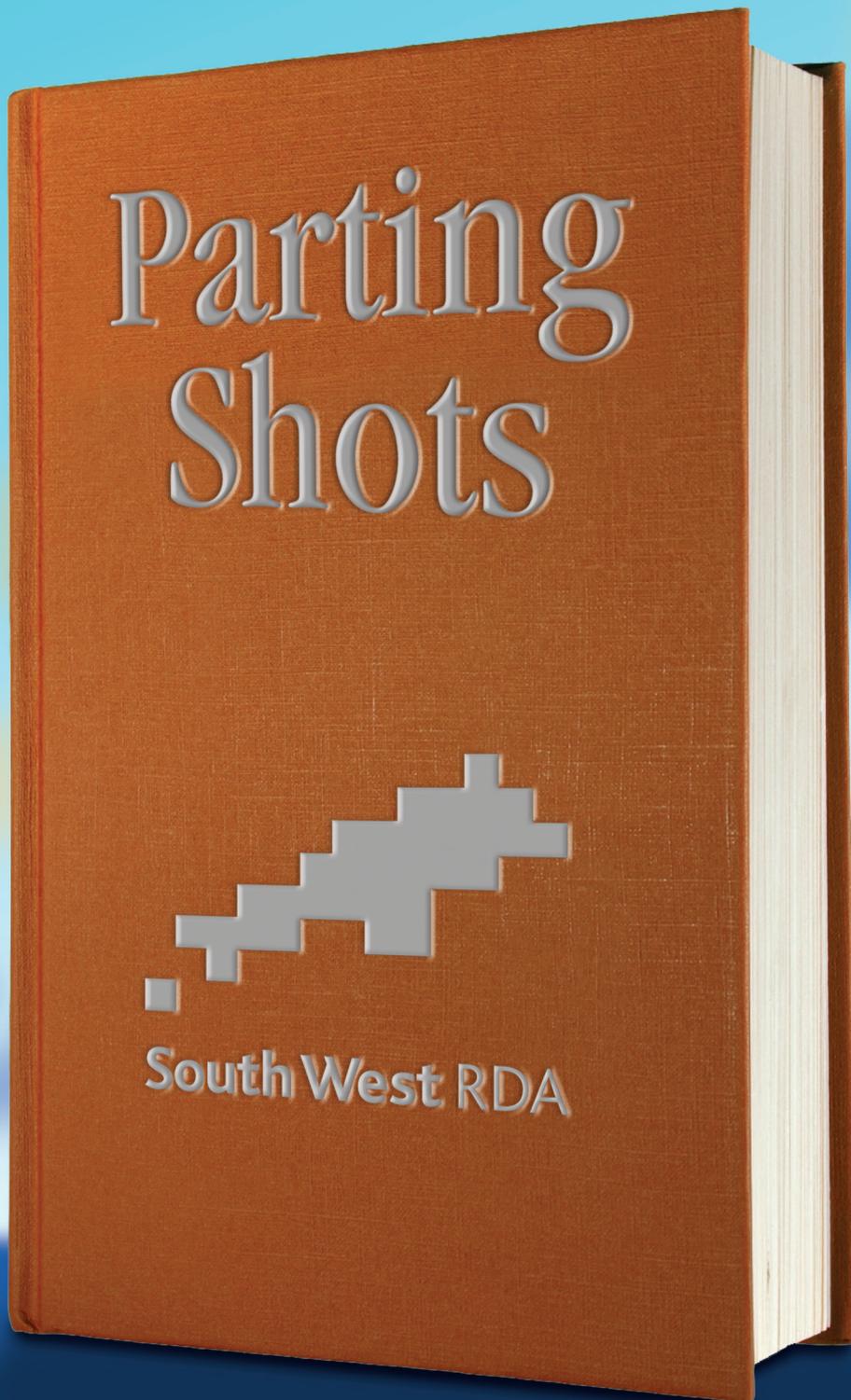


Business Cornwall

Issue 51

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June 2011



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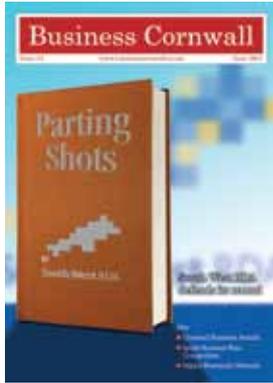
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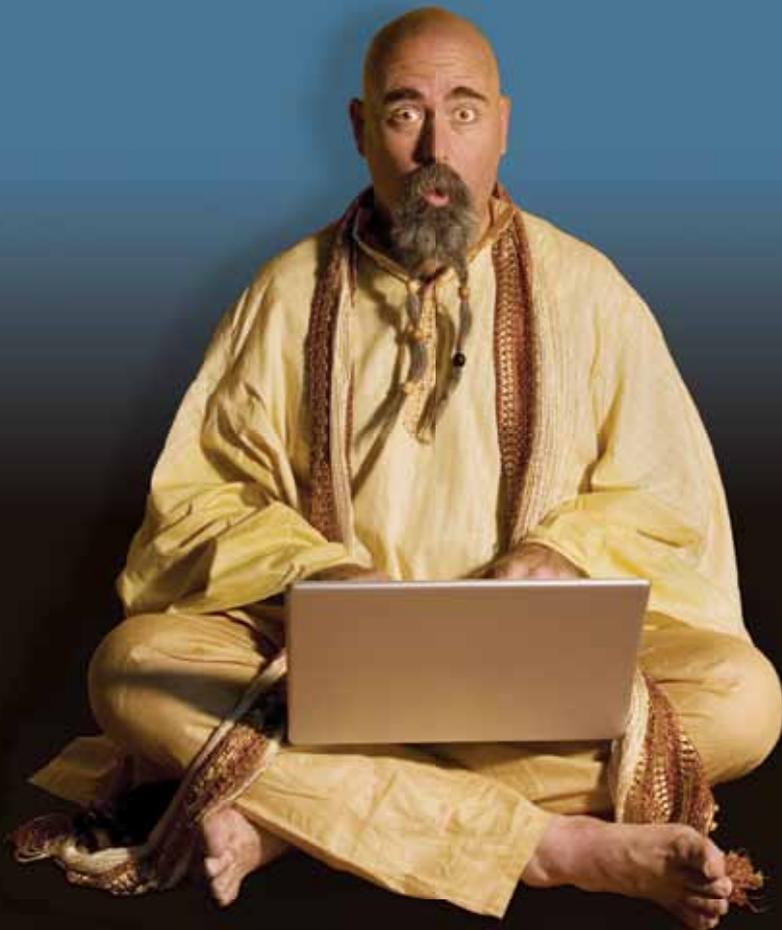
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Are we board yet?

By the time you read this, I have it on good authority that the composition of the first board of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will have been announced.

And about time too, you might say. It has been a series of stop-starts since it was first revealed that Cornwall was having its own LEP.

Sir John Banham's early involvement was expected to have had a smoothing effect on the process, but it didn't quite work out that way, with Sir John's vision differing widely from the majority in the private (and public) sector.

We had to wait until the end of March until a chairman was finally appointed, while it was anticipated that

the board would have been up and running in April.

There has also been controversy over just how much the LEP has already cost the cash-strapped Council – with £36k alone, out of a total of £130k, said to have been spent on recruiting the board.

Speaking after the Cornwall Business Awards, music industry guru Pete Waterman, who has been heavily involved in the Cheshire and Warrington LEP, remarked how smoothly and quickly things had been progressing up in the north west. Oh well.

Once up and running and firing on all pistons, the LEP will have its work cut out convincing the detractors – that vocal section of the business community who have long cried foul at the



whole process in Cornwall – and I suspect what is the silent majority, those who couldn't give two hoots in the first place and just get on with running their businesses. ▶

Nick Eyriey

Digestgeneral

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Accountants merge

Two of the region's most respected accountancy practices have announced that they are in advanced merger discussions.

Francis Clark LLP and Cornwall-based Winter Rule LLP have agreed Heads of Terms which are expected to see the two firms merge later this month.

The new business would result in a practice with 45 partners and 350 staff spread through seven offices in Truro, Plymouth, Tavistock, Exeter, Torquay, Taunton and Salisbury.

Winter Rule chairman, John Mitchell, said: "We have taken considerable time in concluding on this strategic choice which is a landmark decision for the firm.

"We are constantly looking for ways to enhance the services we offer clients and see the merger as providing an opportunity to expand both our resources and the range of services that we can offer our clients."

"The link up will also provide our team in Cornwall with wider career development opportunities which in turn will enable us to continue to attract



high calibre individuals to deliver advice to our clients."

Les Burnett, managing partner of Francis Clark, added: "Francis Clark has been committed to opening a Cornwall office to serve our already considerable Cornish client base so merging with an established firm which we greatly admire has provided the ideal solution." ▶

Gould goes north

Redruth-based communications company Gould Electronics is expanding into Scotland following a strategic partnership with Scot-Tel Ltd.

