

# Surfboard firm on the crest of a wave

The Western Morning News' Think Local campaign aims to encourage people to support their local businesses in these credit-crunched times. Here **Lyn Barton** looks at a Westcountry business which is flourishing in an unlikely environment

WHEN Sally Parkin set up The Original Surfboard Company this summer she assumed peak holiday season would be her boom time.

However, to her surprise, the company's beautiful re-styled traditional wooden surfboards have been flying off the shelves even as temperatures plummeted.

In fact, said Sally, more boards have been sold in November than the whole of the summer.

The entrepreneur firmly believes this is because people are seeking out and supporting quality local suppliers.

"The Think Local philosophy has worked for me," she said.

"I set up the company with the plan to sell through the website but have sold more boards through our local farm shop and local Christmas fairs."

Ms Parkin believes her website, [www.originalsurfboards.co.uk](http://www.originalsurfboards.co.uk), has been an important shop window.

"But I think that people like to see the actual product and buying locally makes a big price difference with the surfboards because of delivery costs," she said.

"The boards at the shop are £39, a £10 saving on the website price."

Sally thinks the surprise success in November sales is also about presenting an original idea for a present people wouldn't have thought about if they hadn't seen it.

"I've sold a lot of boards as presents for men and teenage boys and the pink surfboards have been popular gifts for the girls," she



The company made pink boards in support of Breast Cancer Research UK

said. "People seem to like the fact the surfboards are hand-made locally and make a practical as well as stylish present.

"They are also more environmentally friendly than the foam based boogie boards. Thinking local brings in surprise surfboard sales."

When Sally set up her Exeter-based company the aim was to source everything as locally as possible.

The design ideas for the boards are Cornish and the boards are made in Devon – even the boat vinyl designs are made and applied locally.

A Devon farm shop may seem like an unlikely place to find surfboards for sale.

But Exe Valley Farm shop owner Russell

Powell likes to support his customers and works hard to promote local produce.

"We aim to source everything as locally as possible," he said.

"Apart from the usual things you would expect to find at a farm shop we have a selection of goods made by our loyal customers.

"This includes locally printed cards, shopping bags made from recycled carrier bags, feather dusters made from Devon Ostrich feathers and now original wooden surfboards."

Exe Valley Farm shop is just off the A396 Exeter to Tiverton road near the turning for Thorverton. It can be contacted on 01392 861239.