



NEWS RELEASE

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Boost for Alston retailers

'Shop Doctor' supports eleven retail outlets based in and around Alston to complete a three month programme to help boost their businesses.

The free training, advice and support was delivered in partnership between Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) and South Lakes Development Trust (SLDT), and sponsored by Eden District Council.

ACT was delighted to be able to extend the 'Revitalising Retail Programme' from 8 to 11 retailers as demand exceeded initial expectations.

The tailor made workshops and one to one business support was delivered by Bill Smith, Chief Executive of SLDT in his additional capacity as their retail specialist and resident 'Shop Doctor'. The programme followed the success of a similar programme in Eden District.

Harriett English of Madhatters Hardware, a new business in Alston, wrote to Claire Hudson of ACT and said: "As a new entrant into the world of retail with no previous experience both your and Bill's input has been invaluable.

"The course, although covering a lot of things that should be common sense helped to sharpen and clarify relevant issues about dealing with the public. At the same time it certainly stimulated a lot of very interesting discussion between the retailers in our community.

"It was a privilege to have Bill's expertise in our shop and we have acted on many of his very constructive suggestions. We look forward to his return visit to see if he thinks we are hitting the right notes and to benefit from any further advice he can offer".

Glenys Lumley, Eden District Council's Portfolio Holder for the Economy, said "I have been impressed with the quality of training that has been delivered in Alston and previously in Appleby and Kirkby Stephen. Financially supporting this type of scheme is just one of the many ways the Council has helped businesses and I would urge them to visit the Council's website to see what other help the Council can give."

The 'Revitalising Retail Programme' has supported independent retailers and community shops facing the challenge of reduced customer numbers, supermarket competition and rising operating expenses. The programme's aim was to encourage the revitalisation of small retail businesses within Alston, a key service centre in Eden by supporting them to

enhance their shop fronts and window displays, improve merchandising, layout and customer service.

Bill Smith (SLDT) said “The difficulties faced by many small retail businesses can often be compounded by the lack of opportunity for them to access impartial advice and information about how their individual opportunities can be developed.

“My own experience of delivering individual consultancy to well over 300 independent retailers across the northwest has enabled us to develop a programme that builds retailer confidence and develops a sense of direction and motivation”

Claire Hudson of ACT said: “The free training and support has been an excellent opportunity for Alston retailers to maximise their selling potential and meet with other retailers in the town to look at ways of working together which is very much needed in these challenging times.

“The workshops have received high ratings and there has been very positive feedback about the whole programme. Building on the success of this programme, ACT hopes to deliver similar programmes in other areas in the future.”

- Ends -

Photo:



Claire Hudson, Enterprise Officer at Action with Communities in Cumbria

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Notes to Editors:

Action with Communities in Cumbria

(Previously known as Voluntary Action Cumbria)

- ACT is Cumbria’s Rural Community Council and a registered charity.
- ACT is working with people and communities to improve the quality of life in rural Cumbria.
- ACT is an independent organisation able to work with a wide range of partners on an open and equitable basis.
- Established in 1948, for over 60 years ACT has been supporting communities that are socially, economically and environmentally vibrant where the needs of all are considered.
- To find out more information, please visit ACT’s website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk