

Objective One case study knowledge economy



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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.

Finisterre

Finisterre, founded by Tom Kay, is an example of a business that has been able to use several strands of Objective One support on the road to success.

Uniquely specialising in technical apparel for the cold water surfer, Finisterre began in an attic in a shared house in St Agnes about five years ago. It moved to workspace at Wheal Kitty (which received Objective One investment) and Finisterre itself received support for its expansion from Business Link via the EVOKE programme, which has also received Objective One investment.

Founded in 2002, Finisterre (www.finisterreuk.com) has always had a strong environmental ethos and is a member of '1% for the Planet' - a global initiative whose members contribute at least 1% of their annual revenues to groups on a list of researched and approved environmental organisations. Since joining 1% for the Planet, Surfers Against Sewage and the Marine Conservation Society in the UK have been approved as donees. It has since launched a pioneering environmental scheme based on product life cycle analysis.

Finisterre is the only company in the world making cutting-edge technical apparel specifically for cold water surfers. This consists of a selection of hard shell jackets, mid and base layers made from technical fabrics which meet exacting world class standards. They work with some of the world's leading textile



Finisterre team, from left: Tom Podkolinski (Design Director), Ernie Capbert (Marketing Director), Stephen Davis (Customer Service) and Tom Kay (Founder).

research centres, and the range is almost entirely made from recycled and/or from recyclable fabrics. The products are frequently highly reviewed as good as or better than products from some of the bigger players within the industry.

Finisterre has also used the Unlocking Cornish Potential project with great results. Unlocking Cornish Potential is a Combined Universities in Cornwall project run by Cornwall College and supported with Objective One investment that places graduates with companies and provides expert support for up to one year.

Tom Podkolinski, Finisterre's Design Director and Marketing Manager Ernie Capbert are both graduates who joined the company via Unlocking Cornish Potential. Tom and Ernie's contributions were so central to the success of the company that they were recruited as directors at the end of their placements.

Tom identifies designs, fabrics and manufacturers to achieve an ultimate product which will have as little environmental impact as possible and also participates in lectures, along with founder Tom Kay, highlighting the need for ecological responsibility in commerce.

Ernie, a graduate of the University of Plymouth, has developed every aspect of marketing and promoting the brand to the point where the Finisterre ethos and products are already gaining national recognition. GQ Magazine recently called Finisterre "one of the coolest surf brands" and counted their Anabatic shell jacket in their '100 Best Things in the World 2007.'

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The ability to recruit highly skilled people who could also appreciate the philosophy of the business has been essential for success and Tom Kay is understandably enthusiastic about UCP, “There is no doubt that Tom and Ernie have been instrumental in the shaping of Finisterre. It was a crucial stage of the growth of the business and essential that we found the right key staff to take things forward. UCP was a great help in this.”

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



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