

Budding businesses crack the credit crunch

BUSINESS experts in Swansea helped scores of budding entrepreneurs find their feet in the last financial year.

Figures show staff at Business Centre Swansea helped over 80 businesses start life from April 2008 to April 2009 despite the economic downturn.

And further statistics show 77 per cent of the firms the Business Centre helped to start up in the last two years are still up and running in the face of the credit crunch.

Business Centre Swansea is based on St Mary's Square in the city centre and, subject to eligibility, offers tips on starting up businesses and support for existing businesses including business strategy and planning, access to funding sources, mentoring, development of marketing strategies, information technology advice and training. Lara Stevens, whose family own the Kings Head Inn in Llangennith, is one of those to have taken up the option of free advice from The Business Centre Swansea. She said: "We needed help with a business plan because we were looking to build an extension and increase our accommodation offer from seven to 27 rooms. "We were also keen to look into the possibility of developing the Kings Head as an accommodation base from which people could make the most of the Gower as a destination for sports tourism and activities such as cycling and walking holidays. "Business Centre Swansea was recommended as a source of assistance in putting together a business plan and staff there helped us look into the strengths and weaknesses of what we were proposing and the opportunities that could be taken advantage of in future. "I never thought a free service would be so useful and their guidance has helped us become the largest hotel on Gower with about 50 employees now working here." The Kings Head Inn extension was crafted using Gower stone and environmentally-friendly features in mind and Lara says a helicopter ride from above shows the new venture fits in with the local landscape. Cllr Gareth Sullivan, Swansea Council's Cabinet Member for Economic and Strategic Development, said: "These are tough economic times but, despite that, The Business Centre Swansea is still helping many people realise their business dreams and is offering expertise and support to many others throughout the area. "A huge range of services is available including awareness sessions on starting your own business, tips on how to compile a business plan, guidance on book-keeping and information on latest marketing strategies and techniques. "Such expertise could prove invaluable to both aspiring and existing business people." Have a look at www.businesscentreswansea.com for more information or call 01792 545050.