The new company, Scot-Tel-Gould, will offer its wireless communications portfolio to customers in Aberdeenshire, Moray and Grampian.

Scotland-based Scot-Tel provides wireless and broadcast products and services, while Gould Electronics specialises in two way radio networks and product expertise.

David Gould, director of Gould Electronics and Scot-Tel-Gould, commented: "We are very pleased to have created this new company by creating a partnership with Scot-Tel. By working together we have put in place a vital communications system to an otherwise remote and cut off area." ▶

Leadership Challenge

A Cornwall-based personal and corporate development company has created a unique opportunity to develop excellence in leadership whilst raising vital funds for ShelterBox.

Evolution, run by Martin and Fiona Crump in St Agnes, has developed Outside In: a course aimed to develop leaders in any organisation.

Following eight days of training and leadership development, delegates will take on the ShelterBox Dartmoor Challenge – a 30 mile trek across Dartmoor over two days in September, carrying the iconic green relief box and its contents.

The Crumps led eight teams in completing last year's Challenge, raising more than £17k for the charity.

Martin Crump explained: "We learnt a lot from supporting the teams in last year's challenge, and decided to build on the training we offered to create a specific leadership course."

To find out more about Outside In, contact Martin Crump on 01872 555939. ▶



▶ Dartmoor: ShelterBox Challenge

Netpack in liquidation

Netpack Fulfilment has been placed into voluntary liquidation by its parent company.

Otter House Group, which acquired the Camborne-based company three years ago, said in a statement that despite investing significant sums in the business, it was unable to return it to profitability.

It said: "A combination of increased competition in the fulfilment sector and

the recession has resulted in a shortfall in turnover and significant ongoing losses.

"In recent months the financial outlook for the company has deteriorated, and the directors undertook a further detailed review. Having concluded that the company was unlikely to achieve profitability as a standalone business, attempts have been made to find someone to take over the business. However,

after some initial interest, this has proved to not be possible.

"The directors would like to thank the staff for their efforts and dedication over many years, and express their regret that this action has proved necessary."

Netpack employed 30 staff. ▶

Law firm goes LLP

Regional legal firm Stephens Scown has converted to a limited liability partnership (LLP).



The firm, which has three offices in Exeter, Truro and St Austell and has 30 partners and 230 staff, says it is taking the measure to support the firm's long-term planning and future strategic growth.

LLP status, which was introduced in 2000, provides a modern trading structure for professional firms, such as solicitors and accountants. ▶

Lawyers fully qualified

The employment team at Coodes Solicitors has been given a boost with two of its lawyers qualifying.

Anna Garde-Evans, who joined the firm three years ago and is based in the Launceston office, has been admitted to the roll of solicitors along with Phil Sayers, who is based in the Truro office.

Managing partner Jeremy Harvey said: "We're hugely committed to supporting staff through their training contract to becoming fully fledged solicitors." ▶



▶ Anna Garde-Evans: Qualified

Entrepreneurs of tomorrow

More than 25 graduates who want to start a new business in Cornwall attended the first Unlocking Cornish Potential (UCP) Open Day for Graduate Start up Businesses recently.

Held at the Pool Innovation Centre, more than 30 business advisors and support partners were on hand to test out the graduates' ideas and help them develop their plans.

The event was to publicise UCP's Graduate Start up Programme, which is running through to September 2013 and aims to support around 70 entrepreneurs. ▶

Bed Company wins national deal

A Cornish manufacturer will be selling its traditionally-made beds across the UK following a deal with a national department store.

The Cornish Bed Company will supply House of Fraser with traditionally-made brass and iron beds, which will go on sale in 12 of the national retailer's flagship stores and through its website.

The agreement has seen the Par-based manufacturing arm of the company, Enchanted House Beds, recruit new staff to meet the increase in production.

Owner Nick Horn said: "We're delighted that our beds are now stocked by one of the most established names on the high street, and it's great to see that House of Fraser is supporting British



▶ The Cornish Bed Company: House of Fraser deal

manufacturing in a sector where so much these days is sourced overseas." ▶

Bay merger

Bay Mailing Limited has merged with marketing communications company Media Partners.

The new company will be called Bay Direct Media and be based in St Austell.

It will offer services ranging from direct marketing and data sourcing & management, to hand finishing, packaging and fulfilment.

Bay Mailing director Steve Double commented: "Bay and Media Partners have worked closely together for many years and this merger is a natural development towards meeting our customers' requirements." ▶

Stairway to the bars

Spiral Construction has just completed a feature staircase for the iconic London Palladium theatre.

Working in conjunction with main contractor Overbury and RHWL Architects, the Helston-based company was commissioned to design, manufacture and install a helical staircase to link the newly refurbished Palladium bar with the foyer.

Much of the work was directly supervised by Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber, chairman and owner of the Really Useful Group, which runs the Palladium along with a number of other leading West End theatres.

Spiral Construction MD Eric Nicholls commented: "We are delighted to have been involved in such a prestigious project and the feedback that we have received from all parties involved has been excellent.

"The timescale to complete the work was particularly challenging as we could not carry out any surveys on the existing structure until Sister Act, the last show prior to the shut down, had finished its run. And the work was further disrupted when the theatre had to reopen in the middle of the works for the Royal Variety Performance."

Other high profile work Spiral has been involved with recently includes the design and supply of a feature curved staircase to the Heron Tower, London's tallest building. ▶



Attraction gets 20/20 treatment

Falmouth-based 20/20 has completed a large-scale project for the National Trust at East Pool Mine – formerly known as Cornish Mines and Engines – to encourage visitors to get involved in Cornwall’s rich mining history.

Cornish design and build company 20/20 won a competitive tender process to improve the visitor centre experience and the way that people journey through the site.

Dave Tonkin who led the design team for 20/20, said: “We have designed and installed interactive features so people can get a real understanding of scientific and engineering principles.”



▶ East Pool Mine: Visitor centre

Email marketing masterclass

Falmouth-based email marketing company MailAway is offering free training workshops for business people across Cornwall and south Devon this month.

The workshops, which are being run by Anna Penrose, MailAway’s email marketing specialist, will cover the basics of email marketing and how to use it effectively to increase sales and customer retention.

Penrose explained: “These workshops are a great opportunity for anyone who

wants to know more about what email can achieve for small to medium businesses.”

The sessions will take place at Lewtrenchard Manor, Okehampton (June 14); St Michael’s Hotel, Falmouth (June 29) and at Fowey Hall Hotel, Fowey (June 30).

The two-hour workshops run from 8.45am (for a 9.15 am start). Email anna@mail-away.co.uk to book your place.

HLS launches new site



▶ Online: New website

In preparation for the full market release of its new holiday letting software program, Camborne-based software company HLS Solutions has launched a brand new website.

The website has been designed to provide information on the new holiday letting software package it has developed, along with details of related services the company can offer to its customers.

It has also teamed up with a number of local partners to offer other services that complement the main business.

Bush in the cloud

Truro-based telecoms and IT specialist Bush Telegraph is offering businesses a free four-month trial of its cloud services technology.

Bush CEO Chris Royden said: “By using a cloud services provider, business can enjoy familiar Microsoft applications including hosted Exchange, to ensure that

their systems are always available, whether in the office or out on location 24/7.

“This gives both small to medium sized business and larger enterprise companies essential cost savings, as they don’t need to invest in expensive hardware or licenses.”

Tel: 01872 245 245

Briefs

Streamlining: Cornwall Council has splashed out £7 million on a new business system to streamline internal services such as finance and purchasing. The Council signed the agreement with IT systems provider Cappgemini UK plc, in a move that it hopes will save £20 million over the next five years. The Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, based on Oracle software, will replace the largely paper-based processes that the Council inherited from the old county and district councils.

Marketing: Cornwall-based marketing company FireText Communications recently completed a successful week of SMS marketing at the Volvo Snowbombing festival in Austria, with Outgoing UK, one of the UK’s biggest event companies.

The real thing: Three Cornish companies have been engaged by Coca-Cola to work a new website. Penryn-based agencies Stranger Collective, Anja Jones Translation and Venn Creative have all been involved with The Live Positive Collective, an online platform for people to talk about and be inspired by things making the world a better place.

Greetings: A new business has been set up in south Cornwall specialising in handmade greeting cards. Golant-based Mimsy Grove is the new venture by local horticulturist Karen Wells-West.

Home sweet Home: Event Management company Live Events South West (LESW) has proclaimed the first Cornwall Home Show a great success, attracting more than 1,000 people. LESW owner Andrew Weaver says the two-day event, which took place last month at Kingsley Village, is set to become a regular fixture in Cornwall’s event calendar.

Business class: Saltash-based business software developer Computech IT Services has launched an update of its BusinessMan software for the Windows and Mac OSX platform. BusinessMan Enterprises allows companies to manage all aspects of their business from prospect first contact to invoice.

