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FLYING HIGH IN THE South Wales VALLEYS AND IN THE UK

The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP) has won a prestigious UK Enterprise Support Award. The Award recognises the ground-breaking and innovative business support provided by HOVIP and the exceptional results the programme has achieved for businesses in the South Wales Valleys.

What have the Dragons Den, two flamingos called 'Splosh' and 'Pecks', a one-and-a-half acre roof garden six stories above Kensington High Street and the South Wales Valleys got in common?

The answer is the Kensington Roof Gardens, London, venue for the 2010 UK Sector Skills Council for Enterprise (SFEDI) Awards and HOVIP, a winning Welsh business support and development initiative.

The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP), funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and hosted by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on behalf of the five Heads of the Valleys local authorities, has been announced as the UK Enterprise Support Organisation / Initiative of the Year as part of the 8th Annual SFEDI Awards. The Award category was sponsored by InBiz, a respected market leader in developing and delivering innovative enterprise support programmes.

Tony Robinson OBE, SFEDI Founder and Executive Director said "For the last 15 years SFEDI has been setting the UK standard for skills and support for prospective and existing small business owners and those that support them. Recognising best practice is an important part of our work. We were delighted, because of the massive impact on the South Wales Valleys enterprise development, that Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council won our 2010 Enterprise Organisation of the Year Award for the Heads of the Valley Innovation Programme".

HOVIP flew above 150 award entries from across the UK in the presence of guest speaker Julie Meyer, co-founder of Dragons Den, managing director of Ariadne Capital and noted by the Wall Street Journal as one of the Top 30 most influential women in Europe.

The HOVIP Manager, Phil Burkhard, takes up the story: "This tremendous accolade is a further opportunity to raise the business profile of the South Wales Valleys. HOVIP has generated over £1million in additional business, for 175 businesses and is safeguarding 539 jobs via a range of innovative business support services. This represents more than a 100% return on investment in two years."

"These exceptional results are thanks to a talented team of business owners supported by five local authority partners, private sector sponsors such as BT, HSBC, South Wales Chamber of Commerce, Capital Law and Equinox PR, and initiatives like the University of Wales Global Academy Prince of Wales Innovation Scholarships and Cardiff University."

HOVIP's ground-breaking and innovative business support and development services are delivered by business people for business people. One example is the Awards and Marketplace event on 24 June which celebrates and showcases the most innovative businesses in the South Wales Valleys. See

www.hovip.org.uk .

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PHOTO CAPTION: HOVIP – a winning team for a winning Welsh business support initiative
Pictured: The HOVIP team, from left to right, Phil Burkhard, Chris James, Wendy Locke, Sadie Fentham, Mike Warren and Jeff Harris

NOTES FOR EDITORS

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1. 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.

HOVIP3 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 for more information and examples of how businesses have already benefited from HOVIP.



2. ABOUT SFEDI

SFEDI, the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative, is the government-recognised, not-for-profit standards setting body for both Business Enterprise and Business Support. That means that we research what is needed for all those thinking of, preparing for, starting or running their own self employed or micro enterprise then develop National Occupational Standards to support them and those supporting them. Further information is available at www.sfedi.co.uk

3. ABOUT InBiz

InBiz is a respected market-leader in developing and delivering innovative enterprise support programmes. This is achieved by working with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, Business Link, Learning and

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Development Councils and a host of other partners.

Operating from strategic locations across the UK, the Company focuses on enterprise creation and neighbourhood regeneration. InBiz became part of Avanta Enterprise Ltd in 2006. Further information is available at www.InBiz.co.uk

4. ABOUT THE HEADS OF THE VALLEYS PROGRAMME

The Heads of the Valleys initiative is a 15 year regeneration project, led by the Welsh Assembly Government, working to benefit communities in Merthyr Tydfil, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf. Aimed at stimulating regeneration, economic growth, and environmental improvement, the £140 million programme is making the Heads of the Valleys an increasingly successful and attractive area for people to live and work.

The £140million programme aims to create:

- ☐ An attractive and well-used natural, historic and built environment
- ☐ A vibrant economic landscape offering new opportunities
- ☐ A well educated, skilled and healthier population
- ☐ An appealing and coherent tourism and leisure experience
- ☐ Public confidence in a shared bright future

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