

**25 June 2010**  
**For immediate release**

**Caption for photo: (L-R) *Richard Turner of the University of Wales Global Academy, category winner Chris Matthewman of School of Life and Phil Burkhard of HOVIP discuss the innovative approach to business adopted by many companies in the Valleys area.***

## **The Heads of the Valleys celebrate the Spirit of Innovation across the region**

Four companies based in the Valleys have been recognised for their innovative and enterprising approach to business in the Heads of the Valleys Innovation Awards, an event which showcases and celebrates business innovation in the region.

School of Life, winner of the Most Innovative Sole Trader category is based in Abercynon and is an organisation dedicated to presenting helpful ideas in humorous ways. Their unique approach is using a combination of stand-up comedy, multimedia and original music to communicate important life skills to pupils in secondary schools and sixth-form colleges throughout England and Wales.

Telecentre and Business School is based in Porth and was the winner of the Most Innovative Social Enterprise award. The company helps unemployed and economically inactive people get back into work by providing training services, personal development plans and basic skills and encourage entrepreneurial activity. They also created a social enterprise business incubator to support new and growing businesses.

Caerphilly-based RUMM (Remote Utility Monitoring and Management) Ltd won the Most Innovative Business with less than 20 employees, and is an organisation that aims to protect the environment and reduce costs. This is achieved by using innovative technology and a proven methodology to reduce carbon emissions, achieving large savings for local economies and reducing the impact on the environment.

Based on the Maerdy industrial estate, Rhymney William Medical Supplies is the leading provider of medical supplies and services to the UK healthcare market. Winner of the Most Innovative Business with more than 20 employees, the company

provides equipment, pharmaceuticals and a range of services to Primary Care providers such as hospitals, GP surgeries and NHS trusts across the UK.

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.”

**END**

**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](http://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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