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For immediate release

Rhondda Valley company celebrates the Spirit of Innovation

Porth based Telecentre and Business School has won the Most Innovative Social Enterprise category in the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards, an event which showcases and celebrates business innovation in the region

Telecentre and Business School is a company who help unemployed and economically inactive people get back into work by providing training services, personal development plans and basic skills.

The company won the award by creating a social enterprise business incubation, an innovative way of supporting new and growing businesses. The incubator provides links to training organisations, business support agencies and large scale community regeneration programmes to encourage entrepreneurial activity.

Telecentre and Business School is the first social incubation service in Wales focused on the development of new social enterprises. The organisation embraces a 'let's do it our self' culture and supports people in gaining the skills to start new enterprises and create new jobs for themselves and the community instead of seeking employment from existing organisations.

Managing Director Paul Nagle, who lives in Llwynypia said: "I am delighted to win this award and to be recognised for the training and support we facilitate for individuals and social enterprises, locally and across the Heads of the Valleys.

"In this current economic climate we want to demonstrate to communities and individuals across Wales that social entrepreneurship is for everyone. All that is needed is a good idea, passionate people and appropriate support. With this, new businesses can be started and new jobs created."

Organised by the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP) this year's ceremony and related business exhibition was held at Bryn Meadows Golf, Hotel & Spa where over 200 guests attended.

The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards acknowledge the very best in business innovation and enterprise, and highlight the true commercial and business talent the region has to offer.

The Awards are open to any businesses, including social enterprises, within the Heads of the Valleys region and any business in the boroughs of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Torfaen that can demonstrate a significant impact on or a link to the Heads of the Valleys area as well as beyond.

HOVIP is mainly funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and is a practical and creative programme of support delivered by business people for business people.

Phil Burkhard, programme manager for HOVIP, said: "Now in its fourth year, the Awards honour the most innovative businesses in the region who can demonstrate how creativity and innovation has made an impact on their business, workforce, customers, communities or the environment.

"This has been the most successful yet with a record 57 entrants. We have once again seen evidence that businesses are truly embracing innovation in the Heads of the Valleys region and using it to make their companies a real success. All the Award entrants have automatically become members of the Turning Heads Club (HOVIP's regional business network) whose members are a collective beacon for the region."

The 2010 event was sponsored by the University of Wales Global Academy and the Award sponsors are BT, HSBC, Capital Law, South Wales Chamber of Commerce and FS4B.

Richard Turner, of the University of Wales Global Academy said: "The level of creativity and innovation demonstrated in our winning businesses increases each year I have judged these awards. This highlights that the Heads of the Valleys region is becoming more innovative and more competitive through no small part the work the HOVIP and other initiatives such as the Prince of Wales Innovation Scholarships."

Other category winners include School of Life (Most Innovative Sole Trader), RUMM Ltd (Most Innovative Business with less than 20 employees), and Williams Medical Supplies (Most Innovative Business with more than 20 employees). Each winner received a cash prize and a trophy.

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Note to editors:

The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP) is now in its third phase. HOVIP2, in the last 2 years, has helped 175 businesses achieve over £1 million, mainly in additional business, and is contributing to safeguarding 539 jobs (www.hovip.org.uk).

HOVIP2 is part funded by WAG HoV and is hosted by Merthyr Tydfil CBC on behalf of the boroughs of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf & Torfaen. The two key aims of HOVIP are to:

- 1) Increase the innovative capacity of all businesses (inc. social enterprises) in the five HoV boroughs i.e. to help them survive and thrive.
- 2) Raise the business profile of the region.

HOVIP has just won the **UK Enterprise Support Initiative of the Year**, following a record 150 UK-wide entries, in the awards run by the UK Sector Skills Council for Enterprise. The inaugural HoV Innovation Awards, the flagship event of HOVIP, were first delivered in 2007.

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