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Search begins for Scotland's top Horticulture Learners

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries is calling for nominations for its eighth Scottish Lantra Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards.

Lantra is urging employers, training providers, colleges, universities and schools to nominate employees or students who have shown outstanding commitment to training through their hard work and determination.

Lantra's National Director for Scotland, Willie Fergusson said: Lantra's Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards is a wonderful opportunity to show new entrants the rewarding and diverse careers the sector offers, and encourages people of all ages to consider a career in the sector. The land-based industries offer new entrants excellent quality of learning to develop their skills, comparable with other sectors. The awards demonstrate how employers can benefit from the high levels of skills within the workforce, skills that lead to increased productivity and profitability which can help create a sustainable business in this challenging financial climate.

This year entrants from schools, those in higher education and those in work-based vocational learning are invited to compete for 13 titles. Previous winner, Darren Broadley from Avonbridge, who is currently employed with John Pollock and Sons, secured the Land-based Learner of the Year Award after showing his enthusiasm and commitment for the job.

The prize categories for the 2010 awards include: Overall Winner Scottish Land-based Learner of the Year, Higher Education Learner of the Year and Environmental and Land-based Modern Apprenticeship of the Year, as well as the Skills for Work or Scottish/National Progression Award. There are also eight individual sector awards: Agriculture, Trees and Timber, Aquaculture, Environmental Conservation, Fisheries Management, Game and Wildlife, Equine and Horticulture.

Willie concluded: The awards are a fantastic way to recognise the contribution from all of the learners in the industry, and how the sector can benefit from a skilled workforce. Each year Lantra and its panel of judges are very impressed with the quality of hard work and enterprise demonstrated by the nominees. Once again, Lantra is looking forward to discovering Scotland's talent who will become valuable members of the future workforce.

Nomination forms are available to complete online, view the website at www.lantra.co.uk/scotland. The closing date for nominations is Monday 15 November 2010. For further information contact the

office on 01738 553311 or email Lantra.scotland@lantra.co.uk. Winners will be announced at an Awards Ceremony in March 2011.

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EDITOR S NOTES:

" Successful nominees attend an informal interview with a panel of independent judges.

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based sector, is licensed by the UK Government to drive forward the new skills, training and business development agenda for the sector.

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries, in Scotland represents the interests of approximately 24,500 businesses (13% of all businesses), which employ 115,700 individuals (representing 2% of all employment across the workforce) and 40,000 volunteers.