

## Enterprise award goes to woman for first time



*CPL's Ann Heraty, winner in the international category and overall winner of the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year award, in the City West hotel last night with (from left): Enda Kelly, Ernst & Young; Richard Barrett, Treasury Holdings, industry category winner; Seán Kelly, former GAA president, who won the community award; and Alan Scroope, who won in the emerging entrepreneur category.*

Businesswoman Ann Heraty, who set up recruitment group CPL Resources in 1989, has won the top prize in the 2006 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year awards. Ms Heraty was named overall Entrepreneur of the Year last night at a ceremony in Dublin after she won the International Entrepreneur of the Year category of the competition.

From Ballinalee, Co Longford, Ms Heraty is the ninth winner of the competition, held in association with *The Irish Times*. The first woman to win the competition on her own, she will represent Ireland at the World Entrepreneur of the Year competition in Monte Carlo next June.

Ms Heraty said she was absolutely humbled to receive the award. "I can't believe it to be honest," she said. "It's genuinely unexpected I have to say because the competition was based on such a broad range of business." CPL provides specialist recruitment and workforce management services. Its focus is on sectors such as IT and pharmaceuticals. With 12 offices in Ireland, Britain and Poland, the company is listed on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) in London. It has an internal workforce of 250 and offers short- and long-term work to more than 15,000 people each year.

Ms Heraty paid tribute to her team and her husband, Paul Carroll, whom she described as "her best hire ever". She said she was committed to growing the company even further. "We have a long way to go yet," she said.

One of the two other category awards went to Richard Barrett, co-founder of property group Treasury Holdings, who was named Industrial Entrepreneur of the Year. Established by Mr Barrett and his business partner John Ronan in 1989, Treasury has current assets of €2.2 billion and an international retail investment portfolio worth €2.4 billion. Mr Barrett paid tribute to the Government for its help in getting the company's Shanghai EcoCity project under way, particularly Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Micheál Martin, Minister for Education Mary Hanafin and Taoiseach Bertie Ahern. "I know he's taking a battering in the news but he really put his neck out for us," Mr Barrett said. He also praised Irish diplomats, whom he described as Ireland's "secret weapon" in international business.

The other category prize went to Alan Scroope, co-founder of Tralee-based inventory asset management group FreeFlow, who took the Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year prize. FreeFlow's technology enables customers to promote their inventory to clients, auction it to liquidators and reprocess it to recyclers. Mr Scroope set up the company in a bedroom in his mother-in-law's house. Now, three of his 15 staff are based in California.

The entrepreneurs behind 24 companies that were finalists in the competition attended the presentation of the awards by Mr Martin and businessman Denis O'Brien, who was chairman of the judging panel. Mr O'Brien said that competition for the prize was "extremely hot" and that judges agonised as to who should be the overall winner.

"In the end Ann was selected for her incredible feel in building an extremely successful business from modest beginnings. I hope that this year's winner will encourage more and more women to engage in enterprise," he said.

Former GAA president Seán Kelly was named Social Entrepreneur of the Year, a special award granted in recognition of his contribution to the development of GAA sports. "In a long line of outstanding presidents of the GAA, Sean Kelly is one of the finest examples of social entrepreneurs in Ireland," Mr O'Brien said.

Enda Kelly, the Ernst & Young partner in charge of the competition, said the programme provided valuable role models whose experience can teach both Ireland's existing and future business people.

"Ann Heraty is testament to this and her business success can be partly attributed to her ability to grow entrepreneurialism from within her organisation.

"She has implemented an innovative and successful business model."

Ulster Bank corporate markets chief executive Robert Gallagher congratulated Ms Heraty and the other finalists. "All of those involved in this year's programme have shown tremendous commitment and vision and we wish them every success in the future," he said.

The 24 finalists were chosen from more than 150 entries. The judging panel, which includes former recipients of the overall prize, looks at criteria including growth in turnover and employment, and factors such as the founder's vision for the business. The panel assesses the degree of innovation and creativity in production and marketing. It also looks at the company's performance in local and international markets.

In his speech, Mr Martin said indigenous companies and the people that run them play a central role in the economy. He paid tribute to the winners and the finalists. "During 2005, Ireland had the highest rate of new business start-ups in the European Union and was ranked fifth in entrepreneurial activity across OECD countries," he said.

"These companies make invaluable contributions to many local economies by providing high quality employment, sourcing products and services in the local economy, and by delivering new and innovative products to customers both at home and abroad. "Irish companies make an outstanding contribution to the Irish economy spending over €16 billion annually on payroll, Irish-sourced goods and services. "Their ambition, creativity and the contribution they make to the lives of Irish people throughout the country should not be underestimated," said the Minister.

Mr Martin said the vibrancy of the small business sector was critical to Ireland's future economic success. It was crucial to ensure that everything possible was done to support the growth and development of small businesses, he said.

"Ninety-seven per cent of all businesses in Ireland are classified as small, although they employ almost 800,000 people... Small businesses are important at a national level, for a number of reasons," he said. "They provide regionally distributed employment around the country. They also deliver a range of local services to the economic, social and cultural life of the entire population. They form an essential part of the supply chain for larger firms and, in particular, are part of the support infrastructure needed to attract and retain foreign investment."

He said entrepreneurship was of critical importance in increasing Irish competitiveness and went on to say that embracing international trade and harnessing opportunities in world markets was key to continued expansion of the economy.