

# R & B

RESEARCH & BUSINESS

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A black and white portrait of Alison Thain, a woman with short, light-colored hair, looking upwards and to the right. She is wearing a dark, high-collared top and small earrings. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a large graphic or sign.

## ALISON THAIN

Meet the housing chief who is passionate about place

### TAKING A STEP FORWARD

Supporting Global Entrepreneurship Week

### RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

£1m collaboration with Sainsbury's

### CRIME IS MUTATING

Two Teesside Professors are on the case

# Top 20 songwriter is new social entrepreneur in residence

By David Roberts

**A songwriter who works to empower community groups with the help of digital technology has been appointed Teesside University's social entrepreneur in residence.**



Steve Thompson, who has composed hits for a variety of international artists including Celine Dion, Elkie Brooks, Sheena Easton, Elaine Paige and Sarah Brightman, hopes to use his latest role to increase student volunteering at the University and to strengthen links between social enterprises.

Steve, pictured above, who works at Teesside University as the DigitalCity Community Engagement Coordinator, is recognised throughout the UK and Europe as a leading figure in community engagement through digital media and ICT.

With the help of Teesside University's Social Entrepreneurship Fund, he has helped to set up his own social enterprise, East Cleveland Online (Ecol), which has created a digital network of community groups and creative projects.

His work has taken him across Europe where as well as being a founder member of the Community Informatics Research Network he has run workshops and

lectures in Poland and Austria. Steve intends to use his one-year tenure as social entrepreneur in residence to increase the University's contact with external social enterprises and seek new opportunities for collaboration and to strengthen links with social enterprise networks and events.

He says, 'This is an exciting new role and in many ways social enterprise is of its time. Having set up my own social network, Ecol, I'll be practising what I preach.'

Before working for the University, Steve had a long song-writing career which included penning the top 20 hit, *Hurry Home*, for Wavelength in 1982. He has also composed hits for the heavy metal band The Tygers of Pan Tang, as well as producing Venom and Raven and was also invited to write the soundtrack for *Jaws 3D*.

Steve's social enterprise, Ecol, grew out of a DigitalCity project, the Digital Discovery Route, which ran from 2004 to 2006, and helped to create a loose grouping of community organisations. Its members now include Cleveland Ironstone Mining

Museum, Skinningrove History Group, the Loftus Town Crier and Freeborough Academy Community Radio.

The social enterprise's primary function is to share and fund web space. However, it is also investigating new ways for the groups to collaborate and develop new online markets, as well as exploring e-commerce.

Steve is also working with Ecol to develop a community media channel and a citizen journalist network. He has also worked with Community Voice FM in Middlesbrough to train the volunteers at the community radio station how to maximise their potential by using the latest digital technology and industry standard broadcasting equipment.

Steve says, 'Music was the first part of my life and latterly I've been working with digital community engagement. Where possible I love to work with these two separate parts of my life and connect them'.

Teesside University is one of 56 institutions to be chosen to support social enterprise with a £25,000 award from social entrepreneur charity, UnLtd, as part of a new initiative by the Higher Education Funding Council.

Steve is taking over as social entrepreneur in residence from Kate Welch OBE DL, who as a leader of the Acumen group of social enterprises helped the University build a platform to support social enterprise.

**If you are interested in starting a social enterprise contact us:**

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