A&P collaborates on wave power

A&P Group has entered into ‘collaborative partnership programmes’ with Ocean Power Technologies Ltd (OPT) and Offshore Wave Energy Ltd (OWEL) to work on the research and development of their respective wave device technology and engineering.

The three companies have received funding from the Government body Technology Strategy Board (TSB). A&P will work with the companies to develop and build wave energy devices for the future.

A&P’s engineering and fabrication skills at its yard in Falmouth will be used to help determine the most effective and cost efficient ways to produce the devices from prototypes through to the development and build process.

Drystan Jones, A&P Group’s business development manager of renewables,

commented: “A&P Group is well positioned with its heritage in engineering to become involved in projects such as these. We were closely involved in the Wave Hub project off the north coast of Cornwall and we have committed to this initiative to further support and help progress the use of wave energy in the future.”

Meanwhile, A&P Falmouth has invested upgraded its engineering workshop as part of its ongoing improvement programme. The company’s machine workshop, that already holds 18 lathes and can accommodate 2.5m radius components up to 12m in length, has had new lathes and digital read outs fitted to increase quality and efficiency.

Already a well established ship repair business, A&P is keen to showcase the



Investment: Machining sphere

facilities across a variety of sectors including oil and gas and the renewable energy sectors. ▶

£4M marine renewables project

The Council has helped secure £4 million worth of funding to help develop a marine renewable energy project in Cornwall and Brittany.

Cornwall Council is leading the international MERiFIC project, working with south west universities and leading research and marine organisations both in Cornwall and Brittany.

The project will explore the potential

for marine energy across the regions of Cornwall and Finistère in Brittany and the island communities of the Isles of Scilly and the Parc Marin d'Iroise with a view to identifying opportunities in the regions for new industry and jobs.

It is currently estimated that by 2050, up to 50% of Europe’s electricity supply could be provided by renewable ocean energy generated off the Atlantic coast.

The project will see funding of £4m spent across the two regions. Cornwall Council is contributing £60k towards the project which will be match-funded. ▶

Arrow back in service



Relaunch: Commissioner Peter Fish with Mark Sansom

Falmouth pilot boat Arrow, which was badly damaged by fire last summer, was re-launched last month following a major repair operation.

Falmouth Harbour Commissioners (FHC) marked the end of work with a celebration at North Quay to thank Mylor Yacht Harbour, which carried out the repairs, and the many other parties that were involved.

The fire started in the engine room while the Arrow was 100m off Falmouth Docks’ eastern wharf last July. Firefighters and lifeboat crew involved in the rescue operation were also at yesterday’s re-launch.

Work included removing and renewing engines, wiring, plumbing and hull insulation, as well as repairing areas of the hull which were affected by the heat.

Falmouth Harbour Master Captain Mark Sansom said: “We are delighted to welcome the Arrow back into service and would like to extend a big thank you to all those who have worked so hard to get the work finished.” ▶

Mystery extends to US

Mystery Yachts, made by Cornish Crabbers, has just gained an esteemed US distributor.

Following a visit to the London Boat Show, Thomas Duhén of Forum Marine was so impressed by the Mystery range that he ordered a Mystery 35 for exhibiting at the Annapolis and Newport boat shows.

Duhén also has his sights set on the French market, given his connections in Versailles, and aims to take a Mystery 35 to the Paris Boat Show in January 2012.

Cornish Crabbers MD Peter Thomas commented: “We are delighted to be taking on an international distributor for Mystery after so much success with Cornish Crabbers.

“Having been designed with the needs of serious sailors in mind, we have high hopes for success in the States and beyond.” ▶

TIC topping out

A topping out ceremony was held last month to mark the completion of the highest level of the building for the £13M Tremough Innovation Centre (TIC).

The Leadbitter Group is carrying out the works on the project, which is led by Cornwall Council with support from Cornwall Development Company.

Investment has been provided by the ERDF Convergence Programme and the South West RDA. The centre will be operated by the University of Plymouth.

It is the second innovation centre for Cornwall. Pool Innovation Centre, also run by the University of Plymouth, opened last July.

Rob Bradley, regional director of Leadbitter's Western Construction division, said: "This is a major milestone in the construction of this important facility and we are pleased to celebrate it with Cornwall Council. It is particularly rewarding to know that the work we do will help small and new businesses to get off to a flying start, and we look forward to delivering a first class building."



Hats off: Topping out ceremony

The new facility is due for completion in late 2011 with the first businesses expected to be installed in early 2012.

Hotel project wins award

The restoration and redevelopment of the Cornwall Hotel and Spa in St Austell has won a top regional accolade.

The project, to convert a dilapidated Regency house into a 65-bed boutique 4 star hotel, picked up the Regeneration category in the 2011 RICS South West Awards.

Commenting on the project, the judges said: "This is a bold, dramatic and extensive hotel development which has rescued a listed building, provided a new use for fabric in disrepair and while it needs to 'bed in', justified the restoration of the landscape.

"The long-term prospects have been much improved for the building and the area bringing new revenue and local employment opportunities."

Council reaches mine agreement

Cornwall Council and the owner of South Crofty Mine have reached an agreement over land use to allow a new link road to be built.

The Council and Western United Mines (WUM) have revealed details of a "land swap deal" that will enable a vital new road link to be built and the relocation of surface mining infrastructure, including the development of a new concentrator building, where the ore will be extracted from the mined material.

The Council says the agreement is crucial to the economic regeneration of the Camborne, Pool and Redruth area and could see over half a billion pounds of private sector investment in the long term. The new deal could also bring the creation of up to 2,400 jobs and see 800 new homes being built.

Under terms of the agreement, WUM will move its surface mining operations

at Dudnace Lane to the south where its modern surface infrastructure will be built, which will provide the opportunity to develop the east-west link road through the existing site which will clear the way for regeneration.

As part of the package, the Council will also help fund site improvements, including clearing existing buildings, as part of a wider scheme of regeneration that aims, with support from Convergence, to transform the area over the next ten years.

£70k activity centre improvements



BF Adventure: climbing wall

Work has just been completed on £70k of improvements at Penryn-based charity and outdoor activity centre BF Adventure.

The charity has been adding the finishing touches to a fully accessible climbing wall and zip wire with special kite harness, along with a new toilet and shower block.

Work is also almost finished on a sensory trail – a circular walk complete with visual and auditory aids such as posts, hand-holds, signs and information.

The new facilities have been made possible thanks to £70k of funding from Aiming High for Disabled Children.

The charity has also received planning permission to improve the site and replace the old portacabins they have been operating from in the past 21 years.

Little Harbour on course

Just over a year since construction work began on the new children's hospice, Little Harbour, the final slate was placed on the roof last month.

The team from Pirate FM were at the St Austell site to do the honours, with its listeners having raised over £15k through the local radio station's 'Raise the Roof' campaign.

Children's Hospice South West's Precious Lives Appeal to build the children's hospice for families from Cornwall and Plymouth now stands at almost £4.6 million. The charity hopes the £5 million target will be reached, and the work on the hospice completed, in time for it to open to local families with life-limited children by the end of the year.

Five-a-day in the office

Healthy eating in the workplace is the aim of a Cornish home delivery company's latest venture.

The Office Fruitbox is a new initiative from Cornishfoodmarket.co.uk, which brings fresh, local produce to customers, as well as a wide choice of other consumables – all aimed at beating the prices and the monopolies of the major supermarkets.

MD Sean Williams said: "Our home-delivery customers are embracing the fact that we're giving them the same

quality and price – and a wide choice of goods from fantastic local producers – as we've been giving top class restaurants for many years.

"Now we've opened up the same great choice and value to workers around Cornwall with the Office Fruitbox scheme." ◀



▶ Sean Williams: "Choice"

Alchemy in Cornwall

A new bartending company has been set up in Cornwall aimed at "pushing the boundaries in all aspects of the hospitality trade".

Constantine-based Alchemy Bartenders is the brainchild of Ro Santus, and offers a full bar and restaurant consultancy service to help create "a high class bar environment".

Working with local brands, bars, restaurants and events companies, the new venture looks to provide a "refreshing twist" on cocktail menus and bartending methods, taking its inspiration, says Santus, from ancient alchemists and using local produce.

"Our philosophy is simple," Santus said. "Quality over quantity." ◀

Sweet and no longer bitter



▶ Joe Keohane: Chocolate

The team which took Sharp's from a micro-brewery to the UK's fastest growing producer of cask and bottled conditioned beer is looking to make a similar impact at its latest venture.

Joe Keohane and Nick Baker, who recently sold Sharp's Brewery to Molson Coors for £20 million, bought Devon-based high-end chocolate business Browne's out of administration recently,

and have reopened its Okehampton factory.

