

Entrepreneurs launch third company with support from Business Gateway Midlothian

Ross and Kristen Hunter, founders of a couple of success stories already, have founded a third business over the summer.

The entrepreneurs are behind the award-winning luxury glamping pod company, Armadilla as well as Whisky Frames, which features personalised photo frames made from old whisky barrels.

Now their third company Barrel Smiths, has been launched with ongoing support from Business Gateway Midlothian.

The couple, who employ 34 staff, started their first family business, Armadilla, with Ross's father Archie 10 years ago, designing and manufacturing hi-spec pods from their Midlothian base for clients around the world including Riverbeds near Glencoe and hotel chains throughout the Middle East and Australia.

In 2017, Ross, a design engineer, and wife Kristen, who graduated in interior architecture and also has a Masters in Sculpture launched their second business, Whisky Frames, which was named Start Up Entrepreneur of the Year at the Great British Entrepreneur Awards on its first anniversary.

Using old whisky barrels from distillers and cooperages, the company designs and manufactures bespoke photo

frames, featuring personalised monogrammed rivets, which are numbered so that customers can research the origin of the distillery or cooperage, and currently sell around 350 frames worldwide every week.

Their latest venture, Barrel Smiths, was launched in June during lockdown, featuring handcrafted and personalised gifts, including serving platters, wreaths and wine bottle holders, also made from whisky barrels. Each unique piece of oak stave is hand crafted by skilled woodworkers and tells a story of its history reflecting any scars, fissures and other rustic features of the original barrel.

Over the years the company has received support from various organisations, including Business Gateway Midlothian, from help to streamline production and digital strategy development to marketing, branding and growth planning.

Recently, the couple were the first to receive support from Midlothian Council's new Business Regulatory Support Service (BRSS). This 'one stop shop' for regulatory advice and guidance for businesses is one part of Midlothian Council's Economic Renewal Strategy created to support increased productivity and explore ways to contribute further to the sustainable economic growth in the area.

Kristen said: "We have been incredibly fortunate to have received a wealth of support from Business Gateway Midlothian over the years from planning and development to research and marketing, which has really helped us to be able to grow our businesses and continue to create jobs for people in the local area.

"The new Business Regulatory Support Service has also been an invaluable resource for our latest venture, Barrel Smiths, as it has allowed us to tap into different areas of expertise from various departments including licensing, trading standards and environmental health to ensure we are going

through the proper procedures when selling gifts with alcohol.

“The process of putting us in touch with the right people who could really help us to understand the legalities and processes involved when selling gifts with alcohol has really helped us to drive this side of the business forward and saved us so much time, which we are hugely grateful for.”

Annie Watt, Business Gateway Midlothian Lead, said: “The BRSS process provides clients access to regulatory support at the same time as business support, covering all areas of their business, in the present and looking forward to future plans.

“Business Gateway advisers manage the process for the client so they can focus on other aspects of their business safe in the knowledge that they will have everything in place to operate safely, legally and successfully.”

Business Gateway Midlothian provides expert support and guidance to new and existing businesses, including free advice from experienced business advisers to help start-ups and growth businesses planning to expand or find new ways of doing business.

Free resources include webinars and seminars covering everything from marketing and finance to HR and ecommerce. For details about upcoming webinars check out www.facebook.com/BGMidlothian

To find out how more about the BRSS and how Business Gateway Midlothian can help your business visit <https://www.bgateway.com/local-offices/midlothian/local-support> or call 0131 516 6944.



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