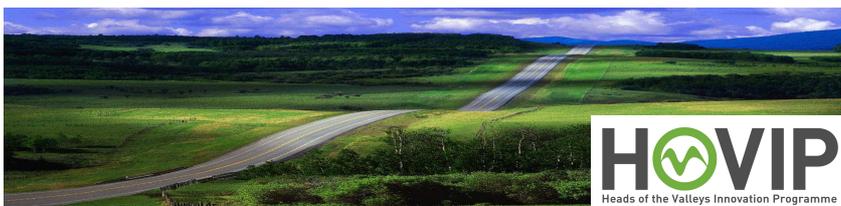


Heads Up

The business newsletter for HOVIP
Issue 1: January 2008



Welcome!

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Programme (HOVIP). This is a regional business development programme designed and delivered by business people with experience at the sharp end and supported by the Welsh Assembly Government backed Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Steering Group.

HOVIP is aimed at increasing the capacity for innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in any sector including new starts, sole traders, established businesses and social enterprises. Phase One was confined to the Heads of the Valleys and Phase Two has been extended to the whole of the five boroughs that comprise the region.

Innovation is about doing things differently to achieve dramatic results. By becoming more innovative, businesses are able to raise their game, become more competitive and get better results. This newsletter highlights the success of HOVIP1, hosted by Merthyr Tydfil College & outlines exciting plans for HOVIP2, hosted by Merthyr Tydfil CB Council.

It demonstrates the benefits of becoming more innovative within a business and of developing a culture of innovation and a 'feel good factor' within the region thanks primarily to the support of our high profile sponsors, the five Heads of the Valleys County Borough Councils (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr, RCT and Torfaen) and Business Eye.

We hope you find it interesting and informative.

Phil Burkhard

Spotlight on Success

Innovation programme brings real benefits for businesses – see www.hovip.org.uk

HOVIP has started to address the challenge of raising levels of innovation in the Heads of the Valleys area.

The programme has reached 132 beneficiaries providing support to 32 businesses and generating over £40,000 in financial benefits alone.

Mixed sector Innovation Workshops, delivered at venues throughout the region and focused on business challenges, organisation wide Innovation Strategy Reviews and related advice and support have featured.



Workshop delegates from Community Enterprise Wales, Saurus Ltd., Penn Pharmaceutical Services and Nocardsthanks.com

The first-ever Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards and Marketplace event were held in June 2007. The Awards attracted a wide range of entries across four categories to recognise and celebrate success.

The Awards and Marketplace were delivered with the grateful support of our sponsors:



The Innovation Marketplace attracted 30 local organisations that showcased their products and services to some 120 visitors. Over a third of exhibitors generated new business within one month of the event, with almost 70% saying they had made new contacts which could prove useful in the future.

The success of the programme is not limited to broad statements of achievement across the region; individual businesses have seen significant changes as well.

Royvon Dog Training Schools, headquartered in Merthyr Tydfil, have identified and introduced a range of new services that are now generating £1500 per month additional income as a result of using creativity techniques gained on the mixed sector workshops.

Rhymney-based Sunday Times Top 100 SME, Williams Medical Supplies plc has used the same techniques to change the culture of their Employee Forum. This has included the latter using the techniques with colleagues to achieve the Green Dragon Environmental Award.

In addition, the Managing Director demonstrated his confidence in the employees by granting a non-managerial team £10,000 to implement a variety of creative solutions to the challenges he set partly as a result of the success of their on-site innovation training.

Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards

June 28 2007 – a night to remember!

The sun definitely came out to shine on the visitors, exhibitors, Award entrants and sponsors who attended this inaugural event. The Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards honour and acknowledge the most innovative businesses in the Heads of the Valleys area.

Patrick Lewis, Director of the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Programme, welcomed everyone and remarked that he was amazed at how much progress HOVIP had made in such a short time.

Exhibitors ranged from Rhymney Valley Brewery, who offered visitors a sample of their beer, to the recently launched Jane Oliver Collection of hand-made jewellery with their unique magnetic clasp.

More established businesses also participated including 25-year strong Design & Manufacture Ltd and International Business Wales. With something for everyone, visitors commented on the professional approach and the friendly informal atmosphere.

The Innovation Awards ceremony was the highlight of the evening with standing room only.



The winners of the inaugural Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards for business, pictured at the Big Pit, (from left to right): Damian Gant, Penn Pharmaceutical Services Ltd; Sassy Hicks, Garnsychan Partnership; Steve Murray, ITDA (UK) Ltd; Sarah Draper, Royvon Dog Training Schools and Kerys Sheppard, Purple Prose.

When we often hear about the adverse effects of globalisation on Welsh business it was revealing to discover that ITDA (UK) Ltd. was joint winner of one Award. ITDA has rewritten the rule book for diving standards and is trading in 30 countries. As the judges noted: "Who would have thought that an international diving school, responsible for setting standards across the globe, could be found in New Tredegar!."

Damian Grant, of Penn Pharmaceutical Services Ltd., summed up the evening by saying: "The event is a fantastic forum for people to meet and showcase their success, promote HoV businesses and clearly demonstrate to the rest of the country how sharing skills and ideas generates fuel for innovation."

You can discover more about the Award winners at: www.nesta.org.uk/informing/articles/hovip.aspx

Invaluable Ideas, Advice & Support

Practical, proven and value for money

HOVIP has helped businesses develop and grow via a variety of methods as these further examples show:

- My Little Angel - (event management, domestic, virtual assistance and concierge services). Landed contracts worth £3600 after exhibiting on June 28.
- Creative Innovations – (trophy providers and laser, glass, crystal and wood engravers). The business has joined the Export Assist Programme after HOVIP sign-posted them to International Business Wales. HOVIP also developed a UK marketing plan and is co-ordinating support with BiF and MTCBC.
- Regan Construction Services – as a result of developing a novel customer feedback process in a workshop and advice on how to exhibit (using a pile of bricks!), they have increased turnover by 20%.



Another brick in the wall -tools of the trade for Mike Regan

What next?

HOVIP2 aims to repeat and extend the benefits of HOVIP1 to businesses (including social enterprises), in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr, RCT & Torfaen via:

- Business Challenge workshops – address your most pressing business challenge and obtain new solutions, new contacts, new skills & new business.
 - Implementation Support – subsidised support to help you implement ideas from the workshops.
 - Innovation survey, strategy and action plan – to introduce or enhance a culture of innovation.
 - HoV Innovation Awards & Marketplace – celebrate success, raise your profile and do business on **26 June 2008**. Nominate yourself or another business.
 - Creative training courses from Universities and Colleges – subsidised provision with a new twist.
 - Best practice promotion – See how the HoV Awards winners do it plus a pilot linked to the 'Inside Welsh Industry Scheme' and Wales Quality Centre!
 - Turning Heads Club – HoV Innovation Award entrants and winners only.
 - Regional Affinity Scheme – preferential offers from any organization in the UK.
- ▶▶▶ For more information visit www.hovip.org.uk or contact phil.burkhard@merthyr.gov.uk 01685 725469.