

Professional profile and current work

David Irwin is a consultant in enterprise and economic development working with clients such as Danish International Development Agency, Department for International Development, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, OECD, Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts and World Bank. He has considerable economic development 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 private public dialogue and ways to improve the enabling environment. He provides strategic support to not for profit organisations, social entrepreneurs and social enterprises.

He is non executive Chairman of Cobweb Information Ltd, a business which researches, publishes and markets business information for new and growing businesses.

He is a member of the Investment Committee and a non-executive member of the Board of Oxfam's Enterprise Development Programme.

Current & recent assignments

- Working with DFID to design one component of the proposed REAP programme supporting East African regional integration (DFID, 2009)
- Partner in consortium managing Kenya's Business Advocacy Fund to support business associations advocating changes in public policy (DANIDA, 2007-2010)
- Adviser to Business Environment Strengthening Tanzania Advocacy Component (DANIDA, 2007 to date)
- Assessor for commercial entries to Ashden Awards for Sustainable Development (2007 to date)
- Appraise & support social enterprises for Esmee Fairbairn Foundation & Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts

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:

- Creating and subsequent growth of SBS to 330 staff and £350m budget
- Ensuring adoption by the government and EU of Think Small First
- 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; now 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, including member of team which won management contract for DfID's £18m Financial Services Deepening Challenge Fund

1978 – 1980 Dunlop, Development Engineer

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

Academic qualifications

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

Professional qualifications

Fellow Institute of Management Consultancy
 Member Institute of Directors

Other

Hon Fellow University of Durham (Foundation for SME Development)
 Trustee Sunderland Youth Enterprise Trust
 Trustee Northern Youth Venture Fund
 Fellow Royal Society of Arts
 Winner: EZI/AMBA Enterprise and Achievement Award (1990)
 Winner: Junior Chamber International — one of Ten Outstanding Young Persons, 1990, Business and Entrepreneurial Accomplishment

Papers

- "Discouraged advisees? The influence of gender, ethnicity, and education in the use of advice and finance by UK SMEs", Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, with Jon Scott, forthcoming
- "Can the private sector successfully advocate change in public policy in Africa?" ISBE, 2008 (*Winner of award for best practical paper*)
- "Learning from business support in Africa", ISBE, 2007

Has worked in Brazil, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Ghana, Hungary, India, Kenya, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Nigeria, Oman, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Swaziland, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, UK, Uruguay, USA and Zimbabwe.