

Chairwoman means business when it comes to equality

HELEN Lacey is on a mission to stop inappropriate sexual comments in business.

"Being a female business owner in Somerset has been, let's say, an interesting journey," said Helen.

"The majority of people I have met have been very supportive but sadly, there are still one or two (men) who think it's all right to pass sexist comments. I am all for compliments but sexist remarks devalue the business relationship, apart from the fact they look very foolish."

Helen was speaking after chairing a meeting of the Somerset Institute of Directors at the Swan Hotel in Wells.

As chair of this organisation, which supports local business people and organises inspirational and valuable business events in Somerset, she also has two key aims:

1. Reinvigorate the institute with new energy
2. Bring in more female members and more younger members.

"Historically many organisations are male dominated with lots of testosterone, power dressing and who has the biggest 4x4," said Helen.

"We need more strong independent women as directors. They can be more in tune with the atmosphere in a firm."

Also, half the UK's customers are female.

One problem for women with young children is attending early morning meetings and evening functions.

The Somerset Institute of Directors has 184 members but only 22 are female, and only 10 members are under 39.

Helen also does not like being called chairman.

"One reason I took the job was because I want to get rid of the term chairman across the whole of the Institute of Directors nationally," she said.

The organisation offers a business platform for directors to network, increase their awareness of what's happening in the wider business environment, arranges seminars, visits and inspirational



Helen Lacey with members of Somerset Institute of Directors outside the Swan Hotel in Wells

events.

Helen founded Red Berry Recruitment in 2007 in Shepton Mallet, then added a Yeovil office in 2010, Bridgwater in 2014 and Cardiff this year.

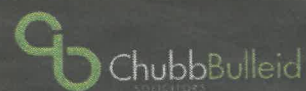
"I am extremely proud of what I have achieved over the last 10 years, a multi award-winning recruitment agency," she said, "and thankful for the wonderful team that work and have worked for me to help make Red Berry Recruitment the success it is."

Philip Welch

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The latest Wells Loyalty League draw winner Liz Gane receives her voucher from Kate Ripley of Ron Thompson Carpets, in Wells. Shoppers can drop off their completed cards at Basil Powell Shoes, and that is also where participating businesses can pick up new cards if their supply has been exhausted.



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