



Jim Woods [Local Enterprise Office Carlow], Jo Browne [Jo Browne]

## The sweet scent of success

### Jo Browne: A Local Enterprise Office Carlow 'Making It Happen' story

***When asked how it all began, Jo Browne goes back to when she was 10 years old, recalling how her sister-in-law gave her a 'solid' perfume from Greece. She fell in love with it. She stayed loyal to solid perfume as she grew up and amassed a collection from all over the world.***

In 2013, Jo was practising as a reflexologist, specialising in aromatherapy and essential oils. A key part of her treatment involved the use of solid perfume, but that year, she hit a snag—she could no longer source any.

Rather than give up on the product that she adored, Jo saw a business opportunity in the shortage.

"I decided just to make myself a solid perfume. From there, I launched three solid perfumes into the market."

From her home in the picturesque countryside of

Hacketstown in Carlow, Jo has created a thriving natural and organic skincare and perfume business.

Her fragrance products, which take her name, are made by hand using beeswax and organic oils, a process which can take up to six months to complete.

"We are makers of solid perfume and cleansing balms. We do luxury soap also, and we have our award-winning diffuser", says Jo. "We use bamboo packaging, too. It's eco-friendly, it's sustainable, and bamboo can grow without any pesticides."

Unlike 'traditional' perfumes sold in a mixture of alcohol and water, which many are people are allergic to, solid perfumes are comprised of a base of hard wax that is applied directly to the skin by rubbing with a finger or pad.

Jo soon recognised growing national and international demand for her product niche. Seeking to capitalise on

this, she looked to the Local Enterprise Office Carlow to help guide her business to the next milestone on its journey.

## International expansion with funding and grants

The Local Enterprise Office Carlow offers a variety of financial supports to small businesses.

A feasibility grant can help a business explore their target market in greater detail and design products and services based on consumer feedback. A business expansion grant provides the funds to scale start-ups internationally. The Trading Online Voucher Scheme can jumpstart a business's digital and e-commerce services, while the Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters (TAME) grant helps businesses expand into new markets.

An injection of cash, as Jo discovered, can make all the difference.

"So far, I've got the priming grant and the TAME grant, which have been really, really helpful in building the Jo Browne business," she says.

Jim Woods, European Project Officer, at the Local Enterprise Office Carlow says the priming grant that Jo Browne availed of can be used by any business in their first 18 months of trading.

"The grant can be used for a variety of purposes, including overheads, staff wages, or other expenses that small businesses encounter. This can be invaluable to small businesses in getting their business up and running."

Thanks to the financial support of the Local Enterprise Office, as well as other business development and mentoring programmes, the Jo Browne product range is now stocked in 120 stores in Ireland, with growing

interest abroad.

"Our products are stocked in twelve different countries, including Canada, the USA, and Switzerland," says Jo. "We're just opening a market into Turkey and we've just sent our first parcel out to France, which is very, very exciting for us."

Jo shows no sign of slowing down. Her business now boasts a staff of five, including one on-the-road salesperson who spends her time visiting Jo's stockists and promoting the brand all over the country.

The entrepreneur who turned her love of solid perfume into a solid brand and business has great plans for expanding in the future—a future that will be supported by the Local Enterprise Office in Carlow.

"The Local Enterprise Office in Carlow can provide a variety of supports to help small businesses make it happen," says Jim.

*"So far, I've got the priming grant and the TAME grant, which have been really, really helpful in building the Jo Browne business."*

Jo Browne, Jo Browne.

*"Local Enterprise Office grants can be used for a variety of purposes, including overheads, staff wages, or other expenses that small businesses encounter."*

Jim Woods,

Local Enterprise Office  
Carlow.

*If you have a business idea, talk to us.  
Together, we can make it happen.*