MD Keohane said: "After the sale of Sharp's we looked for a new business to develop and were impressed by the considerable reputation that Browne's had acquired over the last 20 years plus its range of high-end customers including Waitrose, Duchy Originals and Tesco.

"Both Nick and I have committed long-term investment into the business and intend to continue taking on staff but it is imperative that retailers and consumers across the region help this proud business get re-established." ◀

A Royal Cornish Pasty



▶ HRH Princess Alexandra: Crimping skills

Should Bodmin-based baker Proper Cornish ever be short of a pasty crimper, they could look for a Royal solution.

HRH Princess Alexandra was in town last month and enjoyed a tour of the Proper Cornish production line.

MD Phil Ugalde commented: "Having Princess Alexandra to visit was an absolute pleasure. The afternoon went without a hitch and the Princess was completely charming and thoroughly interested in the staff.

"She spent over an hour chatting to everyone and took the time to learn how to crimp a pasty by hand, which, I might add, she was very good at!" ◀

Barclay House empire expands

Looe hotel and restaurant Barclay House has expanded its portfolio with the freehold acquisition of Ye Olde Plough House Inn in Duloe.

The popular restaurant with public house facilities will trade as 'The Plough by Barclay House' and will be run by executive chef Benjamin Palmer and the management of Graham and Gill Brooks, which led to Barclay House being awarded Restaurant of the Year 2010 by Taste of the West.

Barclay House has also agreed to provide The Plough as a temporary location for the Duloe post office following its closure. ◀

KCS shows green credentials

KCS Print has been presented with an award in recognition of its green credentials.

The Launceston-based firm was awarded the international ISO 14001 certificate for its high environmental standards.

To obtain the certificate, KCS developed an environmental management system at its factory, which is externally audited.

Both the factory itself and the materials used by the company from paper to

lighting are the most energy-efficient available.

Paper, batteries, cardboard and plastic are all recycled, while the aluminium plates for printing are reprocessed.

Director Terrye Teverson said: "We take our green credentials seriously, so I am very proud to receive this certificate."

KCS also operates a cycle to work scheme, which allows staff to hire a bike through the company to get to work. ▶



▶ Pedal power: Production manager Simon Schofield with Terrye Teverson

Furniture firm moves to Cornwall

A company that sells high end furniture made from recycled materials is moving to Cornwall so it can consolidate and expand its business.

Eco Furniture International Ltd is receiving £150k of Convergence funds and investing £211k of its own money into the move, which will involve leasing

workspace in Launceston and buying new equipment. It is estimated that the move will create 15 jobs.

Once established in Cornwall, several new products will be developed and it is estimated that turnover, which was £1.4 million for the year ending March 2011, will more than double this over the next three years.

Eco Furniture International Ltd has also been approved for a £50k loan from the South West Loans Fund, and has received substantial support from InvestinCornwall (UK & EU),

MD Nick Powell said: "Without this Convergence support we were faced with having to mitigate existing overheads, reduce staff numbers and outsource at significantly lower cost to India." ▶

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Council concerns over FiT

Cornwall Council has written to the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to officially express its concern over Government proposals to make changes to the Feed in Tarriff (FiT) scheme.

In an open statement to the Government department, Julian German, Cornwall Council cabinet member for the environment, warns of the "hugely negative effect" that the DECC proposals to pull funding could have on local authorities.

In March the Government revealed proposals to limit FiT for renewable energy schemes of over 50Kw – thereby making large scale schemes no longer financially viable.

The Council has followed the Government's own legislative recommendations and the UK's first council-owned solar PV park site is planned for

delivery on land near Newquay Cornwall Airport.

Cllr German wrote: "With the Comprehensive Spending Review having such a huge impact on local authorities, Cornwall Council has subsequently seen this as a method of providing support for future services and therefore creating direct benefits to Cornwall's communities."

"Cornwall is the focus of activity for a large number of solar PV companies. Working with these companies to help develop our low-carbon economy, we have up to £1 billion worth of expected technology investment. We are linking this work to supply-chain activities for local businesses and undertaking positive relationships with developers leading to effective community gain." ▶

Cornish Mutual names new chairman

A new chairman and non-executive director have been elected to the board of Truro-based general insurance firm Cornish Mutual.

Ian Pawley has been appointed chairman and Graham Shearn has taken on the role of non-executive director.

The outgoing chairman Gerald Blewett has decided to step down from the role while remaining on the board to provide continuity. He will strengthen governance at Cornish Mutual by serving as senior independent director – a newly-created role to replace that of deputy chairman.

Commenting on the changes, MD Alan Goddard said: “We have clear plans to develop the business for the benefit of both existing and new Members and I’m confident that Ian, Graham, Gerald and the whole board at Cornish Mutual will



▶ (L-R) Ian Pawley and Graham Shearn

make a huge difference in the company’s future success.”

Pawley has been a non-executive director with Cornish Mutual since November 2008 and was appointed deputy chairman of the company in April last year. ▶

MD David Dunkley said: “Our creative team are a vital part of our business. In our industry is in not only how the finished article will look but also how things are actually made.” ▶

Parc life

St Austell-based sign company Parc Signs has strengthened its design team.

Graphic design graduate, Sarah Medlin has joined the company along with creative engineer, Simon Burgess, who arrives from Princess Yachts.

Banking on Elvans

Geraint Elvans has been appointed as the new director of NatWest Business Banking for Cornwall.

Elvans has been with NatWest for 23 years, the last 12 of which as a relationship director in the commercial banking team. In his new role, he will lead a team of 13 NatWest business managers in the Duchy.

He will look familiar to many – having been the face of NatWest’s national TV and print business banking adverts last year.



▶ Geraint Elvans

King of UCP

A former radio journalist has been appointed as the new marketing, communications & events officer for Unlocking Cornish Potential (UCP).

Jodie King joins UCP having been a freelance newsreader at Pirate FM for the past four years.

She commented: “As a graduate who moved down to Cornwall, I’m really passionate about UCP’s mission to create graduate-level jobs, stem the brain-drain and increase economic prosperity.” ▶

Putting pen to paper

Penryn-based communications company Radix Communications has appointed a new copywriter.

Kieran Haynes has joined the company having successfully graduated from University College Falmouth’s Professional Writing MA course, with the highest distinction awarded to date by the degree programme.

Radix Communications provides copywriting, design and translation services to a range of multinational clients in the technology industry. ▶



▶ Kieran Haynes

New hire for HR company

Hayle-based Human Resources company Sapience HR has announced the appointment of Graham Symmons as its new HR Advisor.

Symmons joins Sapience with a wealth of HR knowledge from previous roles within the Cornish business community.

Company director Sue Hook said: “This is an exciting time for the company and Graham is a great asset to our team. Graham will play a key part in helping local businesses understand the importance of HR and how it can help them manage their operations in the long term.” ▶



▶ Graham Symmons

Age old issue

Make the most of your staff whatever their age is the message from south west employment specialists Coodes Solicitors and Sapience HR

Generation game

The deadline has now passed to give the required six months notice to any employees that will be retired at or after 65 as the default retirement age is scrapped on October 1 this year.

It means employers must now carefully manage discussions about retirement with their staff to avoid discrimination and support employees as they continue to work into older age.

Jeremy Harvey, managing partner of Coodes Solicitors, says: "A compulsory retirement age is still possible under this legislation if it can be justified, for example under health and safety.

"However, it will become increasingly common for people to continue to be working well in to their late sixties, seventies or older.

"I see this having an impact on organisations where performance or needs of an employee could change as one gets older. It's important for an employer to encourage meaningful discussions about the options available to an older worker."

Harvey recommends drawing up a policy or guidelines for older workers to ensure staff can continue working happily in their senior years whilst the employer maintains a productive workforce.

He also advises that this could be carried out through consultation with members of staff aged 50 or over.

Retirement plans could be discussed in line with regular appraisals to understand how an employee may wish to progress their career.

Issues that may affect an older employee and are worth discussing are health, use of technology, workloads and length of shift or the working day.

Sue Hook, managing director of Hayle-based HR consultants Sapience HR, comments: "An annual appraisal is an ideal time to discuss an employee's ongoing career aspirations, even if this is on a more informal basis if you are a small company.

"For any employee, younger and older, it's worth reviewing on a regular basis how they are enjoying work and how they are performing.

"It will become increasingly common for people to continue to be working well in to their late sixties, seventies or older"

"Everyone has key skills, qualities and experience. It's about getting the best out of the people in your company."

Coodes is now offering retained employment support as part of its expanded business services.

