

Irwin Grayson Associates are consultants in enterprise and economic development. The last 18 months have been incredibly busy for Irwin Grayson Associates. This first newsletter is intended to give a brief overview of some of David Irwin's work. At the beginning of the year, it felt like I was doing all the 'B's: Bristol, Birmingham, Belfast, Bogota, Beijing and Brasil; but recently I have progressed to the 'A's: Ankara, Abuja, Accra and Ayresome (that's in Middlesbrough!)

Middlesbrough Community Finance

David Irwin is currently working with Middlesbrough Borough Council and West Middlesbrough Neighbourhood Trust to explore the scope for establishing a community finance initiative that would be able to provide loan finance to businesses and to individuals who would otherwise be unable to raise a loan. It is hoped that a new organisation, Middlesbrough Community Finance, will provide housing loans and business loans as well as providing support to the Borough's credit unions.

Ghana: Private Enterprise Foundation

David Irwin has been working with the Private Enterprise Foundation in Accra, which brings together some of the key business and trade associations in Ghana, to develop a strategy which can help them pull together all the private sector to help them influence public sector policy more effectively. In addition to advising PEF on strategy, Irwin was asked by the Minister for Private Sector Development for advice on regulatory impact assessment and on small firms' development policies.

An immediate rapport was built with the Minister for Trade & Industry when it was discovered that he set up Empretec and regularly sent staff on placement to Project North East, which we originally founded.

Nigeria: Integrity

David Irwin has been reviewing the work of Integrity and helping it develop a strategy and action plan as well as preparing proposals to raise additional sponsorship. Integrity is an NGO which has developed a Convention on Business Integrity and is encouraging businesses to work ethically and not to engage in corrupt practices. Many businesses in Nigeria, both large and small, are striving hard to work ethically and Integrity should be able to help all by ensuring that they can offer mutual support. It is intended that Integrity should develop a tick mark – which firms will be

encouraged to use when they are trading internationally.

If Integrity can make this work in Nigeria, then it will become an excellent model for every other country in Africa.

Turkey: Review of SME strategy & trends

David Irwin has been working with IMC Consulting in Turkey on a review of strategy and trends. This is part of a major programme of work undertaken by IMC to introduce a wide range of business support initially centred on three business centres, but planning to assist with micro-finance, trade support, etc. The biggest challenge was trying to assess current levels of small firms' activity in a country that rigorously records new business registrations and liquidations – but ignores the fact that nearly five times as many businesses are not formally registered and that liquidations are so difficult that most of those entrepreneurs who cease trading never bother actually to liquidate their business.

China Economic & Trade Commission

The Chinese State Economic & Trade Commission has been encouraging the formation of new businesses – which it sees as a way of alleviating unemployment and under-employment. It has established pilot projects in 10 cities round China. David Irwin was one of four international speakers invited by DFID to contribute to a conference of the staff from those pilot projects – explaining the UK government's approach to small business support policy.

Northern Ireland

David Irwin has had a number of assignments in Northern Ireland. The first was working with Enterprise Northern Ireland to help them redevelop their strategy.

He then teamed up with Colin Stutt Consulting and Shane Wolsey to undertake a feasibility study for the Flax Trust which wants to develop



a creative industries incubation project, providing workspace initially in the Trust's Brookfield Mill workspace on the Crumlin Road. They are now working together on a review of incubation policy for Invest Northern Ireland.

Kenya: Private Sector Forum

In November, 2002 David Irwin reviewed the work of the business associations in Kenya with a view to them coming together to speak with a single voice to influence public sector policy more effectively.

LiveWIRE: South America

David Irwin has been continuing to support *LiveWIRE* – by undertaking feasibility studies in Uruguay and Colombia. Both countries have high levels of entrepreneurship but also have large proportions of unemployed young people – in Colombia's case, many of whom either leave the country or join the revolutionary forces, so both countries need programmes like *LiveWIRE* to encourage more young people to think about starting their own business.

For further information about ways in which we might be able to work with you please contact David Irwin on 0191 241 1984.

LiveWIRE is now running in 21 countries round the world and it is hoped that Uruguay and Colombia will soon join them. David also participated in a South America *LiveWIRE* regional meeting in Rio, which coincided with the second awards programme for *LiveWIRE* Brazil.

Other assignments

David Irwin worked last year with Annabel Jackson Associates on a review of Birmingham City Council's small business support services, and then on a review of incubator workspace in the south west.

He worked with a couple of large corporates who wanted to understand the small business sector rather better.

He did some work for ONE North East as they attempt to rethink the way that small business support service should be delivered in the north east.