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Chance to shine as entries open for South West Skills Awards 2010

The search is on to showcase the talent of work place learners and their employers across the South West.

Entries are now open for the prestigious South West Skills Awards 2010, which celebrate excellence in vocational education and the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations.

Among the winners last year was the Wiltshire fine wine importer Yapp Brothers Ltd. The family owned company won the Success in Leadership and Management category for the growth it has secured following training and development.

Finance Director Tom Ashworth is encouraging other individuals and organisations to come forward and take the chance to shine in 2010.

He said: "I would urge any employer who is serious about developing their workforce to consider entering as it is a great way to celebrate your success."

Tom's comments were echoed by Martin Blatchford, Operations Manager for Bristol company Pultec Ltd, a specialist in fibreglass window systems. Pultec won the Train to Gain - Small Employer of the Year category in 2009 for the excellence of its staff training.

Martin said: "We were really proud to win the award last year. It gave us public recognition of our commitment to high quality training which is essential in our industry."

Regional director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) South West, Malcolm Gillespie, said: "In order to stay competitive as a region, it is essential that individuals in our workforce keep learning new skills. The people and organisations we celebrate through the South West Skills Awards 2010 are doing just that. They have shown courage, commitment and leadership to develop skills which will hold them and their communities in good stead for the future and help the South West to seize the opportunities of an increasingly global marketplace."

The South West Skills Awards, previously run by the LSC, will this year be run jointly by the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service.

An awards ceremony, at the Sandy Park conference and banqueting centre in Exeter on 2 June, will combine the Skills Awards with the South West regional heat of the National Apprenticeship Awards.

The Skills Award categories are: Achieving Skills for Life; Inspiring Others to Learn; Learning Against the Odds; South West Learner of the Year; Train to Gain Employer of the Year (Small, Medium and Large); Skills Pledge Employer of the Year; Success in Leadership and Management; and Third Sector Employer of the Year sponsored by ESF.

To find more information and to enter the South West Skills Awards, visit www.skillsawards.org.uk. The deadline for entries is 16 April 2010.

Note for editors

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009 for the dissolution of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) by 2010 and the transfer of its functions to local authorities and two new agencies: the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency.

Young People's Learning Agency:

The YPLA will champion young people by providing financial support to young learners, by funding Academies for all their provision and by supporting local authorities' commissioning of suitable education and training opportunities for all 16-19 year olds. The YPLA will be established as a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDBP) sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Skills Funding Agency:

Responsible for channelling funding swiftly, efficiently and securely to further education colleges and other providers, primarily in response to customer (employer and learner) choice on

programmes such as Train to Gain. It will operate through customer focused services: *National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)*, *Employer Skills Services*, *Adult Advancement and Careers Service*, *Learner Skills Services*. The Skills Funding Agency will be an agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

National Apprenticeship Service (NAS):

The NAS was announced in January 2008 and officially launched in April 2009. Reporting to the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the service will drive forward the Government's ambition for Apprenticeships. The service aims to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering Apprenticeships.

The NAS takes total responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships that includes: Employer Services; Learner Services; and a web-based vacancy matching system. This online system enables individuals to search and apply for live vacancies and allows employers, and their training providers to advertise their vacancies to a wide range of interested applicants.

The service has ultimate accountability for the national delivery of targets and co-ordination of the funding for Apprenticeship places. It acts to overcome barriers to the growth of the programme and assumes responsibility for promoting Apprenticeships and their value to employers, learners and the country as a whole.

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