

Objective One case study knowledge economy



Objective One is
part-financed by
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The Objective One Partnership
for Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly

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The projects in the Knowledge Economy investment cluster include those developing the Combined Universities and activities that support the development of much stronger links between Higher Education and business.

Developing the Combined Universities in Cornwall is considered so important to the development of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly it was the only project specifically outlined in the Single Programming Document contract. Prior to commencing the Objective One Programme in 2000, there was no such university opportunity in Cornwall.

University level provision in Cornwall and its links with business encourages graduates to start their own businesses, attracts new business and encourages innovation and knowledge transfer, thereby increasing the overall wealth of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Classic Cottages

Shane Cornish grew up in Penzance and always wanted to establish his career in Cornwall, so after completing a BEng (Hons) degree in Electronics at Bournemouth University, he returned to fulfil his ambitions in his home county.

The Combined Universities in Cornwall's graduate placement scheme - Unlocking Cornish Potential (UCP) - proved the ideal stepping stone for Shane.

The scheme, backed by Objective One, aims to introduce skilled graduates to local businesses to work on specific projects that will contribute to the ongoing success of the company.

Through UCP, Shane has been working on the comprehensive documenting and updating of the in-house database application used by Classic Cottages - a very successful, family-run business based in Helston which markets a portfolio of 600 of the best holiday homes in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset. Classic Cottages' philosophy of exacting standards and ensuring that the customer experience is second to none, has resulted in repeat booking levels of between fifty and sixty percent.

The challenge for the IT department is in collating increasingly detailed information and presenting it in a flexible, accessible and user friendly way. This enables maximum and accurate use of data whilst maintaining the individual customer focus which has contributed to the company's outstanding reputation for quality and professionalism.



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Shane has been involved in documenting and porting Classic Cottages' database application into the .Net environment. This involves large scale language changes to the application and will empower the in-house programming staff to use more current design methodologies and tools. He has also designed a new interface for managing prospective properties and their owners. This will allow Classic Cottages to analyse customer enquiries and records more closely and thus enhance the customer information and communication stored in the database. Alongside this has been the development of a contact management system and continuing IT support to the company.

At the suggestion of the UCP Project Officer, the company has applied through the Let's Profit scheme, run by the Learning and Skills Council and European Social Fund (ESF), to fund additional study for Shane to support a more generic role as well. He is now taking a part-time Microsoft certified iPro course at Cornwall College in Camborne - also part of the Combined Universities in Cornwall initiative - which will result in a Microsoft Certified Systems

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Engineer (MCSE) qualification. As Shane explains, “It is a fantastic opportunity. From the company’s point of view, they benefit from my new skills and I gain a broader knowledge and have a respected qualification at the end of it.”

Shane explained the value the UCP scheme has had for him overall saying: “Cornwall is my home and I always had the intention of coming back. UCP has really opened some doors for me and made it happen. This is a successful, expanding company which really captures the magical side of Cornwall and is inspiring to work for. My skills are put to full use and there is always more and better to strive for.”

Director of Classic Cottages, Simon Tregoning is equally enthusiastic about the benefits of the UCP scheme and Shane’s contribution to their success, commenting: “We have a great deal of raw talent here in Cornwall and we are delighted to be playing a part in nurturing that talent.”

The Unlocking Cornish Potential programme places graduates with small and medium sized businesses in Cornwall for up to 12 months. Investment in UCP through Objective One means that participating businesses receive 30% of the cost of taking on their graduate for the duration of the project. Graduates and their employers also receive support from an independent mentor, 70% of previous UCP graduates have been offered a permanent position with their host company at the end of the project. UCP was the first project launched by the Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) initiative to offer direct business support and is managed by Cornwall College.

UCP has proved highly successful in ensuring graduate knowledge remains in the region and gets harnessed for the benefit of businesses. Two key priorities for the EU’s Lisbon Agenda, which aims to achieve economic regeneration, are knowledge and innovation for growth and to create more and better jobs. UCP is an effective way of achieving these aims.

For more information about Unlocking Cornish Potential visit www.unlockingcornishpotential.co.uk.



Lower Trembath, a 17th Century granite farmhouse 1.6 miles south west of Penzance, is one of Classic Cottages’ hand-picked selection of over 600 of the finest holiday cottages in the West Country.