



PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 3rd June 2010

Swindon resident named South West's Apprentice of the Year award

Steven Watson of the British National Space Centre is celebrating today after winning the Apprentice of the Year Award at the South West Skills Awards, which took place last night (2 June).

The prestigious ceremony, which took place at Sandy Park conference centre in Exeter, was presented by BBC's former chief news correspondent, Kate Adie, OBE. Kate, who is the current presenter of Radio 4's *From Our Own Correspondent*, delivered a keynote speech about her own experience learning essential skills on the job.

This journalistic theme was reinforced by compere Clinton Rogers, the BBC's Chief Somerset Correspondent.

The South West Skills Awards recognise and celebrate the achievements of apprentices, learners and employers who have excelled in the region.

Run by the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service, the evening combined the Skills Awards with the South West regional heat of the National Apprenticeship Awards.

Steven Watson of the British National Space Centre will go on to the national Apprenticeship Awards ceremony at Westminster Plaza in Central London on 15 July 2010, where he will compete amongst the best from England.

Dr John Chudley, Regional Director for the South West National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) agreed: "These awards recognize individuals at every stage of life and career, and the contributions of employers, both large and small, spanning all sectors.

“By acknowledging and rewarding the diverse learners and training opportunities in the region, we hope to encourage more individuals and organisations to take part in initiatives in the future.”

Further information about the South West Skills Awards can be found at:
<http://www.skillsawards.org.uk/>

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Steven Watson

Steven Watson has grown in confidence, enthusiasm and ability during his Business Administration Apprenticeship with the British National Space Centre. Using his new-found skills he has implemented major improvements to the organisation’s website - the public face of BNSC - which has dramatically increased the numbers of virtual visitors. He has also set up YouTube and Twitter accounts attracting a still greater number of enthusiastic followers. As the organisation’s Marketing and Communications Officer, Steven’s responsibilities involve maintaining, updating and improving the BNSC website on a daily basis, dealing with public queries, helping with events and managing stock. In just ten months, he has evolved from being a general admin assistant to a fully fledged website content manager and digital engagement adviser.

As well as studying for NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration, Application of Number and Communication, Steven also found the time and motivation to complete several extra web-based qualifications including courses in Writing for the Web and Website Accessibility, and took part in a Digital Team Shadow Day. Steve is described as committed, professional and enthusiastic about his work. His manager feels he is an absolute pleasure to work with and that he has made an extremely positive difference to the public communications effort of BNSC.

The South West Skills Awards

These awards recognise the achievements of individuals at every stage of life and career. By acknowledging the diverse learners and training opportunities in the region, the Skills Funding Agency hopes to encourage more learners and organisations to take part in learning initiatives that not only support individual development but contribute to stronger economic and workforce prosperity.

Sponsors for the South West Awards

Train to Gain Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Business Link and Train to Gain
Skills Pledge Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Skills Pledge
Third Sector Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by European Social Fund
Success in Leadership and Management Award – sponsored by Train to Gain

Apprenticeship Awards – sponsored as a whole by City & Guilds

Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by EDI
Young Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by Unilever
Advanced Apprentice of the Year Award – sponsored by EAL / EMTA Awards Ltd
Micro Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Skills for Care
Small Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by BT
Medium Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by Sellafield Ltd
Large Employer of the Year Award – sponsored by BAE Systems

Skills Funding Agency:

The Skills Funding Agency is 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 operates through customer focused services: *National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)*, *Employer Skills Services*, *Adult Advancement and Careers Service*, *Learner Skills Services*. The Skills Funding Agency is 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 Department for Education (DfE), 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.