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PUTTING SOME FIZZ INTO BUSINESS: Fiona Wilson with some of her Lovely Bubbly range of exclusive champagnes.

Fiona goes ahead with new venture

By Nigel Stirling

THE daughter of former Newcastle Breweries boss Alistair Wilson has vowed to push on with her latest business venture despite her father's recent death.

Fiona Wilson will this week launch champagne import business - Lovely Bubbly - which aims to tap into demand for niche champagnes. Ms Wilson said she was determined to push ahead with the launch of the business despite her father's death only weeks ago.

She said: "It has been absolutely devastating to lose my father and we thought about cancelling the launch of Lovely Bubbly. But my Dad was due to come and we know he would have wanted it to go ahead."

Lovely Bubbly, which is targeting companies' corporate gifts and events, has signed

exclusive supply agreements with several producers near the city of Reims in France's Champagne region. It has already tasted success supplying 2,000 bottles of middle-priced champagne to London-based video game manufacturer Namco Europe for corporate gifts and also attracted orders from local clients including Tanfield Group and Pricewaterhouse in Newcastle.

Ms Wilson has targeted sales of 20,000 bottles for the company's first year in business.

"The UK market at present is dominated by about half a dozen champagne makers. But there are hundreds of champagne producers in France and many of them have

products that are as good as, or better than, those from the household names - and can compete on price," she said.

"When I went to Reims, I realised what fabulous champagnes these really were. I came across half a dozen champagne houses with an absolutely top quality product, but zero or very little representation in the UK."

Ms Wilson, whose father was instrumental in signing one of the longest sponsorship deals in football history with Newcastle United while managing director of Newcastle Breweries, is a former United marketing manager and for the past three-and-a-half years has run an events business, which last March successfully organised an international sports' management conference at Northumbria University.



Kevin Rowan

THIS is certainly not the first time I have used this column to write about second-hand smoke and ill-health at work but, hopefully, it could be the last.

In the next few weeks MPs will have the chance to debate a ban on workplace smoking as part of the Government's Health Bill.

They will be asked to choose between a partial ban, with exemptions for places not serving food and for private clubs, or a complete ban in all workplaces.

From a worker perspective, there can be no justification for exposing one group of workers to what is known to kill and cause severe chronic illnesses to hundreds of workers each year, those employed in exempted workplaces, while protecting those working elsewhere. In fact, such a distinction could be challenged as discriminatory on human rights grounds.

Second-hand smoke certainly doesn't discriminate in the way that it harms workers. Exposure increases the risk of lung cancer and heart disease by 24% and 25% respectively. Second-hand smoke at work is estimated to cause the

The right to smoke does not infer a right to kill

death of more than two people per working day across the UK as a whole - 617 deaths a year - including 54 deaths a year in the hospitality industry, or 35 people each year in the North-East. Exposure to second-hand smoke at work kills three times more workers than industrial accidents.

It is often claimed that effective ventilation systems will remove the effects of second-hand smoke. However, although they may remove the smell of tobacco smoke, they fail to eliminate the carcinogenic particles and gases from the air. The scientific evidence is strong - ventilation systems cannot eliminate the risk of death and disease.

There is no popular support for a partial ban either. Recent independent research into attitudes of people in the North-East towards smoking in public places demonstrated strong public support for a workplace ban - 73% of people believed that all workplaces and public places should be smoke-free and 84% felt that restaurants and cafes should be smoke-free.

Business interests, too, want to see one rule for all. I have heard that there are libertarian arguments playing on the mind of MPs, that smokers should be allowed to smoke and have a drink if they want. The right to smoke does not infer a right to kill, only a comprehensive ban will ensure all workers are protected.

Kevin Rowan is the regional secretary for the Northern TUC

CONTRACTS & TENDERS

**LSC County Durham
Bidding deadline extended**

19.1.06

The deadline has been extended for organisations to bid for European funding in support of Lifelong Learning provision Following the discovery of a technical error in the on-line prospectus the deadline for bids to provide training within County Durham under European Social Fund Objective 3 Co-financing has been extended by one week to noon on Monday, February 20th 2006.

Technicians are working to make online applications available by Monday, January 23. In the meantime, hard copy application forms can be obtained from LSC County Durham, Allergate House, Belmont Business Park, Belmont, Durham DH1 1TW, telephone 0191 376 2386. The web address is: <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/countydurham/corporate/default.htm>



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Market set to react to Dow Jones falls

FRANTIC trading is expected on London's Stock Exchange today after US markets suffered their worst day's trading in nearly three years at the end of last week.

On Friday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell by more than 213 points - nearly 2% - to 10,667, wiping out all gains the index has made so far this year.

Equity prices have risen strongly over the past year and earlier this month the Dow rose above 11,000 points for the first time since the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Traders blamed the losses on disappointing earnings from investment bank Citigroup and General Electric and sharp oil price rises.

Oil prices jumped by \$1.52 a barrel in New York on Friday to

\$68.35 after concerns over terrorist threats, Iran's nuclear plans and falling production in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Australian bank Macquarie, which is mounting a bid for the London Stock Exchange, has held talks with an American market to create a joint derivatives operation should its bid succeed.

Macquarie believes the LSE's failure to have a business in derivatives - financial instruments such as futures and options that derive value from underlying securities - puts it at a disadvantage to rivals such as Euronext in Paris.

It wants to launch a joint derivatives venture with an exchange such as Chicago Mercantile - which it is believed to have already had talks with.

Pooled effort creates an eighth branch

THRIVING estate agent Michael Poole is opening up an eighth branch office.

The Tees Valley firm is to open up in Ingleby Barwick to service Europe's largest private residential housing development.

The new office gives Michael Poole coverage throughout the Tees Valley to work with buyers and sellers, as well as landlords and tenants in letting.

The firm is also developing other services including auctions, conveyancing and mortgage advice, together with the sale of overseas properties.

The firm is involved with the Rightmove and Home Sale Networks, allowing its clients national exposure.

Michael Poole was established in its Middlesbrough office in 1994.