



## Case Study: High Society

Susan Watt and Helen Atkinson opened High Society on Swan Street in Longtown in May 2007. They stock a range of exclusive ladieswear as well as hats, accessories and finishing touches.

"We try to stock something for any occasion – not just evening wear or an outfit for a wedding but also a confidence booster for an interview or a scarf or piece of jewellery to update a favourite outfit. People tend to remember our hats from the window displays but we also have beautiful and unusual bags, jewellery and scarves."

Susan Watt

### Longtown Market Town Initiative involvement

Business expansion and marketing grants have enabled Susan and Helen to promote High Society at wedding fairs and other events and they have also been featured in the Glamour supplement of the local newspaper.

"We can't rely purely on passing customers but have got to get out and about, let people know that we are here and encourage them to make the trip to Longtown. We sold a lot of hats ahead of Ladies Night at Carlisle races and have also had customers who were looking for something special to wear for a Buckingham Palace garden party. One of our most memorable sales was hats for a wedding to three generations of the same family."

Susan Watt

### Achievements

Helen and Sue are looking forward to the arrival of their new Spring stock and hope to build on the initial growth in business in 2007 with a great 2008.

"Our clothing ranges have so far been limited to what could be ordered late in the season but spring will bring our own choices from designers such as Peter Martin and Jorlie. We want to offer something special without a ridiculous price tag and we hope that our customers will enjoy the new clothes as much as we enjoyed choosing them."

Helen Atkinson

High Society is also supporting other local businesses, stocking hats and fascinators from Sara Gadd who is based in Carlisle. Sara is even offering to meet up with customers who buy their outfits from the shop and then want to have a hat specially made.

"Working with Sara Gadd gives us something unique to offer to our customers and it is great to work with someone else who is based in this area and can focus on local customers."

Susan Watt

## Challenges

High Society is in a prime location in Longtown but needs to attract customers from across North Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway. Word of mouth is the best publicity but Helen and Susan are aware that they need to use every marketing opportunity to generate the reputation that will then encourage potential customers to come to them.

“The Longtown MTI grant and promotional advice have enabled us to make a good start and to recognise some of the potential for our business. The challenge now is to build on our first months of trading and to become the shop of choice for anyone else who is looking for clothes and accessories to boost their confidence and make them feel their best.”

Helen Atkinson

## Future plans

Establishing High Society and its reputation is going to be a long-term challenge for Susan and Helen and they'd like to encourage people to come into the shop for advice and ideas without feeling under pressure.

**“We try to be as approachable as possible. I know it can feel odd walking into a small shop but our customers know what we're happy to let them browse and also happy to suggest ideas if we're asked. It's not about getting the most money from a single sale – it's all about encouraging people to come back time after time and tell their friends too!”**

Susan Watt

If you are organising an event or planning for a special occasion and think that High Society might be able to help you, please get in touch with Helen or Susan at the shop on Swan Street.

**Nature of business:** Ladieswear, hats and accessories shop  
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