



West Devon Business Information Point
Bridge House
Rooms 2 & 3
25 Fore Street
Okehampton
EX20 1DL

www.bipwestdevon.biz
team@bipwestdevon.biz

AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

Put a Spring into Business Profits

For many businesses, Spring is a time when they look forward to a period of busy sales, many land based businesses having diversified into a wider range of business activity, such as tourism, adding value to meat, production of plants for sale and many others besides, all these have led to contact with customers. Customers mean sales and sales mean profits. This is in sharp contrast to agricultural businesses producing commodity products who rarely meet the end customer.

To run these new business activities profitably, many people have needed to acquire new skills. Customers demand high quality goods and services. Successful businesses achieve these and having achieved it initially, continue to grow with expanding product lines and increasing profits. Businesses that fail to address these skills often struggle along, eventually implode and cease trading. The owner's reaction then is to say it was a bad idea, rather than admit that they did not have the skills to make a success of the business.

To assist existing and potential new businesses learn from others and to obtain new skills for the future, Agri-BIP have in partnership with Lantra (the Sector Skills Council for the Landbased and Environmental Industries) obtained European Social co-financed funds in conjunction with the Learning and Skills Council, deliver a number of practical workshops. These workshops will deliver the skills required for the future, **free of charge**, to businesses within South Hams, Torridge, West Devon and North Devon. These workshops will be held at convenient locations across the area. People who are unable to attend due to difficulty with travel and childcare costs, can be helped by with these costs funded by the project.

The spring into Business Profits element of this project will commence in April with a speaker who is well known to most people in the red meat industry. Philip Warren, master butcher from Launceston. For anybody who has an interest in meat production and meat sales, Philip is an engaging speaker and has more knowledge than most people I know with regards to meat, meat presentation, meat handling and most of all meat sales. If you are looking to add value to your products, this is a workshop not to be missed. It will be held at his premises at Launceston and will be very practical.

Honestly, not all of us can build a business in the way that Philip has, but there will be techniques, which he uses that can be picked up by others. To build on those techniques this first workshop will be followed by a series of workshops covering marketing, sales and promotion, determining who your customers are and how to reach them. If you are stimulated by this talk to start retailing your own meat or any other products an ideal start would be a workshop for people **Setting up a Business**, covering legal implications, tax, VAT, Health and Safety, Hygiene etc. With many businesses now making sales over the phone, whether it be Bed & Breakfast or meat / veg box schemes, telephone selling techniques are important.

(Continued overleaf)

You may just think that having got the customer at the end of the phone, it will be easy to make the sale, but this is not always the case and there are some simple techniques, which can be used to ensure that more of those phone calls get turned into sales and lead to profit.

Having got these businesses up and running, how will you be recording the financial activity, are all the invoices going into a box, or are records being kept which will enable you to monitor the growth and profitability of the business? **The Finance and Basic Bookkeeping workshop** will cover all the areas needed to ensure that you have the right records.

I have talked a lot about customers, but having made a sale to a customer do you know who he or she is? Can you reach them again or will it be a one off sale? Using IT, for example a database, can ensure that you keep a record of all of your customers and can reach them again and let them know of any special offers, mail shots or perhaps even send them a newsletter? Remember that an existing customer is much easier to keep than is finding new customers.

On the subject of IT, more and more businesses are now using the Internet as a vehicle for sales. Have you got a website? Does it generate sales? If not why not? Perhaps, people are unable to find your site. With billions of sites out there, just having a website built without the right marketing techniques, you will never be found, it is like a grain of sand in the desert, but using the right techniques, search engines will find your website and you will get new customers and new sales. Why not come along to a **Web Development Workshop** and find out more.

Some landbased businesses are already developing other business activities and have been lucky enough to obtain a grant under the Rural Enterprise Scheme. However obtaining a grant is not as easy as it seems. On the allocation of a grant you will need to make claims and justify your expenditure in order to draw down your grant. A **Project Management Workshop** aimed specifically at Rural Enterprise Scheme applicants is a must if you are going to manage the project effectively.

Depending on your needs and ambitions you can attend one or any combination of workshops/ events, if there are other areas not mentioned above that you require give me a call and we will try and accommodate your needs. Remember for eligible people they are **free of charge**.

Throughout this Spring programme of workshops and events, we will be inviting other speakers to attend, who will, I am sure inspire us all to examine our current business activity and spur us on to undertake new activities, which will lead to extra profits and will really put a **'Spring'** into your step.

Stewart Horne - Manager

Meat Production and Meat Sales Workshop

Our practical workshops begin with – **Philip Warren, Master Butcher**

Giving an insight into the art of retailing meat profitably.

The workshop will take place on Tuesday 26th April at Westgate Street, Launceston starting at 7.30pm.

Remember for eligible people these workshops are free of charge.

This is an opportunity not to be missed!

For more information and to book a place at this workshop, please contact us in the office on

Freephone 0800 592 872.

Drop in Clinic at Liskead Market

Agri-BIP in connection with The Integrated Area Team at Caradon are holding a Drop in Clinic to answer any queries you might have on Single Payment Scheme applications and National Reserve issues.

The clinic will be on Thursday 21st April at the livestock market and will be open from 10am – 2.30pm, so do feel free to drop in.

