

AM Bid Services scoop SME prize



A section of the audience of 300 at The Brunton for the Midlothian and East Lothian awards dinner. Picture Nigel Duncan Media

AM Bid Services of North Berwick, East Lothian are the SME of the Year in the Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber of Commerce business awards.

The company started trading on 1 October 2014 and, in the three years to date, it has become an award winning multi-sector bid specialist providing advice and assistance to organisations bidding for contracts in the public, private and third sectors.

Growth has been demonstrated each year, and turnover increased in year two by 195 per cent. The year 2016 has seen the company add new staff and expand across 20 new sectors.

Owner Andrew Morrison's commitment to quality has resulted in an extremely high bid win rate and in the past year they have had over 20 satisfied clients' referrals to other businesses.

They will shortly add new services such as Bid Gap Analysis and a Bid Training service.

Cross Borders Brewing Company from Eskbank near Dalkeith are the Business Start up of the Year.

On 2 May 2016, Cross Borders Brewery owners, Gary and Jonny, took the keys to their unit in Hardengreen, Eskbank.

By June, they had built and installed a brew plant capable of producing up to 9,000 pints of beer per week.

In July 2017, they sold £20,800 of beer, a 326 per cent increase in annual sales. Cross Borders have produced and released five core beers – Pale, IPA, Porter, Heavy and Braw – and two seasonal brews, Spring and Summer. Cross Borders beers can now be found in a number of Scotland's best craft beer retailers as well as independent wholesalers and distributors in the UK.

They have also embarked on export adventure to Hong Kong, mainland China and Germany.

Having won two SIBA awards, Cross Borders are nominated in three taste categories in the forthcoming Scottish Beer Awards 2017 as well as being nominated for best Marketing and Breakthrough Business of The Year.

The 11-year-old awards highlight the strengths of local businesses and recognise those who have pioneered new concepts and innovation, excelled in commercial enterprise or distinguished themselves with their attitude to workforce development.

This year over 50 per cent of entries were from businesses who had not entered before and the judges had a hard task in picking the winners.

The standard of entries has increased year-on-year and, overall, the range of businesses and the quality of them shows what an array of talent there is in the area and the awards were handed out at The Brunton in Musselburgh.

Other awards were:

BUSINESS HIGH GROWTH 2017

Winner: Golfclubs 4cash Ltd, Bilston, Midlothian

Martin Lambert started Golfclubs4cash as a partnership in 2012 and it is a second-hand golf equipment retailer, buying and selling used golf equipment and other golf accessories.

They offer a repair service and are an officially recognised

Motocaddy service centre. They sell online and through their store in Bilston Glen Industrial Estate.

The company moved premises in January 2015 to a 1,500 sq ft warehouse unit and increased their business opening hours significantly.

Increasing staff throughout 2016 from eight to 15 employees gave them the man power to massively increase their online presence, but also provide a better in-store experience to build their customer base.

From a standing start in 2012, and having capitalised on a niche in this marketplace, they anticipate their 2016 £1.8m turnover to reach £3m for 2017.

BUSINESS INNOVATION

Winner: Power Migration Partners Ltd, Easter Bush, Roslin, Midlothian

Power Migration Partners Ltd (PMP) have developed an innovative and improved redox flow battery technology based system called the Single Liquid Flow Battery (SLIQ), which can revolutionize the future of electrical energy storage. SLIQ technology is significantly different from other energy storage concepts.

The approach offers strong potential for a step change in the technology because of its low cost, high efficiency, modular and scalable design and its ability to operate for a longer time. It is specifically designed for ease of assembly, deployment and easy expansion.

PMP won a Scottish SMART award in 2014, and won the Innovate UK Energy Catalyst competition in 2016. SMART funding led to the first demonstrator being installed in April 2017, and this 5kW/30kWh system has been successfully providing back-up power to Knoydart Renewables, located in Inverie, an off-grid village powered by a hydro system.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

WINNER: Prentice Coaches, Haddington, East Lothian

Established in 1991, Prentice Coaches is the family multi-award winning bus and coach operator.

They believe in running modern eco-friendly buses in immaculate condition with customer care delivered by staff who take immense pride in delivering 21st century transport to the community.

