

Tourism project helped winning hotel to get cash support

# University study helps new starts



**STUDY HELP:** Number One owner Claire Smith

A BLACKPOOL hotelier has benefited from a £1.4m project to help create jobs in the region's tourism industry.

Claire Smith, proprietor of Blackpool's only boutique bed and breakfast, the Number One, is among 11 lucky individuals to gain from the project launched by Lancaster University and the European Union Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The project has carried out a number of feasibility studies across the North West aiming to boost employment in medium-sized businesses.

Mrs Smith opened her award-winning five-star B&B a few years ago and has created one full-time and three part-time jobs.

She said: I'm absolutely

thrilled to bits with the feasibility study which found out about the niche market for this upmarket hotel.

"It's all very well having a bright idea and giving up your livelihood to do something completely different, but first you have to know it's a viable proposition and not too off the wall.

## Ambitious

"The study also impressed the bank and made it easier to raise the money. I couldn't have afforded the time or the money to have done it myself."

This latest project follows a successful four-year scheme to kick-start tourism throughout Lancashire and Cumbria.

The original Learning Tourism project created 79 new jobs in over 100 businesses and, to date, has resulted in over £2.6m increased spending by visitors in the region.

The project was funded

equally by the ERDF and Lancaster University and aimed to make small businesses become more competitive.

Project manager Alan Heywood of the Tourism Centre at the university, said: "We're looking for owners to contact us if they are ambitious about growing their business.

"We can help with marketing, business development, leadership and innovation.

"It's hard for a business to manage change and sometimes a fresh pair of eyes gives a new perspective.

"We'll be running graduate consultancies and a series of workshops which all help the owner to stand back and think strategically."

Any business or graduates wishing to benefit from the work of The Tourism Centre should contact Alan Heywood on (01524) 594947.