Cornwall leads the way in delivering the national pilot for the Fresh Start Initiative

Following the successful launch of the national framework for the Fresh Start Initiative at the Smithfield Show, Cornwall Agricultural Council is at the forefront of being the first local body to take up the challenge of delivering this initiative to the agricultural and land based industries throughout Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Fresh Start is an industry led initiative, aimed at securing a sustainable future for farming through bringing fresh, dynamic and innovative people into the industry, whilst prompting others to think about how they will respond to the challenges and opportunities of the CAP reform for the future development of their businesses.

The CAC believe all farmers will need to adapt in some way to the resulting changes and will need to take stock and make choices about the future direction of their businesses. Some may decide to lease out or sell their land; some may employ contract farmers or managers or even consider a joint venture arrangement. All these possibilities have the potential to create more opportunities for young and new people starting out in farming.

The Cornwall initiative is offering a robust package of measures to help people consider these options including matchmaking, business support, retirement planning, mentoring and training. We also aim to introduce financial engineering and rural housing provision at some stage in the near future.

For further information or to make an application please contact Charlotte Woodford on 01872 322837

Rural Rumours

The latest rumours to reach us include: -

- If you enter your farm into the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme then you can only cut your hedges every other year
- Grassland that has been growing for longer than 5 years since it was last reseeded cannot be ploughed
- Stubble turnips or other catch forage crops that were not declared on IACS forms do not generate a set-aside requirement
- Forage maize that was grown on land that was not eligible for arable aid payments does not generate a set-aside requirement

None of the above are true, although some points do have a grain of truth in their background.

- Cutting hedges every other year is an option under ELS that can be utilised to count towards the overall point's score that is needed to qualify the farm for ELS, but is not a general requirement of the scheme. There are in excess of 60 options that can be selected from in order to generate the points needed to qualify.
- There is no general restriction on ploughing grassland that has been down for longer than 5 years. There is a requirement to adhere to the Environmental Impact Legislation – which is a very different thing.
- Stubble turnips or any other arable forage crop (except for kale) will need to be counted towards the set-aside requirement calculations. The fact that they were not declared on IACS forms (because they were sown after May 15th) does not alter the fact that the crop was grown.
- All arable crops will need to be counted towards the set-aside requirement calculations. The arable aid eligibility criteria, or whether the crop was grown and claimed as an arable crop or as a forage crop is irrelevant in the new set-aside calculations

All these points and more will be explained during our workshops, which are detailed overleaf.

Vocational Training Scheme
Single Payment Scheme and Entry Level Scheme
Workshop Schedule

If you would like to attend a Single Payment Scheme workshop, we have a number running over the next few weeks as detailed below. If you are some distance away from a scheduled meeting, give us a call and we will try and put a meeting on in your area.

- 06.04.05 Langport, Somerset (venue to be confirmed)
- 07.04.05 Dupath Well Farm, Callington
- 12.04.05 White Hart, Modbury
- 13.04.05 Eagle House, Launceston
- 19.04.05 South Molton Community Info Centre
- 20.04.05 Crown and Sceptre, Holsworthy
- 05.05.05 The Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton
- 10.05.05 Dupath Well Farm, Callington
- 11.05.05 South Molton Community Info Centre
- 12.05.05 The Crown and Sceptre, Holsworthy

Entry Level Stewardship - First quarterly deadline on **May 31st 2005.**

- 14.04.05 Bere Alston Parish Hall, Bere Alston
- 21.04.05 Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington
- 25.04.05 Wiveliscombe Community Centre
- 26.04.05 Dartbridge Hotel, Buckfastleigh
- 28.04.05 Dupath Well Farm, Callington
- 03.05.05 Beanbridge Hotel, Wellington
- 04.05.05 Eagle House, Launceston

These workshops are run in conjunction with the South West of England Landbased Colleges VTS Scheme. This funding package requires us to make a small charge of £10 inc VAT.

For more information, contact us in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872.**

Entry Level Environmental Stewardship
Scheme Points Scoring

The scheme requires applicants to “score” points through a mixture of: -

- calculating points for preparing a “farm environmental record” (a map with environmental features marked upon it) – 3 points per hectare
- calculating points through choosing management options such as hedgerow management, certain types of cropping
- calculating points by preparing management plans covering Soil management (3 points per Hectare), Nutrient management (2 points per hectare), Manure management (2 points per hectare) and Crop protection management (2 points per hectare).

In non LFA areas 30 points per hectare are required, in LFA areas including parcels of land over 15 hectares 8 points a hectare are required.

Therefore completion of the Farm Environment Record, coupled with the management plan options can score up to 12 points per hectare – without having to alter your farming at all.

Additionally the soil management plan will be needed next year for the single farm payment scheme, the nutrient and manure management plans will contribute towards NVZ records and assurance scheme requirements. We shall be organising workshops to help you to produce the plans for your farms.

Please note the first quarterly application deadline is **31st May 2005** –not 1st May as published in the last newsletter- please accept our apologies for any confusion.

Set - Aside and Horses

It will no longer be permitted to graze horses on set-aside land. The reason for this change is that land that is being used for grazing horses will be able to be used for claiming single farm payment entitlements, therefore the use of set-aside land to provide forage for horses has been removed as permissible.

DISCLAIMER

Every effort has been taken to ensure the information contained in these notes is correct, however, West Devon Business Information Point will not be liable for any loss arising from the use of these notes or any omissions or errors contained within.

Sponsored by Learning and Skills Council, The European Social Fund, Business Link, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority, and Lantra.