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Argyll Apprentice wins Trees and Timber award

Apprentice Eamonn Staunton was named 'Trees and Timber Learner of the Year' at the eighth annual Lantra Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards. Eamonn was among the winners who met the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead.

Eamonn who comes from Lochgilphead in Argyll is completing a Modern Apprenticeship in Trees and Timber with the Forestry Commission Scotland.

Eamonn said: "Completing a Modern Apprenticeship has been really beneficial as it allowed me to learn from others in the organisation; it also provided a lot of training which I then put into practice during the work placement. Through the apprenticeship I have been able to raise the standard of my work, and this is just a start. I am driven by a genuine interest in what I do and I hope to achieve great things in forestry and make a positive contribution to the industry."

Ian Wilson from Forestry Commission Scotland said: "Eamonn shows an unrivalled willingness to learn new skills and new areas of knowledge, making the most of opportunities to improve and develop. Studying through the Modern Apprenticeship programme has helped Eamonn immensely, from operation, to conservation and recreation; he has always achieved the necessary high standard and exceeded the expected outputs. Eamonn sets a good example for other apprentices to follow and passes on his knowledge and skills to them."

Runner-Up of the Year award, sponsored by the Rural Development Initiative was presented to Carina Convery, a Modern Apprentice with the Forestry Commission Scotland.

Carina moved to Scotland from Germany successfully gained a place on the Forestry Commission Scotland Modern Apprenticeship programme. Andrew Hunt from Forestry Commission Scotland said: "Carina has a great interest in the land-based sector, her commitment to the work and the learning she has undertaken has been of exemplary standard and she presents as a role model for other apprentices. Carina has really benefited from being on the Modern Apprenticeship programme, she has completed all the core training requirements ahead of schedule and has maximised her consolidation in each area."

A total of 25 prizes were presented during the annual Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards ceremony organised by Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries. The awards, which attracted over 60 nominations, are designed to inspire new entrants to take up a career in the land-based and aquaculture sector and make employers aware of the benefits of a well trained workforce.

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead said: "This is the third year I have been honoured to attend the Lantra Awards and, like both previous occasions, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and skill of the trainees."

"Farming and rural industries face challenging, but interesting times. Scotland's economy is recovering, our food and drink sector is world renowned and we are on the cusp of an energy revolution which is opening up new and exciting opportunities."

"Rural Scotland is very well placed to take advantage of many of these new opportunities and I am sure that many in the hall tonight have the talent to make a significant contribution."

Willie Fergusson, National Director said: "The Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year awards attract a very high calibre of candidates who are committed to further developing their skills and knowledge. It is vital for the future of these industries that we continue to encourage new entrants and demonstrate how employers can see the bottom line benefits that highly skilled new entrants can bring to the business."

Willie continued: "Recognition of the importance of the awards by industry, their commitment to them, and their generosity in sponsoring this event has grown significantly over the years and we are indebted to the sponsors who make this event the success that it is."

This highly prestigious and important annual event, held this year at Crieff Hydro hotel, attracted 140 guests, including learners, employers, farmers, crofters, land managers, training providers, stakeholders and members of the Scottish Parliament. Skills Development Scotland, Marine Harvest and Scottish Natural Heritage were the main sponsors of the event.

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Full list of winners:

- Overall Winner Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Scott Simpson
- Overall Runner-Up Land-based and Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Rebecca McWilliams
- Agriculture Learner of the Year: Scott Simpson
- Agriculture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Craig Connell
- Aquaculture Learner of the Year: Harris Wright
- Aquaculture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Robert Wyvill
- Equine Learner of the Year: Rebecca McWilliams
- Equine Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Susan Torrance
- Floristry Learner of the Year: Debbie McKenna
- Game and Wildlife Learner of the Year: Joshua Bunton
- Horticulture Learner of the Year: Daryl Russell
- Horticulture Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Ryan Mooney
- Higher Education Learner of the Year: Zane Pretorius
- Higher Education Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Graeme Dunlop
- Land-based Curriculum for Schools Learner of the Year: Danny Watson

- Land-based Curriculum for Schools Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Ryan Munro
- Modern Apprentice of the Year: Stuart Burns
- Trees and Timber Learner of the Year: Eamonn Staunton
- Trees and Timber Learner of the Year Runner-Up: Carina Convery

Special Awards:

- Algo Blairgowrie Ltd - Endeavour Award: Righa Purvis
- Algo Blairgowrie Ltd - Endeavour Award: Eve Schulte
- Taypack Potatoes Ltd – Endeavour Award: Debbie McKenna
- CARAS Scotland Award: Zane Pretorius
- CARAS Scotland Award: Fraser Mitchell
- CARAS Scotland Award: Righa Purvis

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CREDIT FOR PHOTO:

201 - Bridget Staunton receives the Trees and Timber award from Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead on behalf of her brother

EDITORS NOTES:

- Lantra is the Sector Skills Council for land-based and environmental industries, working to ensure these businesses access the training, qualifications, skills and knowledge they need.
- Lantra 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.
- Lantra represents 17 industries: agricultural livestock and crops; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; land-based engineering; horticulture, landscaping and sports turf, production horticulture; trees and timber and veterinary activities.
- By working together with the sector, Lantra leads research on skills issues and business needs, sets national standards and develops qualifications to meet modern business needs and help businesses grow through skills.
- For more information see www.lantra.co.uk.