



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Issued 29 Jun 2009**

### **District Council invest in Alston businesses**

Local retailers are being offered free support and advice to help boost their businesses through tailor made workshops and one to one business development sponsored by Eden District Council.

Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT) is offering the chance for retailers in and around Alston to take part in the 'Revitalising Retail Programme', following the success of a similar programme run for retailers in Appleby and Kirkby Stephen.

The 'Revitalising Retail Programme' will support independent retailers and community shops facing the challenge of reduced customer numbers, supermarket competition and rising operating expenses. The programme aims to encourage the revitalisation of small retail businesses within key service centres in Eden by supporting them to enhance their shop fronts and window displays, improve merchandising, layout and customer service.

Glenys Lumley, Eden District Council's Portfolio Holder for the Economy, said "I have been impressed with the quality of training that was delivered in a similar scheme to local retailers in Appleby and Kirkby Stephen and am sure that local businesses in Alston will find the training really useful. Financially supporting this scheme is just one of the many ways the Council can help businesses and I would urge them to visit the Council's website to see what other help the Council can give."

The programme will be delivered by South Lakes Development Trust. Chief Executive, Bill Smith said "The difficulties faced by many small retail businesses can often be compounded by the lack of opportunity for them to access advice and information about how their individual opportunities can be extended.

"Our experience of delivering consultancy to 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"

The programme will be delivered in four phases, beginning in August 2009. Starting with an initial snapshot assessment of each participating business, to identify issues from a customer's perspective. Interactive workshops will look at opportunities for enhancing the internal and external aspects of high street business and good retailing.

Participating businesses will then have the opportunity to receive accredited training from a 'Welcome Host for Retail Course' focusing on good customer service. This will then be followed by one to one business development.

Claire Hudson of ACT said: "The free training and support will be an excellent opportunity for Alston retailers to maximise their selling potential, which is very much needed in these trying times.

"The workshops from the Appleby and Kirkby Stephen programme received high ratings and the recent evaluation report stated that the one to one consultancy support was also highly rated and was regarded of being of direct value to the participating businesses.

"One of the businesses reported that the programme was considered to have been extremely beneficial and there has been a significant increase in trade since changes were implemented".

The programme will run from August 2009 through until the autumn. The first two workshops are on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September and Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September from 7pm to 9.30pm at Alston House Hotel. The Customer Service Training will be held over 2 evenings on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October and Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> October from 7pm to 9.30pm again at Alston House Hotel. The one to one business development will follow and continue through until late autumn.

Booking for the free training and support is essential, to find out more contact Claire Hudson at ACT on Tel: 01768 869538 or Email: [clairehudson@cumbriaaction.org.uk](mailto:clairehudson@cumbriaaction.org.uk)

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**Further press information available from:**

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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 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](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)