

JANE Hampson is certainly enjoying the sweet smell of success as her business, Little Satsuma, goes from strength to strength.

A trained aromatherapist and massage therapist, Jane, 30, produces and sells natural, environmentally-friendly toiletries, including her Scouse Soap Company brand of soaps. She also offers pamper parties and corporate massage days.

She makes the products herself with help from her family, and sells them via her internet shop, markets and selected outlets such as the 08 Place and John Lennon Airport.

Little Satsuma evolved through Jane's love for the environment and animals. After spending some time in London as a stockbroker, she decided to return to Liverpool and follow her dream.

She explained: "I wanted to do something in Liverpool that I could build upon and be proud of.

"I began researching suppliers and reading books on soap making, and spent night after night perfecting blends and processes.

"I started setting up our IT systems and structure so we were organised from day one and could cope if we grew. I had great support from a friend who taught me to web-master it myself.

"I used personal funds to set up, and I was lucky enough that my parents have been supportive and a good source of advice."

Little Satsuma has been up and running for two years now, and business is growing steadily for Jane. She said: "We have commissions for new soaps from other companies, and our soap is going into several new outlets soon. We are meeting a new hotel next year, so we hope to get the



ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY: Jane Hampson

soaps there. We are also getting recycled gift boxes to package the soap in, and plan to approach larger stores. I might even try Harrods – nothing ventured, nothing gained!"

She added: "We are getting to the point where we will need a workshop and to introduce phone ordering, which means we will need an additional member on board.

"We are also introducing a commission scheme for people who hold their own parties to sell our products to friends and family. It's great, low-cost

advertising for us and an easy way to expand without massive overheads!"

Jane's favourite part of the job is coming up with ideas. She revealed: "We are making a new soap from lemongrass and kelp (A little Kelp from my friends!) and a new cream with apple extract and frankincense, which have anti-ageing properties."

The company was listed as one of the top 200 ethical buys for Christmas in the 2005 Green Guide, and with coverage in the Observer twice

so far this year, Jane is flying the flag for quality, environmentally-focused, ethical products from Merseyside. She also makes the UK's first range of palm oil-free soaps, and gives a 10p donation to the Orangutan Foundation with each bar sold.

But running your own business does have its problems. Jane admitted: "The biggest challenge is removing all the things I get super-glued to my fingers when I am making gift baskets. The best one was having to talk to a

client on the phone whilst I had two wood reindeers glued to my fingers and the other two fingers glued together. I am just glad they couldn't see me!"

But when she looks back to those early days, making her first batch of soap, it all seems worthwhile.

She said: "Seeing the company grow and over-hearing people saying they love the products is a total buzz for me. I can't believe how far it has come. I am delighted, thrilled, inspired and very optimistic for the future!"