



# Interview with Kate Welch,

**Chief Executive - Social Enterprise Acumen CIC**

**October 28th, 2015 will see Newcastle Race Course transformed into the venue for UK's first Social Enterprise Festival aimed at the general public.**

Social Enterprises are in our communities and on our high streets. They operate from back rooms, village halls and exclusive business parks. Their operational addresses vary as much as the huge variety of products and services they offer. However, they all have one thing in common. The common denominator is that Social Entrepreneurs are in the business of addressing problems. Their organisations and businesses trade to tackle social problems; improve communities or operate with an environmental purpose. In essence, social enterprises are on a 'social mission': they know what difference they are trying to make, who it aims to help, and how they plans to do it.

On October 28th at Newcastle Race Course, the general public are invited to be consumers of these goods and services and their attendance will demonstrate their support of their community. The event is taking place over the school half term and there will be an abundance of children's activity on offer. All entertainment, products and support services will be supplied Social Enterprises.

The **North East Social Enterprise Festival** is the brain child of Kate Welch, OBE DL FRSA.

**Q: How did you come up with the idea with the Festival?**

Kate: We know that the public are still not fully aware of the difference social enterprises are making in our communities so I wanted to find a way of bringing social enterprises together to show the breadth of services and activities they offer and invite the public to a great day out for all the family. I didn't think anyone else in the country had tried this and research shows that we are the first to have a Festival like this in the UK.

**Q: What aspect of the Festival are you looking forward to the most?**

Kate: Having so many passionate people together to show the people of the North East what an amazing job they do by applying business models to social

issues. This will be clearly shown by the “Dragons Den” competition and talking to any of the social entrepreneurs at the Festival

**Q: What can the stall holders expect to gain by attending the Festival?**

Kate: The festival will give social enterprises the opportunity to reach thousands of people who might be customers or users of their services. They will also be profiled in the press and media before, during and after the Festival and tell their story. Not least they will be able to sell their products and services.

**Q: You have arranged the event to take place during Half-Term, was that by accident?**

Kate: By design! The Festival has always been envisioned as a day out for the family and an opportunity to show all generations what social enterprises do. School holidays often pose a challenge to parents and carers but this October they can bring the children to an event with lots of fun, challenging and learning activities that range from bushcraft to robotics and circus skills all run by social enterprises that make a difference in their communities

**Q: As a Social Entrepreneur, what changes in our sector would you like to see?**

Kate: I would like social entrepreneurs and social enterprises to think bigger and be bolder. They are challenging many of the conventional ways of doing business and as they grow in number and scale we can make a bigger difference to the economy and life of the North East. I'm pleased we have several social investors and support organisations taking part as we need investment to help the sector grow and develop. For new social entrepreneurs we have role models like Bethany Ainsley of Nouveau who has just raised investment to develop her social enterprise. Learning from those who have already scaled is a great way of spreading the passion for the social enterprise way of doing business.

**Q: Will the Festival be able to re-address any of these imbalances or perceptions?**

Kate: Absolutely we will be showing the public what a great sector we already have in the North East but also what potential there is. Bringing social enterprises, more customers and potential investors has to be a winning combination.

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## What are Social Enterprises?

A social enterprise is a business that trades to tackle social problems and improve communities. They make a real difference and are sustainable through trading. Social enterprises come in many shapes and sizes from large national and international businesses to small community based enterprises.

## For more information:

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