

Sarah Dunning, 38, runs Westmorland Limited, the Dunning family business, which includes Tebay Motorway Services and the Rheged Centre, Penrith, and employs 500 people. She is married to Joel, a heart surgeon and they have two children who have just started school

What is the best thing about living in Cumbria?

Its sense of community. You really feel it when you run a business in Cumbria – businesses and other organisations are very supportive of each other. The staff, too, are tied together through their communities as well as their work, which brings a lot to a business.

Who's the most interesting person you've met through your job?

Martin Greenland, an artist, for the way he combines dream with reality and for his ability to express his work in words. There are so many interesting artists and crafts people in Cumbria, driven by creating something beautiful and of quality.

Do you have a favourite place in Cumbria?

The Howgill Fells. They are less trodden than many Cumbrian fells but they are appreciated by the thousands in the cars passing through that part of the M6 every day.

What do you do to unwind?

Spend time with friends and family around the kitchen table, with oven glove in one hand and glass of wine in the other.

Where do you recommend for a decent pint and a good bite to eat?

I'm not a pint drinker, so I tend to like pubs which do good food. I visited the newly re-opened George and Dragon in Clifton, near Penrith the other evening. We could do with more pubs like that in Cumbria – this one is really unpretentious and simple but it has been beautifully done.

Tell us something that not many people know about you.

I did more than 100 skydives a few years ago. I wouldn't do another now, I'd be too worried about who would drop off the children at school if my parachute didn't open.

If you could change anything about Cumbria, what would it be?

More affordable housing would go a long way to growing our working communities and strengthening our



businesses in turn. A little less rain would be nice for next year too.

Do you have a favourite walk in the county?

Stenkrieth, in Kirkby Stephen. It has a fantastic river for paddling and skimming stones, and even swimming if you're brave. It also has a poetry path carved into stone

and a disused railway track – great for bike rides with the children.

If you had to sum up Cumbria in a single word, what would it be?

Enriching.

Interview: Mary Ingham
Photograph: Phil Rigby