

ALCESTER – SO ENTERPRISING!

More than 300 people visited Alcester Enterprise Week at the Greig Centre in late September 2004. This was the first event of its kind in South Warwickshire which was aimed at promoting new business start-ups and bringing together local businesses.

The event was opened by Councillor Juliette Short, Chair of Stratford District Council, Councillor Susan Juned representing Warwickshire County Council and Councillor Jim Kenyon, Deputy Mayor of Alcester. Monday's **Community Enterprise** event coincided with the annual Warwickshire Volunteering Event – there were some 40 exhibition stands promoting all that is good within the volunteering community. Business organisations attending all week included Womens' Business Development Agency, Business Link, Stratford College, Warwickshire County Council and Coventry & Warwickshire Cooperative Development Agency.

Tuesday's theme day – **Rural Enterprise and Farm Diversification** – brought together organisations supporting the farming and rural community – providing information, advice and funding opportunities to help diversify rural businesses. Prominent at the event was Longbarn Village – a superb redevelopment of old farm buildings at Alcester Heath by Jane and Paul Roberts and now home to 10 quality new businesses including exhibitors Xternal Dimensions, Teapot Hall, Fusion Brasserie, Lagoon and Flame Ceramics Studios.

Wednesday welcomed **Tourism, Hospitality and Retail** businesses to the Greig Centre – co-ordinated by Lise Evans of Advantage Alcester and the West Midlands Regional Business Tourism Centre. It was particularly good to see proprietors of local guest houses and four of the recently-opened shops in Alcester High Street present – demonstrating that the town is really encouraging new retail businesses and shoppers alike!

Local graphic design company Nomad, themselves a recently established business based at Minerva Mill, said:

'We were new to Alcester but over the past year we have really found such a welcoming community and it has been a great place to develop our expanding graphics and design business. There is a fantastic entrepreneurial spirit in and around the town and the Alcester Enterprise Week is a really good initiative.'

The Thursday theme focussed upon **Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology** – a mainstay of the Alcester and Bidford area and a business sector with a rich industrial history. Several local companies were present to support the event including Tony Turner, managing director of GreenMech Engineering of Kings Coughton, who said:

"My company was heavily involved in the national forestry machinery event at Ragley Hall which took place on the same day but I was determined to support

events such as Alcester Enterprise Week to show the best of our local engineering industry”.

Alcester Enterprise Week finished on a real high with the **Arts and Creative Industries** Theme on Friday. The town and surrounding villages produce masses of creative talent and skill - demonstrated by the 25 exhibitors at the Event. The afternoon was led by Abbie Cooke, who has recently moved to Alcester to start her own business 'Beauty at Work Ltd'. Abbie led two active workshops developing the theme of 'Creative Enterprise' – the Creative Gameshow with young participants from Alcester Grammar School Sixth Form and a second workshop with the artists who were exhibiting.

The event was part of the PIE in Business programme which is supporting start-up businesses across South Warwickshire. Mike Woollacott of Alcester Business Network – organisers of the event – said:

“We have had a great response both from local businesses and from business organisations and this really seems to have caught the attention of local people who have ideas of starting their own business. With our own enterprise hub at Minerva Mill, a business start-up centre supported by Advantage Alcester and now our own online local business organisation – Alcester Business Network – everything is in place to make Alcester the place to start and run a successful business!”

For further information about business start-up in Alcester or about joining Alcester Business Network, call Mike Woollacott on 01789 761337 or visit www.alcesterbusiness.co.uk