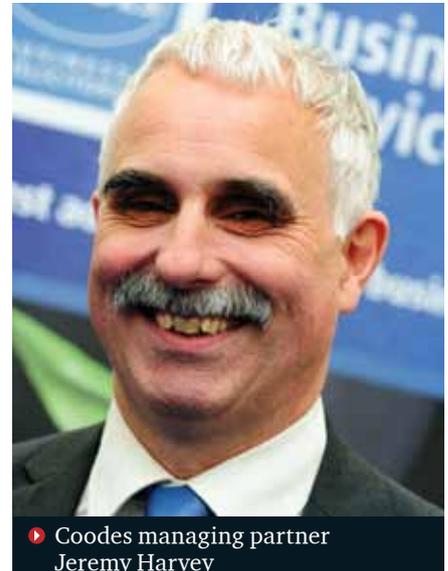
Launched at the Cornwall Business Fair on May 18, the firm offers a comprehensive service to businesses of all sizes with specialist legal experts based throughout Cornwall and Devon.

Led by commercial partner Christian Wilson, the service covers all aspects of business, from setting up to succession planning.

Wilson explains: "We've been established in Cornwall and Devon for hundreds of years, yet we are completely focussed on the needs of businesses today.

"We've been listening to our commercial clients about what they need to support and protect their future interests. For example, we are starting to introduce more fixed fee services so people know what they are paying upfront.

"As a result, we are offering a comprehensive service for businesses at all sizes and all stages of growth, from intellectual property to protect a new idea to succession planning to help your exit strategy." ◀



▶ Coodes managing partner
Jeremy Harvey



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ShelterBox steals the show

The county's leading business figures gather at St Mellion International for the annual celebration that is the Cornwall Business Awards

The Inspirational founder of Helston-based charity ShelterBox was crowned Winner of Winners at last month's Cornwall Business Awards 2011.

Tom Henderson OBE, whose organisation has already helped people in some 80 countries, had already been named Business Leader of the Year, in recognition of his work building the internationally-renowned charity within the county.

Unfortunately he was unable to make the ceremony at the St Mellion International Resort due to a prior engagement in New Orleans, USA, but in time-old awards ceremony tradition, he accepted his award in a pre-recorded video message that moved the 320-strong capacity audience to a rapturous approval.

ShelterBox's near-neighbour Frugi was the other big winner on the night – the organic clothing company scoring a hat-trick of awards for Customer Focus (sponsored by **Business Cornwall** magazine), Best International Business and Most Creative Use of the Web.

Scuba equipment specialist Fourth Element completed an excellent night for companies from the Helston area, winning the Best Diversification category for its new method for creating interactive 3D maps of submerged wrecks.

Falmouth's Fit'n'Fun Kids, the childcare company run by two-time Entrepreneur of the Year Rachel Jones, was a double winner again, receiving awards for Best Employer and Excellence in Marketing.

But apart from some familiar faces, the awards also conjured up a number of first-time winners, again illustrating the great diversity of the Cornish business sector.

2011's Entrepreneur of the Year award went to Julie Hewitt of St Wenn-based Rosedown Eggs, for achieving a five-fold improvement in sales, and 700% rise in profits.

Meanwhile, 26 year-old Dan Parker, who turned his online system for university sports clubs into flourishing mobile messaging firm Firetext Communications, was rewarded with the title Young Businessperson of the Year.

Another electronic messaging company, Bude-based Schoolcomms, whose



Winner of Winners: Tom Henderson OBE
(award received by head of operations John Leach, centre)



Best Diversification: Fourth Element



Business Innovation: Acaster Blades



Customer Focus: Frugi



Most Dynamic Growth Business: Schoolcomms

system delivered well over half a million updates to parents each day during December's extreme weather, won Most Dynamic Growth Business.

Cornwall's burgeoning green sector was also in evidence, as solar farm developer Silicon Vineyard was named Best New Business in Cornwall, while environmental social enterprise ReZolve collected the award for Best Third Sector Business.

Technical innovation was also well represented, with an electronic waste transfer record system from Clear-flow winning Best Use of Technology and Launceston-based Acaster Blades receiving Business Innovation of the Year for its super-efficient heating and hot water system.

A team from Richard Lander School collected its Young Enterprise Award, while Penryn-based baby feeding product company Sproggie was welcomed onstage to receive the prize for winning the Ignite Cornwall Business Plan Competition (*for full details, turn to p24*).

Suzanne Bond, chief executive of awards organizer Cornwall Development Company, was thrilled with the overall standard of the awards and said: "Tonight's winners – indeed, all the finalists – have proven once again that Cornwall has the business talent, creativity and determination to take a starring role as the UK emerges from recession.

"Increasingly, Cornish businesses are a match for the best in their respective fields, anywhere in the world. They deserve our congratulations, recognition and support."

This year's keynote speech was delivered by music industry mogul Peter Waterman, who entertained the audience with reminiscences from his early days in the entertainment world.

"Increasingly, Cornish businesses are a match for the best in their respective fields, anywhere in the world"

The winners in full...

Ignite Cornwall Business Plan Award:

Sproggie

Sponsored by Oxford Innovation

Young Enterprise Award:

Zola

Sponsored by the University of Plymouth

Young Business Person:

Dan Parker (Firetext)

Sponsored by First Great Western

Best New Business in Cornwall:

Silicon Vineyard

Sponsored by Worldwide Financial Planning

Best Third Sector Business:

ReZolve

Sponsored by The Eden Project

Customer Focus:

Frugi

Sponsored by Business Cornwall

Employer of the Year:

Fit'n'Fun Kids

Sponsored by Cornwall College Business

Best Use of Technology:

Clear-flow

Sponsored by BT

Business Leader:

**Tom Henderson OBE
(ShelterBox)**

Sponsored by Ginsters

Most Creative Use of the Web:

Frugi

Sponsored by University College Falmouth

Excellence in Marketing:

Fit'n'Fun Kids

Sponsored by NatWest

Most Dynamic Growth Business:

Schoolcomms

Sponsored by Superfast Cornwall

Best Diversification:

Fourth Element

Sponsored by Niddocks Internet Marketing

Best International Business:

Frugi

Sponsored by Export Cornwall

Business Innovation:

Acaster Blades

Sponsored by Combined Universities in Cornwall

Entrepreneur of the Year:

Julie Hewitt

Sponsored by Coodes

WINNER OF WINNERS:

**TOM HENDERSON OBE
(ShelterBox)**

Sponsored by Cornwall Development Company

Indeed, he seemed to enjoy himself so much up that he somewhat lost track of time, despite subtle and not-so subtle hints from event organisers. Not that the audience minded, however, fully absorbed in his fascinating tales.

Talking to **Business Cornwall** afterwards, Waterman said how impressed he had been with the standard of entries and the talent of Cornwall's business sector in general.

A keen entrepreneur who has always appreciated innovation, Waterman highlighted the importance of teamwork in a businesses' success

"No man is an island," he said. "For example, Simon Cowell has an amazing organisation which he has picked himself, people doing things that he can't do."

And rather than being a hindrance, he sees Cornwall's geographical location as a positive attribute.

"A good idea is a good idea," he said, "and one of the great things about being in Cornwall is that you're so far away that you can incubate an idea and really get it to work before you launch it north if you like."

He believes that good ideas will always win out in the end, and does not appear to be a fan of innovation centres.

"For me personally, I'm yet to be convinced," he said. "If you have an idea you'll make it work, sometimes a little bit of help will detract you. It's still a mute point."

Waterman is a keen supporter of local business back in the north west

where he lives, and has taken an active involvement in the Cheshire and Warrington LEP.

And, unlike the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly incarnation, remarked how smoothly it had gone.

"We haven't allowed the public bodies to come in and do it their way," he explained. "We wanted to stop the talking and see money go to small and medium sized businesses and places where it could make a difference.

"Real words. We want to make a difference and it's important not to be put off by bureaucracy." 

Zeitgeist

Something of a social media lesson from Zeitgeist this month, as we learn of the “darker side of recruitment” and Facebook relationships in the office. We also reveal that sexism in the workplace is still a real issue

Recruitment and social media

Don't use social media for recruitment; it is a “complete and utter waste of time”.

That was the surprise advice of a roundtable discussion organised by hosting specialist UKFast.

Geoff Newman of Recruitment Genius said: “For a smaller company it is less relevant; it is more intensive in terms of generating content. The viability depends on the context of the company and how frequently they are looking to recruit.

“For the vast majority of small companies, I'd say it would be a complete and utter waste of time and money.”

But social media is also being used for a darker side of recruitment – digging up

“By sticking to traditional methods, we not only save time, we also save money”

information on potential candidates to judge suitability. A practice the experts agreed was treading a fine moral line.

A recent study found that over 80% of employers use social media profiles to screen job applicants. From the photos posted of you on Facebook to the drunken tweets directed at your ex, everything is available to employers.

But UKFast MD Lawrence Jones does not think social media profiling is the way forward when recruiting. “If we



were to dig into the social media profiles of all of these people, I would need to hire a team of ten recruiters. By sticking to traditional methods including telephone interviews and online personality profiles for all interviewees, we not only save time, we also save money.”

