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PRESS INFORMATION

The Phone Co-op wins top honour at 10th Annual Enterprising Solutions Awards

Winners of the Enterprising Solutions Awards were announced at a gala awards ceremony in London last night. The Best Social Enterprise Award, and a cash prize of £10,000, went to The Phone Co-op, the UK's only telecommunications co-operative.

The Awards are designed to find and reward the UK's most successful and innovative social enterprises – businesses that tackle a social or environmental need.

Vivian Woodell, chief executive of The Phone Co-op, said: "We are truly honoured to receive this award. The Phone Co-op set out to prove that the co-operative model could be applied in an industry which is now a fundamental part of modern society. Our success and continued growth demonstrate that consumers and businesses alike are increasingly interested in using suppliers with a fair and sustainable approach to business."

The Phone Co-op has been hugely successful in a competitive market, and has enjoyed a steady growth over the past ten years – it now has 15,000 customers, a share capital of £2 million and a turnover of £7.5 million.

Based in Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, the co-operative's main offices are in a converted farm and it also has an office in Manchester. Its main objective is to operate in the interests of its customers, rather than outside investors and it applies ethical and environmental policies to all aspects of the business, including promoting greener travel, operating a transparent pricing policy, treating staff fairly and investing in community initiatives. The Phone Co-op is keen to spread its success around and has set up two separate funds to support the growth of new and developing social enterprises.

Jonathan Bland, chief executive of the Social Enterprise Coalition, organisers of the Enterprising Solutions Awards, added: "For the Phone Co-op to thrive and continue to grow in such a competitive market demonstrates the power of a business model that operates on the core values of quality, community and sustainability. All this year's winners are testament to what can be accomplished when innovation and responsible business are combined to deliver solutions to people and communities, something that today's economy reminds us is absolutely essential."

Kevin Brennan, Minister for the Third Sector who presented the Awards, said: "In my previous job at the Department for Children, Schools and Families it was clear to me the difference social enterprise can make to the lives of our young people. I am now relishing the chance to see the real impact that has been made across the age gap and across communities where this movement has really made its mark.

"This year's winners of the Enterprising Solutions Awards provide yet more inspiring examples of the innovative, often unique ways in which someone can make our country better by combining social drive with real business acumen."

The runners-up were **CEiS**, **NMC Design + Print** and **The Wise Group**, who each received £5,000 each, as did **Sunlight Social Enterprises CIC**, the winner of Best New Social Enterprise. **Fyndoune Community College** was the first winner of the newest award, Best Social Enterprise in Schools, and received a £1,000 cash prize.

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Notes to Editors:

- For more information please contact Claire Jarvis at The Phone Co-op on 01608 647713 or 07773 845568 or at claire@thephone.coop
- or Caroline Borge, senior press officer at the [Social Enterprise Coalition](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk) on 0774 369 3040 (m) or 020 7793 2318 (o) or at caroline.borge@socialenterprise.org.uk.
- The awards are run by the Social Enterprise Coalition on behalf of RBS and the Cabinet Office, and sponsored by BT, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Communities and Local Government and Social Enterprise Magazine.
- The Social Enterprise Coalition is the UK's national body for social enterprise. Acting as the voice for the sector, it supports and represents the work of its members, influences national policy and promotes best practice.
www.socialenterprise.org.uk
- Social enterprises are dynamic businesses with social and environmental aims. Well known examples include The Big Issue, Cafédirect and Jamie Oliver's Fifteen, but there are many other social enterprises operating in a wide range of industries from farmers markets and recycling companies to transport and childcare providers.
- According to figures from the Government's Annual Small Business Survey 2005 and existing data for the social enterprise sector, there are at least 55,000 social enterprises in the UK with a combined turnover of £27billion per year.