They have invested over £600k in five new eco-friendly buses which meet 'Low Carbon Bus' status and produce 30 per cent less greenhouse gases than standard diesel buses, crucial in their two routes through the only Air Quality Zone in East Lothian.

The entire Prentice fleet is either Euro 5 or Euro 6 compliant, something which Lothian Buses aims to achieve by 2020.

A rainwater harvesting system captures rainwater from the roof of their workshops and is used to wash the fleet saving vast amounts of mains water.

Prentice Coaches also collaborate with other eco-friendly businesses such as Redpath Tyres for their waste products.

COMMITMENT TO STUDENT & GRADUATE ENGAGEMENT

WINNER: The Mercat Grill, Whitecraig near Musselburgh

The Mercat Grill is an independent, family-owned village pub and restaurant offering wholesome, locally-sourced Scottish pub fayre.

Since taking over the business, owner Graham Blaikie has opened his doors to offer work experience to students and school pupils.

He has built up good relationships with university lecturers and taken the time to explain what his business requires from

students and graduates.

Every year, The Mercat Grill is involved in a placement scheme with Queen Margaret University's multi-media students. A group of five help with social media activity between January and April, generating ideas, including video production.

The Mercat also helps school pupils with work experience and an East Lothian pupil's work experience was such a success that this has been extended and the pupil is now studying catering at college while continuing to learn at The Mercat.

COMMITMENT TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

WINNER: EDF Energy Nuclear Generation Ltd, Torness

EDF Energy is Scotland's largest generator of low carbon power, producing more than a third of the country's electricity, but they are also investing in the next generation of Scottish minds.

EDF have a strong tradition of youth engagement but the past year has seen an expansion of their projects and renewed commitment.

EDF are pro-active with the Edinburgh International Science Festival. Both the new 2017 partnership with SmartSTEMS and the Pretty Curious project encourage girls to consider science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects.

Torness engineers mentored 11 students from Wester Hailes Education Centre and there was a ten-week programme called My School is an Island at Preston Lodge High School.

They are also involved in Teaching STEM through sport with support from Scotland's women's curling captain, Eve Muirhead.
www.edfenergy.com

COMMUNITY IMPACT

WINNER: Dunbar Music School CIC, Dunbar, East Lothian

Siobhan Grealy and Jacqui Preston set up the Dunbar Music School CIC in 2016.

They now have 13 teachers, giving lessons at The Bleachingfield Centre, which is a community centre in Dunbar, between 2pm and 8pm, five days a week.

The school provides music tuition and performance opportunities for children and adults.

Their customers are predominantly the 2000-plus children at school in Dunbar and the surrounding cluster who have little or no access to local instrumental tuition and the school offers the fundamental benefits gained through learning an instrument and making music with others.

Highly-skilled, professional music tuition is now available for all in Dunbar where previously people had to travel a distance to find. Students can start at age three and the oldest is 78.

EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

WINNER: The Aerial Man, Roslin, Midlothian

Nicola and Mark Henderson run Aerial Man Scotland which supplies, installs and maintains aerial, satellite and TV systems.

Their dedicated engineers work around the central belt and they now have a large client base, built through reputation, active networking and a large social media presence.

They have built their business on extremely high levels of reliability and communicate with their clients at every step of the job through to completion.

Clients are informed of the engineer's name and estimated time of arrival. Their engineers must maintain high standards of tidiness and customer engagement.

The following day, the client will receive an email thanking them for their business and inviting feedback allowing any issues to be promptly rectified. It is also no surprise that many of their clients return to The Aerial Man Scotland and refer to others.

BUSINESS AMBASSADOR

WINNER: Lynn Mann, Supernature, Carrington, Midlothian

Lynn started Supernature Oils in 2011 with her husband and co-owner Chris, producing cold pressed rapeseed oil and Infused oils on their tenanted family farm.

Specialising in infused oils, Supernature now has the broadest range in the UK and is the most-awarded cold pressed rapeseed oil in the UK.

As Women's Enterprise Scotland Ambassador, she is actively involved in the Women's Enterprise Scotland project which seeks to inspire, motivate, engage and connect with women-led start-up and growth businesses.

A strong supporter of Midlothian's Business Sector Lynn is a member of Midlothian Food and Drink Forum and regularly speaks at Business Growth Clubs events around the country.

www.supernature.uk.com