Entrepreneurs' skills call

Entrepreneurs in the south west are calling for the provision of more ‘on the job’ skills learning for entrepreneurs according to new research released by Coutts & Co.

This was seen as the top measure by 40% of entrepreneurs when asked to cite their number one priority to create more entrepreneurs in the UK.

In contrast, only 9% of those surveyed in East Anglia agreed on this point with those in the south west. This priority was followed in the south west by the development of teaching enterprise in schools (32%) and more positive stories around entrepreneurs as role models (15%).

Entrepreneurs in the south west are the most likely to want improved access to growth capital (32%) as the top driver

“Entrepreneurs in the south west are the most likely to want improved access to growth capital (32%)”

to enable Britain to become more of an enterprise economy, compared to one in ten in the north east and in Wales.

When first setting up their businesses, the area where they most needed support was overwhelmingly accounting and finance (52%). Marketing (30%) and fundraising (20%), were also areas where they needed help.

Workplace Facebook etiquette

Office managers in the UK have revealed that they prefer to keep work and home life separate when it comes to social networking sites, by avoiding friendship links with work colleagues.

Research by Brother revealed that 50% of office administrators are not linked to anyone at work on Facebook.

40% of those questioned revealed they were friends with close workmates on the social networking site, while just 10% were happy to befriend their managers or boss.

Sexism in the workplace



According to a survey conducted for Marie Claire magazine, sexism is still rife in the workplace.

Despite the apparent “enlightened” times in which we live, 46% of women surveyed have experienced sexism at work.

The research claims that two thirds of women believe a mentoring scheme would help them do better in business. 60% of those questioned who had been mentored at work found the scheme had a positive effect on their business.

However, 72% of firms have no such scheme in place.

Other findings include 63% who believe a woman's age is more of an issue in the office than a man's, while 78% believe being attractive helps them get ahead.

Seasonal bump for housing market



Demand for property increased in Devon and Cornwall during April, according to the latest RICS UK Housing Market survey.

16% more surveyors reported demand rose rather than fell during April, up from 12% more in March.

Respondents noted that the good weather led to increased numbers of viewings from potential buyers in the south west. Despite this, local surveyors continue to report that a lack of mortgage finance is hindering many, with only the cash-rich able to really take advantage of the market.

Looking ahead, 13% more surveyors in the region predict sales to increase rather than decrease over the next three months. ▶

Storm in the cloud?

Security remains the main hurdle to businesses switching to cloud computing, according to a recent survey from AMD.

The study found 59% of businesses are concerned about security in the cloud, while 32% were still concerned about the reliability of their internet connection.

Of all the businesses considering a switch to the cloud, 42% said they were attracted by the savings it would make. In other parts of the world, increased efficiency was the prime driver for 54% of businesses in the Asia/Pacific region. ▶

Administrations broadly unchanged

Administrations in the south west show little change year on year, according to recent research by accountancy and business advisors Baker Tilly.

However, there was a small downward trend in the region whereas businesses in the south east are under increasing pressure suffering from an acceleration of business failures over the past year with administrations up 32% year on year.

Particularly hard hit are the services sector with

30% and construction with 22% increases. The last year has seen a specific squeeze on these sectors as contracts decline or cease altogether and more services are taken in house.

However, overall administrations fell 8.2% across England in Q1 2011 compared to the same period 12 months earlier, but despite this fall individual regions relative performance has been extremely varied.

The numbers can be seen in full in the tables below:

Regions	Q1 10	Q1 11	% change
East Anglia	17	24	41.2
London	230	196	-14.8
North East	16	11	-31.3
North West	132	124	-6.1
South East (excluding London)	57	75	31.6
South West	47	46	-2.1
Yorkshire and Humberside	95	76	-20.0
Midlands (All)	101	91	-9.9

Source: London Gazette

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A lasting legacy?

As the South West RDA begins to clear out its desks, former head of business development, Stephen Bohane, defends its record in Cornwall, explaining how the agency has helped shape the Duchy's future

The South West Regional Development Agency has not always enjoyed the highest levels of popularity in Cornwall.

Brickbats have regularly been flung in the RDA's direction over the years, and when it was announced 12 months ago that it was being consigned to the dustbin of history in preference to a more local solution, there was not much dissent.

Ironically enough, in the intervening months local opinions towards the RDA have shown signs of softening and there is every chance as we move forward that its legacy will be remembered even more fondly.

The South West RDA's outgoing head of business development, Stephen Bohane, strongly defends the RDA's record in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, claiming that many of its investments have laid the foundations for the Duchy to become a significantly more prosperous place.

With the RDA's help, he claims, public money has gone into projects where once private investment feared to tread. That it has helped smooth a pathway for private money to follow in behind.

The writing was on the wall for the English RDAs as soon as keys were exchanged at Number 10 last May. The Conservatives had made little secret of their dislike of the regional agenda, while the Lib Dems, at the very least, envisaged a radical overhaul.

And it was arguably this 'regionalism' that meant that the RDA and Cornwall were so often uncomfortable bedfellows. A quango with a head office in Exeter and a remit that extended as far east as Bournemouth and north up to Gloucester, was always likely to be open to criticism

in a place like Cornwall, with its strong sense of identity.

Bohane recalls that geographical misgivings extended well beyond the Tamar, however. He explains: "When the Government first set up the RDAs in 1998, there was a huge row across the country about where the boundaries should be, not just in Cornwall.

"And the Government said, in my view quite rightly, that they're not going to argue about it forever – which is what would have happened – this is the map, like it or lump it.

"But it gave us an incredibly large and incoherent region. But it was not just Cornwall who had a problem with it, Gloucester considered itself more a part of the West Midlands, while there was a strong argument from Bournemouth and east Dorset to go in with the Isle of Wight and Hampshire to have an RDA for the central south."



▶ Stephen Bohane



But while Bohane accepts some of the criticisms levelled at the RDA, he does not accept the notion that all the major decisions were taken in Exeter or Bristol.

"That's not fair," he says. "Decisions were taken as much in Truro. There has always been a Truro office from the word go."

He does admit, however, that the RDA didn't always get it right and was "initially quite arrogant" in some of the things it said. It was also over optimistic on the delivery timescale for many projects, which left it wide open for criticism over the apparent slow pace.

While the regeneration work in Camborne, Pool, and Redruth continues apace and is there for all to see, for many years there was a growing frustration at the inactivity behind the hoardings. "Every stone we turned over revealed more work that was needed before we could even put a spade in the ground," says Bohane. "We learned a real lesson on how long these projects take."

In hindsight Bohane admits the RDA should have been more realistic in its timescale. The same goes for the regeneration work of St Austell town centre.

"I got in a lot of trouble there," he admits, "in giving a very optimistic view on when the town centre would be built. I had to go on radio and television several times to explain why things were so behind schedule.

"But these projects are not easy. For example, one of the sites we needed to buy was the old Tesco store in the centre of town. But Tesco refused to sell so we have to go through a compulsory purchase order. That alone cost us a year.



► Pool Innovation Centre: Without its direct investment, the RDA claims workspace projects like this would never have happened

“We were accused of all sorts. People said we would give up but we carried on and you go there now and it’s doing very well. The private sector would never have touched that project, it was difficult enough for the public sector.”

And he admits that there have perhaps been times when the RDA has been too forcible and undiplomatic in Cornwall, when bringing in outside input.

“The example that comes to mind,” he says, “is the innovation centres. We hired a national expert on innovation centres and he had quite a thorny relationship with some of the partners in Cornwall because he challenged their thinking. But the good news is one is up and running and another is about to come on line. And hopefully there will be a medically related one at Treiske in the near future.”

Bohane is proud of the work the South West RDA has put into development of quality office space such as the Pool Innovation Centre. The development of quality office space has traditionally been a problem in Cornwall due to market failure. The high costs of construction combined with low land values and the lack of blue chip tenants, have led to perceived high levels of risk on behalf of developers.

But the RDA has been able to bridge the gap and in some cases directly build premises. Going back a few years now, Tolvaddon Energy Park, says Bohane, is

a good example of the amount of effort that has gone into workspace. “There is no way the private sector would have built that at the time,” he says, “although they probably would today, because we have proved the market.”

Two of the South West RDA’s most successful and high profile investments are the Eden Project and Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC), while it has also invested significantly in the development of Newquay Airport, which he says is of “huge significance” to the Cornish economy.

“People said we would give up but we carried on and it’s doing very well”

“The airport has a hugely exciting future for the economic development of Cornwall,” he says. “It is a great asset and has a number of USPs.

“And it has bags of land around it. There is real private sector interest around the airport. I played a part in bringing AgustaWestland to Newquay and am aware of strong interest from other global blue chip aviation-related companies looking at the airport. Even if just one of them invests, it will be really significant for Cornwall.

