



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010**

### **Plymouth celebrates success at South West Skills Awards**

Plymouth was the big winner at last night's South West Skills Awards, which saw locals walk away with two of the 17 coveted awards.

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 winners were:

- Princess Yachts International – won the Apprenticeship Large Employer of the Year Award.
- Kawasaki Precision Machinery UK – won the Apprenticeship Medium Employer of the Year Award.

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.

Princess Yachts International and Kawasaki Precision Machinery UK will go on to compete in the national Apprenticeship Awards ceremony at Westminster Plaza in Central London on 15 July 2010, where they will be amongst the best from England.

Dr John Chudley, Regional Director for the South West National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) agreed: "These awards recognise 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 Plymouth, 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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**Princess Yachts International**

Princess Yachts International, Plymouth, has been fully committed to the Apprenticeship programme for over 14 years. The company currently employs 46 advanced apprentices in marine engineering and boat building who were chosen after a robust recruitment process that ensures the highest quality candidates are employed. Princess Yachts is often used as an example of best practice for the region and has received numerous awards. It prides itself on the approach of a mentor per apprentice - enabling a young person to gain the guidance, skills and support from a skilled employee who has often been through the process themselves.

Like most businesses Princess Yachts has been affected by the credit crunch but has worked hard to maintain a reduced training programme because managers are aware how valuable their training is - not just for individual apprentices but for the future of the industry as a whole. Most apprentices are offered a job with the company after completing their Apprenticeship and many go on to achieve management positions. Those that excel often win awards and one is currently being sponsored in a full time marine engineering degree course. This year Princess hopes to open a learning centre where apprentices and other employees can access information for study.

**Kawasaki Precision Machinery (UK) Ltd**

Apprenticeships have been on offer at Plymouth-based Kawasaki Precision Machinery (KPM) for more than 30 years. The business currently has 12

apprentices and, over the last 5 years, has trained 22. Every month the apprentices rotate between all departments to give them maximum exposure to the workings and processes within the factory – this, the company believes, allows them to appreciate the entirety of the business process from the initial customer order through to the finished product. The Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award has recently been introduced as an optional extra for apprentices keen to further challenge their boundaries and enhance their personal development.

KPM has a very low turnover of trained apprentices and the total length of time they have served is a massive 400+ years – demonstrating excellent staff retention and a huge return on the company's investment. Within KPM, training and development does not stop once an apprentice has received their indentures – on the contrary, they are encouraged to further their studies to broaden and develop their knowledge. Despite the impact of the global recession, KPM UK is committed to continuing with its Apprenticeship scheme and to expanding it.

### **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.