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Secret Millionaire role for Directorbank founder Hick

WELL known serial entrepreneur Jonathan Hick, founder of The Directorbank Group, is to become the latest Yorkshire businessman to appear on TV show the Secret Millionaire.

Mr Hick is due to appear in the award winning Channel 4 series this Sunday. He follows in the footsteps of Brighouse-based marketing entrepreneur Carl Hopkins who featured in the last series.

Earlier this year Mr Hick spent nine days undercover in Hendon, Sunderland where he saw the impact of the recession at street level, including issues of mental health, alcoholism and drugs. The area is still reeling from the closure of its once world-leading shipyards two decades ago.

On the programme, Mr Hick talks publicly for the first time about his own mental breakdown six years ago.

He said: One in four of us will be touched by mental health problems in our lifetime, yet there is still a stigma to it. I was incredibly lucky in having supportive family, colleagues and friends so I made a full recovery and moved on. There remains a big part of me wanting to help those who hit problems each year and those who are long term sufferers.

An innovator, Mr Hick has been spotting business opportunities since the age of 13. However, it was not until his early 30s that he began to see real success from his ideas.

He puts a lot of this down to building teams of people with complementary skills and experience - particularly sector, operational and financial.

He said: The Directorbank concept was based on matching some of the UKs top business people to good business ideas, often in return for a stake. This principle of adding serious management teams makes all the difference to entrepreneurial ideas.

Today Leeds and London-based Directorbank is Europes leading provider of senior directors to private equity and venture capital backed companies.

Despite the recession, Mr Hicks business interests are thriving and he continues

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to spot and develop new opportunities.

Apart from The Directorbank Group, his other businesses are the Spencer Arms, a gastro pub near Barnsley; Blue Sky Cruising; Sterling Graphic Equipment; and CallUma a 24/7 multilingual help service for tourists around the world.

Having grown up in the port of Hull, Mr Hick was delighted to discover his secret destination was Sunderland with its shipbuilding heritage. A significant number of his ancestors were trawler skippers and his father and three generations before him were in the timber trade so Hicks childhood was spent amidst ships and docks.

Sunderland claims once to have made half the worlds ships via a shipbuilding industry that at one time employed over 20,000 people many of them living in the streets of Hendon and on the banks of the Wear.

The three charities he visits are all in Hendon. Headlight, a drop-in centre to support people with mental health issues; Sunderland Maritime Heritage, a community project to preserve artefacts and skills of shipyard workers; and SitnBfit which runs chair or wheelchair based exercise classes for elderly and infirm people.

The Secret Millionaire will be broadcast at 9pm on Easter Sunday, April 12 on Channel 4.

<http://www.thebusinessdesk.com/yorkshire/news/10139-secret-millionaire-role-for-directorbank-found>