“The CUC was a very brave move to stop exodus of young people from Cornwall. I was involved in the early days and

was asked by some senior civil servants what would happen if the students didn’t come. But they did and it’s been a massive success. It’s a long-term plan, but it is and will continue to be a transformational project for Cornwall.”

Of course, the RDA coffers have been far from a bottomless pit and it has had to turn down many schemes over the years, and backtrack on others when Government cutbacks first started to hit.

“Investment decisions were not taken by the RDA alone,” says Bohane, “but with partners such as the Council. But remember we were looking for economic output and had to turn away a number of good projects, including social projects, that didn’t have a hard-edge economic output.

“And we were besieged by tourism projects. We could support schemes like Eden, because they brought new visitors into Cornwall, but we were unable to support projects which simply shuffled visitors around.

“And we had to be equally as hard-nosed about investments we made in business. Our requirement was to create skilled jobs, higher value jobs that could support the transformation of the economy.

“And all the evidence suggests that we have been fairly successful. Over the years Cornwall has had one of the highest regional growth rates, and RDA and



▶ Wave Hub: The RDA invested some £12.5 million towards the development of Wave Hub, a sea power project situated some ten miles off the Hayle coast

European funding has had something to do with that.”

Bohane points to a number of highly successful companies in Cornwall where the RDA has been involved at significant stages of their development, such as Pendennis Shipyard, Fugro Seacore, and St Austell Brewery, where it invested in its bottling plant.

Another brewery to benefit from early RDA investment was Sharp’s, which grew to become such an attractive business that Molson Coors recently acquired it for £20 million, with a pledge

“Cornwall has been in the headlines for the right reasons”

to expand its existing Rock premises and create more jobs.

And beyond that, Bohane lists the RDA’s broadband investments; sustainable energy projects such as the Wave Hub; and money towards business support initiatives such as high growth start up support and coaching, delivered by Oxford Innovation, as further evidence of the legacy that it will be leaving.

He says the RDA years have been an exciting time. “When I arrived in 1999, most of the news from Cornwall was bad. The only significant project attracting attention at that stage was Tate St Ives. But in subsequent years, Cornwall has been in the headlines for the right reasons.”

Bohane appreciates the fact that the regional agenda is dead, for the time being at least, but hopes Cornwall doesn’t become too inward looking as the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership begins to take shape.

While the Government has labelled the LEPs a replacement for the RDAs, the key difference, of course, is that they will receive very little direct Government funding.

The exact functions of the local LEP are still a little sketchy, but Bohane is sure to be an interested bystander.

He says: “The LEPs haven’t decided what they want to do exactly, and it’s up to them how many of the RDA functions they try to take on, but they won’t have the cash.”

Most of the funding for LEP projects will come from the Regional Growth Fund. Round one has already passed with a first allocation to the wider south west worth £8 million, which compares with the original SWRDA allocation of £142 million.

“It will be very interesting watching from the sidelines whether they decide to tackle the broad economic agenda or try and concentrate on one or two key areas.”

What would he recommend? “I’ll leave that to them,” he diplomatically sidesteps. “You can argue a case both ways.” ▶



▶ Eden Project: The South West RDA has been involved with Eden since its inception and has provided £17.93 million of investment over the project’s four phases of development

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"I didn't sleep last night after yesterday, it was really more beneficial than expected and I have a plethora of ideas on my mind."

Mark Wright,
Piran Technologies Ltd

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25% of Cornwall & Isles of Scilly based businesses cite 'Reducing costs' as their primary objective for 2011*

*Collaboration Survey 2010, PFA Research Ltd

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Baby, Ignite my

A baby-feeding product company from Penryn wins the Ignite Business Plan Competition, and plans to take a lucrative market by storm

If ever proof was needed that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and kicking in Cornwall, it could be found in Newquay last month at the grand final of the Ignite Business Plan Competition.

A fledgling baby-feeding product company beat off the efforts of nine other businesses on the night in a Dragon's Den-style presentation, after an original entry to the competition of more than 70.

The Ignite Business Plan Competition, now in its second year, is far more than an awards ceremony. In being crowned winner at the grand final at the Carnmarth Hotel, Penryn-based Sproggie walked away with a prize fund worth a staggering £100k, giving it a tremen-

dous boost as it prepares to take on the bid wide commercial world.

“This proves that with pure vision, creativity and a bit of enthusiasm you can get a long way”

The competition, supported by ERDF Convergence investment, is a kind of talent contest for Cornwall's budding entrepreneurs, looking to discover a fantastic commercial idea that could provide that spark to form an award-winning business.

And it didn't let us down, with the winner showing that inspiration doesn't

have to be complicated, with product designer Michael Mailling first hitting upon the simple idea after seeing a mother struggling to feed her infant child on a long haul flight.

“This proves that with pure vision, creativity and a bit of enthusiasm you can get a long way,” he said, commenting on his victory. “I'm delighted to have won the competition and I believe that Sproggie can represent the county as an international brand, and best of all it's a simple idea.”

Mailling confesses that he thought he had seriously messed up the pitch when presenting to the judges, but believes it was its simplicity that ultimately won through.



▶ Michael Mailling (centre) celebrates with (l-r) Treve Willis, Carleen Kelemen, John Girdlestone and Stephen Bohane

fire

“Being an entry product, I think they liked the fact that it was think big and start small. They also saw that it was patent protected and has huge potential to become a major international brand.”

Win or lose, Mailling was determined that Sproggie would go to market, but the victory does give him a tremendous start. Now the dust is beginning to settle, he will, along with trusted business partner, chartered accountant John Girdlestone, look to drive the business forward and fulfil its obvious potential.

“He reins me in,” says Mailling of Girdlestone, “which is a good balance. He’s good with numbers, I’m good with design.”

Just days after winning the Business Plan Competition, Mailling received an offer of investment from an individual, but with everything suddenly moving so fast, he is understandably weighing up all his options.

Mailling and Girdlestone must also decide how to make best use of the prize fund, which includes a £25k European cash injection from competition organiser Oxford Innovation; a radio marketing campaign through Pirate FM; business and finance advice from Winter Rule; legal advice from Foot Anstey Solicitors; design services with Creative Edge; website development through Net Insight; free office space at Pool Innovation Centre; and HR support from Tamar HR.

The competition attracted entries from a wide range of businesses from across Cornwall. Judges, who included Richard Gardiner from Foot Anstey Solicitors, Richard Wadman from Winter Rule, Dave Rickett from Creative Edge, Beverley Warne from Pirate FM and Richard Scutt from Pool Innovation Centre, were looking for innovative ideas that had the potential to be turned into successful ventures, led by people



▶ The Ignite Business Plan Competition 2011 finalists

who could become the region’s business leaders of the future.

Lucy Jewson, chair of Judges, and owner of successful children’s clothing company, Frugi, said: “The overall standard of entries was extremely high and our ten finalists were exceptional. We selected Sproggie as our winner as we felt the business showed great potential for growth through innovative product design and development.

“If we can pull this one off, I think we can be bigger than Ginsters! I really do”

“I am sure the prize fund will go a long way in helping Sproggie bring their plans to fruition.”

Oxford Innovation’s competition manager, Leo Dunne, was delighted with the calibre of entrant. He said: “We launched the Ignite Business Plan Competition last year and were amazed at the number and quality of entries. We

received even more entries for this year’s competition, which is testament to the entrepreneurial spirit of Cornwall.

“The quality just keeps getting better and better and all our finalists were worthy of their position; I know the judges had a very hard task in selecting just one winner. We would like to congratulate Sproggie on winning Ignite 2011 and we’re sure they will go on to have a very prosperous future.”

And Mailling is certainly not underestimating its potential. “If we can pull this one off,” he says, “I think we can be bigger than Ginsters! I really do.”

But while it is only now that the product is set to enter the marketplace, Sproggie is far from being an overnight vision. In many ways it has been a company sitting on the shelf, just biding its time for the right moment to come and take the market by storm.

Mailling recalls that “eureka” moment when he first struck upon the idea some ten years ago, sat on a long

haul flight. "This mother was really struggling to feed her young child on the plane," he says, "and I thought there's a market there. She was struggling between the spoon, the tin and the bowl, and it just wasn't going very well.

"The idea was just so obvious," says Mailling. "To have a vessel that was squeezable, with a clip on spoon. It was a case of either going on to manufacture the vessel ourselves, or could we piggy back onto something else?"

Mailling settled on the latter, although the only problem was that at the time no one was producing baby food in a pouch. However, he noticed that Lucozade was selling drink in a pouch, and took the calculated gamble that technology in the baby food market would soon catch up.

And so he began the timely and costly patenting process, to have everything in place for when baby food was sold in pouches.

In recent years that market has exploded, to such an extent that Ella's Kitchen Organic sells 100,000 units a day alone. And Sproggie is now ready to expand on its convenience with its patented clip-on spoon, which easily attaches to the nozzle of any pouch transforming it into the "ultimate delivery system", enabling the parent to squeeze out the food onto the spoon all with one hand and with no mess.

