

Objective One case study business support



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The Objective One Business Task Force's vision is to 'Make Cornwall the place to do business in the 21st Century' and its aim is to 'establish Cornwall as a model for sustainable prosperity by creating foundations that support innovation and best practice'.

The projects in the Business Support investment cluster provide support, advice and investment for mainly, but not exclusively, small and medium sized businesses.

This cluster also includes a number of funds that provide tailored services to individual small and medium businesses to assist them with development and growth.

Small and medium sized businesses are essential to the development of the economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Waterborne

A Cornish kayaking school and shop, which opened for business only nine months ago, is already splashing out on three new sea kayaks for the coming season.

Waterborne was set up in rented premises on Porthleven's harbourside by husband and wife Drew and Sian Pilley, with help from Business Link Devon and Cornwall's 'Starting in Business' service.

As Sian explained, the new sea kayaks will boost the couple's plans to expand both the retail and training aspects of their business. She added: "They are at the cutting edge of new sea kayak design."

"We're also on course to become an official demonstration centre for these craft which should attract experienced paddlers and the high end of the market – both for kayaking activity and related equipment sales through the shop."

Waterborne, which this season will call on the services of two kayaking instructors and full-time help in the shop, stocks a diverse range of water sports clothing, accessories and equipment for all ages.

As self-confessed business novices, the couple found it helpful to attend a Business Link Starting in Business awareness session at Launceston followed by workshops at Penzance on planning and regulations, sales and marketing and finance and accounts.

"It was a steep learning curve," recalled Sian. "But the programme helped us to feel our way and, although it was a lot of information to take on board, we're now reflecting on it and remembering what we picked up."



Waterborne offers kayak coaching on an individual or group basis tailored towards sea, surf or inland paddling

The Pilleys also benefited from a 'Starting in Business' business review and development plan which advised them to separate their retail trade transactions from the kayaking activities.

Drew, an outdoor education lecturer at Truro College, started paddling nearly 20 years ago and has paddled extensively at home and abroad while Sian, a trained primary school teacher with an arts background, grew up in north Cornwall.

Drew, who also teaches sailing and boat maintenance, explained: "Water is an important feature of our community and safety is of paramount importance. At Waterborne we hope to instill a sense of respect and responsibility for the water in all our clients."

The business offers kayak coaching on an individual or group basis tailored towards sea, surf or inland paddling, plus courses for accredited qualifications, trips exploring Cornwall's caves and coastline, and children's holiday courses. For the more experienced, white water and surf sessions are available on local rivers and beaches.

The prime location overlooking the harbour in Porthleven attracts many tourists and the Pilleys are carrying out market research to build on its potential by developing a centre of excellence for activity holidays and corporate events as well as training.

Meanwhile the business is looking to develop a website and re-design publicity material to promote new activities and target out-of-Cornwall customers.

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With a passion for stories and community life, Sian is also currently organising a community project funded by a grant from a local heritage initiative. It involves local children interviewing and filming Porthleven residents – and then creating film ‘shorts’ that bring alive these local stories which will be performed and celebrated at Easter.

“From Cornish stock and having lived in Cornwall for most of my life, I have taught at a number of schools in the county,” she said. “I know how important community is and I am very keen to develop Waterborne and its position within the community of Porthleven.”

The Starting in Business programme offers new business start-ups a mixture of tailor-made advice, seminars and guidance in their first twelve months of trading. For more information contact Business Link on 0845 600 9966 or visit www.bldc.co.uk.



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