

Professional profile and current work

David Irwin is a consultant in enterprise and economic development working with clients such as Asian Development Bank, Danish International Development Agency, Department for International Development, Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, International Labour Organisation, International Trade Centre and World Bank. He has considerable experience in the UK and internationally and substantial experience of assisting small businesses. He advises organisations wishing to set up initiatives to support businesses such as enterprise agencies, incubator workspace and equity & loan funds. He advises on regulatory reform, private public dialogue, private sector advocacy and ways to improve the enabling environment. He trains, mentors and supports business associations and others in dialogue, advocacy and negotiation. He provides strategic support to not for profit organisations, social entrepreneurs and social enterprises. He was awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion in 2009. He is non-executive Chairman of Cobweb Information Ltd, which researches, publishes and markets business information for new and growing businesses. He is a Visiting Fellow of the Department of Politics at Newcastle University.

Selected current & recent assignments

- Team leader developing competitive city action plan for Bavet in Cambodia (Asian Development Bank, 2022-23)
- Team leader for project to promote and support international trade between the Greater Mekong sub-region and India (Asian Development Bank, 2020-22)
- Team leader assessing the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Nepal (World Bank, 2019) and Mozambique (World Bank, 2020)
- Supporting chambers of commerce to build skills for advocacy in Nepal, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Myanmar (ITC, 2018-2023)
- Partner in a consortium managing Kenya's Business Advocacy Fund to support business associations advocating reforms of public policy (DANIDA, 2007-20)
- Assessor for Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy and Ashden Trust's Philanthropic Investment Fund (2007-23)

Previous employment**2000 to 2002 Small Business Service: Founder Chief Executive**

In March 2000, David Irwin was appointed first Chief Executive of the Small Business Service, an executive agency of the DTI, responsible for all the government's support for small businesses and a role as the "strong voice for small business at the heart of government".

I set a vision, subsequently taken up by government, that, by 2005, the UK should be the best place in the world to start and grow a business. SBS was responsible for the Business Link network in England as well as finance schemes such as the Small Firms Loan Guarantee, Regional Venture Capital Funds, a high tech venture capital fund and early stage funds. Achievements included:

- Creation and subsequent growth of SBS to 330 staff and £350m budget
- Ensuring adoption by the government and EU of Think Small First policies to support SMEs
- Mitigating effects of red tape through membership of Cabinet Sub-Committee on Regulatory Accountability
- Launching Regional Venture Capital Funds to provide over £200m for investment in new and early growth businesses
- Persuading Treasury to give extra funding to establish early stage funds (£50m) and to establish an incubator workspace loan fund (£75m)
- Speaking at conferences and seminars, including representing the Small Firms Minister at OECD conference in Bologna



- Establishing profile for SBS through personal contact with media including the Financial Times, the Sunday Times and Today programme.

1980 – 2000 Project North East, Co-founder and Director

Before joining SBS, David Irwin co-founded Project North East (PNE), an innovative enterprise and economic development agency based in Newcastle. Achievements included:

- Growing turnover from start up in 1980 to £4m in 2000
- Staff increased from two founders to 95
- In 1985, won contract from Shell to manage LiveWIRE to encourage young people to think about starting in business; then extended to expand LiveWIRE internationally
- Creating first Youth Enterprise Centre, which became model for YECs in UK and internationally
- Initiating one of UK's first non-bank loan funds
- Developed & implemented Design Works, a £1.7m initiative to promote the importance of design & marketing to commerce & industry, for the Burton Group
- Working extensively with emerging enterprise agencies mainly in central Europe and southern Africa

1978 – 1980 Dunlop, Development Engineer

Worked in electronics and IT in technical department of Hydraulic Hose Division

Academic qualifications

2015-2019	PhD (Politics): Newcastle University (part time)
1983-1986	MBA: Newcastle University (part-time)
1977-1978	Advanced Course in Production Methods & Management: Cambridge University
1974-1977	B.Sc. (Honours) Engineering Science and Management: Durham University

Professional qualifications


Fellow	Royal Society of Arts
--------	-----------------------

Other

Holder	Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion (2009)
Winner:	EZI/AMBA Enterprise and Achievement Award (1990)
Winner:	Junior Chamber International – one of Ten Outstanding Young Persons, 1990, Business and Entrepreneurial Accomplishment
Councillor	Parish Council of Broomhaugh & Riding (co-opted 2020, re-elected 2021)

Selected papers

- Policy advisory groups in Kenya: interest group participation and effectiveness, *International Review of Public Policy*, (2023) 5(1) pp. 272-292, doi.org/10.4000/irpp.3175 with Mercy Kyande
- External influence on parliamentarians in Kenya, *Journal of Public Affairs*, (2023) 23(1), doi.org/10.1002/pa.2826 with Njeri Kiereini
- Five decades of small business policy in England: policy as a value proposition or window dressing?, *British Politics*, (2021) https://rdcu.be/clkgd, with Jon Scott
- African approaches to dialogue and advocacy, in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Interest Groups, Lobbying and Public Affairs*, Eds: Harris, P, Bitonti, A, Fleisher, C.S. and Binderkrantz, A.S. Palgrave Macmillan (2021). doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13895-0_230-1

(For full list, see <http://irwingrayson.com/igPapers.php> or  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1462-5795>)

Has worked in Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Iraq, Kenya, Latvia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, OPT, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, UK, Uruguay, USA, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.