Mailling believes that this product has the potential to do the same for baby foods as baby bottles did for milk. "Once you have established a need," he explains, "you are half way there. It's not necessarily about reinventing the wheel every time, but adding value all the time."

"The idea was just so obvious. To have a vessel that was squeezable, with a clip on spoon. It was a case of either going on to manufacture the vessel ourselves, or could we piggy back onto something else?"

As with all new ventures, getting the name and branding right is vitally important, perhaps even more so in such a customer focused and sensitive marketplace as baby products.

"It is the brand image in which people put their trust," says Mailling. "Getting the name right was hard work and involved a lot of late nights. It can be a struggle to get the domain names. So we had one lap top open on Companies House, and the other on a domain name web site, plugging in names hoping to get a match.



"The 'sprog' bit was quite obvious and then we thought of tying it with 'oggie', because we wanted to do something from down here. So 'Sproggie' popped out and we managed to get the domain names and the limited company as well."

And as with the patent, this was all done several years ago, with Sproggie since lying dormant, just waiting for its calling.

In the meantime Mailling got on with his successful career as a freelance product designer, working in a number of markets, but particularly the audio and consumer goods sector.

But now his attentions are fully focused on Sproggie. And the clip-on spoon is just the beginning of the story, with the company looking to launch



a range of "bigger and better" complementary products next year, while further developing and characterising the Sproggie brand.

While Mailling says that 46% of the market would buy ready-made baby food, it is that other 54%, the "home-made brigade", that is the competition and the challenge for Sproggie.

And the sky would seem to be the limit. He comments: "Sproggie is a brand led by fun and convenience – to help out stressed out mums busy of time and limited on hours. The market is led by life-style and convenience, and we believe we can assist that process through a range of unique and high value tools. We want to bring a whole range of products that is going to excite the market."

It is going to be a closely managed process, but Mailling has every confidence. "The biggest task for us," he says, "is getting the brand personality right. If we can get that sorted and nailed down, we are on to a winner."

And he will be proud to do all this based in the Duchy, insisting that location is no longer a barrier for developing new, exciting products.

"Ten years ago, as a consultant, I was constantly commuting back and forth to Germany. I did used to lose some business," he admits. "Clients didn't always want to pay me for sitting on an airplane, but with broadband, that problem has now just gone. You can do everything down here.

"It's exciting to anticipate the launch of a potential international brand from Cornwall." 📍

Connected Cornwall

A bumper edition of pictures this month capturing the Cornish business community out in force

Networking opportunities have abounded across Cornwall in recent weeks.

Cornwall Business Week was a tremendous success, with a number of events held up and down the county. The Cornwall Business Fair proved to be the ideal networking event everyone thought it to would be and drew record numbers to Lemon Quay in Truro.

And across way on the same day, Hall for Cornwall was the venue for the launch of an e-marketing book produced by four of the Duchy's leading online

businesses – Aren Grimshaw Social Media, Niddocks, MailAway and UKNetWeb.

We also feature pictures this month from Stephens Scown's Business Class briefing, and the launch of the Outdoor Screenings season, which took place at Victoria Gardens

Kingsley Village was the venue for the first-ever Cornwall Home Show. The event attracted 1000 visitors and proved so successful that event organiser Live Events South West is already planning for next year's show.

And finally, back in Truro, Brett Harvey was commissioned by Totally Truro Business Improvement District to produce a short film to mark Art in the City, a community arts festival that was held in April and May.

The film – My Truro – premiered at a special celebration event at One Eyed Cat. ▶

Cornwall Business Fair

Photos: Khalile Siddiqui Photography



All captions L-R 1 Martin Follett (Cornwall Chamber) 2 Richard Glover (Cornwall Chamber) and Matthew Clarke (KernowPods) 3 Andy Coote (centre, BizWords) 4 Networking at the Business Fair 5 Vicky Evans and Rachel Jones (Fit 'n Fun Kids) 6 Sarah Talbot (Miss Tea)

Cornwall Home Show



1 Dan Smith (Eco Energies) 2 Debra Gristwood (Sustainable Furniture UK) 3 Heath Everett (H Everett Interiors) 4 Kim & Luke Weller (Iroka) 5 John Weller (South West Carpets) 6 Mat Filewood and George Edward-Collins (Cornish Traditional Cottages)

Art in the City Launch



1 Jean Cooke, Ron Cooke, Nick Seaton-Burrige (Scott Burrige Commercial) and Rob Nolan 2 Rose Hatcher (Fish Factory Gallery), Sophie Capron (artist) and Brett Harvey (film maker) 3 Tony Welford (chair of Totally Truro) and Viv Hendra (Lander Gallery)

Outdoor Screenings



1 Film makers Brett Harvey and Ian Bucknole 2 Karen Weeks (Truro College Business Centre) with husband Craig 3 Kate Whetter (Cornwall Education Business Partnership) and Kirstie Newton (Cornwall Today)

Business Class Briefing



1 Paula Drodge and Hilary Pryor (TMS Financial Solutions) and Jo Morgan (Stephens Scown) 2 Phil Wilkes (Lloyds TS) and James Hodgson (Hodgson's Chartered Accountants) 3 Tiffany Chambers (Stags) and Bill Clarke (Cornish Farm Dairy) 4 Giles Dunning and Ben Jones (Stephens Scown) 5 Jo Lawless and Tracey Lewis (Robinson Reed Layton) 6 Tim Williams (HSBC) and Sean Mitchell (Bishop Fleming) 7 Sam Weller (The Cornwall Hotel Spa and Estate) and Paul Taylor (Goldring Yates) 8 Claire Vaughan (Kelsall Steele), Peter Moody (St Austell Printing Company) and Bernard Pooley (Kelsall Steele) 9 Mel Greenhalgh (Mel G Ltd) and Teresa Thompson (Downing Dodd Partnership)

Marketing E-book Launch



1 Adrian Noott (Equipped 4 Sport), Andrea Edlin (Niddocks) and Anna Penrose (MailAway) 2 Sandra Boehner (centre, Into 3D) 3 Jon Brassington (Icarus), Mike Reid (Netinsight) and Mark Hudson (Seventhwave Design)

The last word

Janus Howard – Digital Peninsula Network

Name: Janus Howard
Company: Digital Peninsula Network Ltd
Job title: Managing Director

What did you want to be when you were young? **A professional surfer.**

What was your first full time job? **Life guard on my local surf beach.**

What is your best quality? **Tenacity.**

What is your worst quality? **Impatience.**

What is your favourite book? ***The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* by Haruki Murakami.**

What is your favourite film? **Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*.**

What is your favourite restaurant? **A lovely little Thai restaurant in Penzance called Sukothai which has great food at good prices.**

How do you like to relax? **Spending the day at my favourite beach in Cornwall, Gwenver, with my girlfriend, friends and surfboard.**

If you could build a house anywhere in the world where would it be? **I would rather build a superyacht so that I wouldn't be tied to one location.**

If you could be a superhero, what superpowers would you like to possess? **Flight, it would save a fortune on holidays.**

Who was your teenage pin up? **Coco from the TV series *Fame*.**

Can money buy happiness? **No, but lack of it can certainly cause unhappiness.**

Most annoying TV personality? **Allan Carr.**

If you only had £1 left in the entire world, what would you spend it on? **Something I could sell for £2.**

What has been the best moment in your career? **Winning substantial funding from the European Social Fund**

to enable DPN to support Cornwall's digital business community.

What has been the worst moment in your career? **Drying up during a public presentation.**

What do you begrudge spending money on? **Parking.**

What's the best thing about Cornwall? **Its strong community spirit.**

What is the most valuable lesson you have learned in life? **Life is short so make the most of your opportunities.**

What makes you happy? **Playing the guitar with my friends after a good surf.**

What makes you angry? **My own shortcomings.**

If you could invite any two people for dinner, who would they be and why would you invite them? **Stephen Fry for his intelligence and wit and Paco Pena to play the guitar.**

What could you not live without? **She knows who she is.**

Tell me a joke. **Q: Why did the scarecrow win the Nobel Prize? A: Because he was out standing in his field.**

What's the greatest invention ever? **The wetsuit because it enables surfing in Cornwall all year round.**

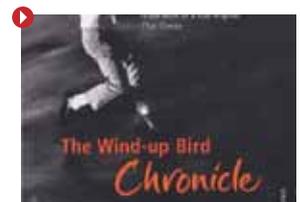
What's your favourite holiday destination? **A yacht in the Canary Islands for great sailing and surfing.**

When is honesty not always the best policy? **When being interviewed for a magazine.**

What's your #1 ambition? **Good health and a long life.**

If you could be God for a day, what miracle would you perform? **Returning the environment to a pre industrial state.**

Describe yourself in three adjectives. **Determined, resourceful, direct.**





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