

Behind the scenes

Behind every successful business is a team of dedicated personnel but what we often overlook is the contribution busy professionals make to our island community. In a new series of articles, Contact gets under the skin of leading local companies to discover how their employees' endeavours benefit Guernsey.

Winning such accolades as the Citywealth Magic Circle award for International Law Firm of the Year or the Chambers Europe Offshore Client Care firm of the Year award takes a commitment to excellence few can compete with. What is arguably even more impressive is that Bedell Cristin has achieved this while dedicating a great deal of time to local causes and worthy endeavours.

Bedell Cristin is an offshore law firm with a growing reputation outside our shores and acknowledgement within the community for its corporate social responsibility activities. Beddell Crispin established an experienced team in Guernsey five years ago, and has since

too, as a member of the technical committee. One of Kate's other key interests is acting as a local adviser to Young Enterprise, a national education charity operating in Guernsey since 1982, whose mission is to equip young people to succeed through enterprise by forging links between school and industry. Locally, the scheme has brought together Guernsey's senior schools, with the aim of inspiring young people to set up and run their own businesses, as well as forging a link between the schools and the business community. Kate was adviser to Guernsey's winning team, named .ink, which ran events and produced a magazine with the aim of bringing the island's schools together. The team now goes through

The firm has also made a significant success of the gardening and environmental initiative 'Little Green Fingers', the three-year-old scheme for children co-sponsored by Bedell Cristin and Floral Guernsey, in which every Guernsey primary school is now involved. The scheme aims to give all children, regardless of circumstances, the opportunity to experience the joy of growing vegetables and other plants, raise awareness of where food comes from and of environmental issues, and encourage team and community spirit through competition.

'Little Green Fingers is about so much more than funding. Not every Guernsey child is lucky enough to have their own garden. We really



Left: Mark Helyar lends a helping hand through 'Little Green Fingers'
Centre right: Alisdair Davidson, Mark Helyar and Kate Ovenden



expanded into new, larger offices.

A number of the partners play key roles beyond the day to day business of the firm, being highly active in working parties and professional associations and helping to shape new Channel Islands legislation and white papers which have a real impact on the future of the industry.

Instilling a social responsibility has to start from the very top and Managing Partner Mark Helyar, a leading insurance and reinsurance lawyer, has been at the forefront of island policy forming and industry debate. A regular speaker and chair at leading industry seminars, Mark is a voting non-States member of the Public Accounts Committee and member of the sub-committee that recently produced the contentious report on 'Good Governance' adopted by the States of Guernsey.

Two other senior partners are also committed to playing a meaningful role in Guernsey life outside their legal work. Kate Ovenden, a partner and corporate law specialist who joined the firm in 2006 after 10 years at a City firm, sits on the marketing committee and the non-Guernsey funds working group of the Guernsey Investment Fund Association – which was set up to support the island's growing investment management industry. Mark is involved

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to the UK South-East regional finals.

Kate also finds time to be on the committee of Guernsey's Women in Professions, which has a membership of more than 100 senior women on the island.

Alasdair Davidson, partner and head of the firm's Guernsey litigation team, has acted for most of the island's leading fiduciaries, fund providers and banks. He is a regular speaker at conferences and has also contributed to a number of publications, including the International Bar Association's Anti Money Laundering Forum guide on Guernsey. But he also believes in using his skills and experience to contribute to the community. As the immediate past president of Guernsey Round Table, he gives time to local community initiatives such as the annual Harbour Carnival and raising money for charity supporting projects as diverse as the RNLI, the Priaulx Baby Foundation, Clic Sargent and the Guernsey Womens' Refuge. Alasdair is also the director of a local charity providing sheltered accommodation for adults with learning or behavioural difficulties.

wanted to make a difference, so that our less privileged children can enjoy nurturing and watching their own plants grow,' said Kate Ovenden

'Our policy has always been to look for projects with broad appeal where we can foster relationships that build over several years', said Mark.

"Our commitment to the local community is not just about signing cheques for good causes – giving our professional time and choosing programmes which develop skills and leave a legacy is very important to us."

Some Bedell Cristin lawyers also devote time to good causes further afield. Guernsey corporate and finance lawyer Sukhvinder Chana was one of a team from the wider firm who raced up the iconic Gherkin building in London – all 1,037 steps – to raise funds for the Christchurch earthquake appeal, to date, over £300,000 has been raised.

The Bedell Crispin culture for success quite clearly extends beyond the confines of its industry so if you would like to profile what your business is doing for your island, please email us at info@lighthouseci.com.