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**2008 Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards launched at Cyfartha Castle**

*Celebrating innovation and business success*

The search is on for the most innovative businesses in the Heads of the Valleys area. Businesses throughout the region are being invited to enter the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards which were launched on April 23 at Cyfartha Castle in Merthyr Tydfil by Alistair Neil, Chief Executive of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.

The Awards celebrate and reward the most innovative businesses in the region, including social enterprises and the theme for the 2008 Awards is “Aiming High”. Businesses can gain recognition for any business activity they have implemented that has had a dramatic and beneficial impact on that business, customers, employees or the community.

Winners of the inaugural 2007 Awards were Royvon Dog Training Schools, International Technical Diving Agency (UK) Ltd, Garnsychan Partnership, Penn Pharmaceutical Services Ltd and Purple Prose. Some of these businesses, for example, are global market leaders, trade in 30 countries, have opened offices in the UK, North America and Tokyo and have long standing contracts with the Malaysian Government. Kerys Sheppard of Purple Prose said: “Winning the Sole Trader category was a huge reward for so much hard work and this public recognition has given me the confidence to drive the business forward and make it an even greater success.”

Entries for the 2008 Awards are open to all businesses based in the Heads of the Valleys area and the closing date for entries is 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The entry process is short and simple. The Awards will be judged by a high profile panel of judges that includes Jeff Grosvenor, Commercial Manager at HSBC, Ceri Fitzpatrick, BT Partnership Director for Wales, Shannon Robinson, Chief Executive, Community Enterprise Wales, Richie Turner, Wales Manager for NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts and David Russ, Managing Director of Newport and Gwent Enterprise. The winners will be announced at an Awards Ceremony at the Innovation Marketplace event on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at the Parkway Hotel in Cwmbran.

“Innovation is crucial to business survival and growth.” said Phil Burkhard, HOVIP

Manager. “These Innovation Awards recognise businesses that are already making a significant

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contribution to the economy of the area. We want to raise the profile of their innovative activities and the Heads of the Valleys. In days gone by, Merthyr Tydfil was the iron capital of the world and the region a hotbed of innovation. It is appropriate, therefore that the 2008 Awards are launched at Cyfartha Castle.”

“We are also delighted to have the support of such prestigious sponsors who have contributed to an exciting package of prizes for the winning companies. I would urge innovative companies in the Heads of the Valleys region to make sure they enter by our closing date of 6 June.”

The 2008 Awards will have 4 categories:

**Most Innovative Sole Trader** – sponsored by HSBC Bank plc.

**Most Innovative Business with less than 20 employees** – sponsored by ngb2b (Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce).

**Most Innovative Business with more than 20 employees** – sponsored by BT.

**Most Innovative Social Enterprise Business** – sponsored by NESTA, the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts.

For further information about the 2008 Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards, which are part of the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme, and to obtain an entry form, visit [www.hovip.org.uk](http://www.hovip.org.uk).

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#### **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

Enquiries to: Phil Burkhard, Project Manager, Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP), Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Tel: 01685 725 469 Email: [phil.burkhard@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:phil.burkhard@merthyr.gov.uk)

#### **1. ABOUT THE HEADS OF THE VALLEYS INNOVATION AWARDS**

For an entry form and more information visit [www.hovip.org.uk](http://www.hovip.org.uk) or call Phil Burkhard on 01685 725 469 or email: [phil.burkhard@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:phil.burkhard@merthyr.gov.uk)



#### **2. ABOUT HOVIP**

The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP) aims to increase the capacity for innovation in businesses in the Heads of the Valleys region. HOVIP2 is a regional business development programme that is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government HoV Regeneration initiative and is hosted by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council. The five Heads of the Valleys Councils ( Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen) Community Enterprise Wales and NESTA comprise the HOVIP Steering Group. See [www.hovip.org.uk](http://www.hovip.org.uk) for more information and examples of how businesses have already benefited from HOVIP.