

# 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.

## H2OK Systems Limited

**Unlocking Cornish Potential graduate Helen Stimpson is helping a Cornwall-based company expand its range of services into the sustainable systems sector.**

Helen, who graduated in 2005 in Geography from Leeds University, is Sustainable Systems Consultant for H2OK, based at Allet, near Truro. She has recognised the growing demand in companies and households for sustainable systems such as rainwater harvesting, which collects rain and reuses it for non drinking water uses such as toilets, washing machines, vehicle washing and for watering gardens. These systems reduce the need to abstract, treat and pump mains water, preserving a natural resource, reducing carbon emissions and saving money on increasingly costly water charges.

She took the post via Unlocking Cornish Potential, a Combined Universities in Cornwall project run by Cornwall College that has received Objective One investment. Graduates are placed with businesses and offered support including an expert mentor.

Helen, who is from London and now lives in Truro, explained her job, how Unlocking Cornish Potential had supported her and ambitious plans for company expansion.

She said: "Quite a few modules in my degree were about sustainable development, sustainable cities, sustainable energy and renewable energy



Helen Stimpson, Sustainable Systems Consultant for H2OK

**technologies. H2OK has brought me in to assess the commercial scope of sustainable systems across the South West. Because the company already deals with waste water systems it is a natural transition to move towards environmental technology such as rain water harvesting and grey water systems.**

"There is the potential for a huge market out there and my research into sales potential has involved talking to architects, developers, council planners, the South West Regional Development Agency and a number of non governmental organisations. This research has already generated enquiries and contracts for site work and assessments.

"Unlocking Cornish Potential has supported this with two mentors – one for marketing and one for renewable energies. My plan is to eventually head a sustainable systems sector of the company."

H2OK was founded in 1995 with two employees. Now it has 40 employees with a further number of subcontractors helping it to a turnover in excess of £5 million, with continued growth in mind beyond the South West.

Phil Badger, founder and managing Director of H2OK, is delighted to have Helen onboard. "We have for some time now wanted to raise our profile in the sustainable market. Helen has helped us identify the market size and shape which will enable H2OK to devise a strategy to become the market leader in the South West for water-related sustainable solutions."

Ben Leonard, of Unlocking Cornish Potential, said: "The sustainable development and renewable energy market is a real growth area in Cornwall

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where we have considerable expertise. UCP is delighted to support Helen and H2OK to enable to them to enhance their commercial offering in this important area. With the renewable energy degree at the CUC, several market leading renewables consultancies and a growing band of entrepreneurs focussing on this in the county, it is an exciting demonstration of the skills base emerging in Cornwall.”

**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](http://www.unlockingcornishpotential.co.uk).**



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