

“Pour myself a cup of ambition...”

Now where have you heard that before? I'll tell you... **“ Working 9 to 5”**... good old Dolly Parton . It's become something of a theme tune for getting back to work in Helston and the Lizard; you may have seen the team who have masterminded this new back to work programme singing it on street corners all over the area drumming up business for the new initiative. I believe “Flash mobbing” is the expression these days - hardly a typical civil servant way of working – but this is hardly a typical back to work project.

“Pour myself a cup of ambition “ is what most of the 2 million unemployed in the UK are trying to do every day in their quest to get back to work. Yes, the position is getting better and people are indeed getting back into work but it's still a national problem made up of lots of local ones - 400 of those UK unemployed are here in this part of Cornwall - making up the most southerly cohort of that 2 million. They'd just love to be working 9 'til 5 but they're not finding it easy to get into work or get back into it.

Why? Well first off it's not a hugely wealthy part of the country. Secondly the jobs are few and far between and thirdly they're slapped across an area of over 200 square miles with pretty lousy transport links.

First get a job and then try to get to it. And get home again at the end of the day. Not easy. It's really not.

And another tricky intangible barrier to getting back into work is lack of confidence. Virtually every unemployed person is seeking this precious commodity - that ability to walk a little taller; to stride into that interview like you're 'the man'. Or woman.

Well this new initiative in the Helston area is trying to do just that ; it's called **Helston and the Lizard Works** and it's been fashioned by people from the area drawing on experience from what's been happening successfully elsewhere in Cornwall in recent years to really try to make a difference.

“ the longer you're unemployed the longer you're unemployed...your self - belief goes...nothing I do makes a difference...it makes you quiet...it makes you aggressive...”

Lack of confidence is the single biggest handbrake to these people getting into work.

Perhaps they were never that confident in the first place but certainly they have all been knocked for six now - talk to any unemployed person of any age and from any social cohort or educational background and they will admit that their confidence was severely knocked when the axe fell or bad luck of some sort came knocking.

Yes, the smarter you are and the better off you are the easier it is to dust yourself down and get straight back to it - of course it is - but everyone feels it to a greater or lesser degree. And so virtually everyone I've met on scores of meetings across the county and now in the Helston area talks of the confidence boost that spending a few days on courses brought them. Yes, they were learning useful stuff but more than that they were getting something intangible or perhaps all too tangible to put back between their ears...**CONFIDENCE. Maybe Dolly's cup of ambition should also be joined by a cup of confidence.** Matching the desire for something better with the attitude to enable you to get there. Can't have one without the other.

And confidence can come from realising that you are not alone, from realising that others are in the same boat too...

" if we'd passed each other in the street before this we'd never have known we were all in the same boat...I spoke about things this morning I haven't spoken about for 20 years"

Unemployment and being out on your ear can be a very lonely place - isolated, misunderstood, alone. Helston and the Lizard Works gets them together - humour often the great leveller. Many of the people I met would not have had the confidence to simply go and do that by themselves.

Just last week (in fact it happens every Thursday and Friday now, week in week out) I was with such a gang at Helston Cricket Club on a course led by an organization called Active Plus staffed by ex-military vets - "veterans inspiring people" as they neatly put it. We were learning first aid. OK at the end of it we were hardly up to "Casualty" standards but we knew a lot more about mouth

to mouth resuscitation and all that pressing on the chest business to get the heart pumping again that we see on TV.

First Aid – what could be more about confidence? About communication?

About being of use? It was uplifting and life-reaffirming and it's just one of the various programmes that are now happening amongst the country's most southerly unemployed which are catalytic in luring people back into social interaction and in doing so to realise that they are not alone, not useless and that they are not on dead end street.

Quite simply they are meeting others. Learning together. Having a natter together. Rolling a fag together. Other stuff in the pipeline is CV writing, IT skills and access to IT. Jobsearch skills, volunteering and so on. With partners like Cornwall College, Cormac and the National Trust.

Some of the team presenting the course were actually volunteers – just giving of their time to help others and to keep their hand in. Volunteering - **“we’re working we’re just not paid for it” was how one thoughtful volunteer put it** to me in Truro a few weeks back. His way of saying loudly that I’m not workshy, I’m out there doing it; just right now there’s no money in it for me...but there will be.

Just think, you’re a potential employer - how do you weigh up the claims from two, on the face of it, quite similar jobseekers – one who has simply been out of work, the other who’s kept his hand in, done a bit, got up in the morning and gone in somewhere and done something. I know which way I would jump.

So when they get to that bit of the CV or the application form they do indeed put down that they are **‘in work’**. That they DO stuff from time to time; that they are still in the habit of getting up and going somewhere to do something of use. That they are “keeping their hand in”. And there is a growing body of evidence that simply DOING something can lead ultimately to doing something for money again. And of course putting yourself about can help with getting that essential reference. Potential employers notice and the activity has an integral value in itself. It makes you feel good. It brings satisfaction and it can bring new skills.

So, that in a nutshell is what Helston and the Lizard Works is all about - a friendly, community focussed programme of ideas and actions that can help the people who live hereabouts back into work or into work for the first time. And projects that benefit the community that they can volunteer to work on. They understand about Dolly's "cup of ambition" and they know that training and confidence boosting will help get it to your lips. We will be reporting on what's going on regularly...and there's a lot of it.

"Nine to five" has become something of an anthem down Lizard way for all that good stuff ... a soundtrack to getting back to work in our beautiful but remote community. If you are looking for work or are in the enviable position of being able to offer some get involved just call xxxxx or e-mail