

Outsider creator scoops Local Hero award

John Keogh has been named as the Local Hero 2024 in the Midlothian and East Lothian Business Awards due to his “fantastic work for the homeless community”.

He set up The Outsider, waterproof outside coats for those who love the great outdoors, and John also collaborated with The Gyle Shopping Centre in Edinburgh for the Big Outsider Sleep Out last November. It raised in excess of £5,000.

John retired as head of engineering at Jabil Electronics in Livingston in 2017 and the concept of The Outsider began in December 2021 when he was walking down Buchanan Street in Glasgow.

Keith Barbour, president of Midlothian and East Lothian Chamber, who organised the event, one of the leading business awards in Scotland, said: “On talking with the homeless – yes, he didn’t walk past – he realised that what was more valuable to them was something 100 per cent waterproof that would protect them and their belongings from the elements.

“A wild swimmer himself, John was familiar with waterproof changing robes, and using his vast career experience, John set about setting up a Community Interest Company (CIC) so that he could take donations and grants as well as manufacture and sell products commercially. So, The Outsider was born.”

Barbour added: "His waterproof Outsider coats sell to those who enjoy the great outdoors and the coat is also excellent for wheelchair users, and John reinvests profits to provide sleeping coats, a sleeping bag conversion of the coat, FREE of CHARGE, to those sleeping rough.

"Outsiders garments are manufactured solely in Scotland to very high standards and the business focuses on working towards Net-Zero Emissions and the Circular Economy. John hopes business growth will create jobs in Scotland."

LOCAL HERO: John Keogh: sponsor: NetworkROI; base: EDINBURGH and LOTHIAN

HIGH GROWTH BUSINESS OF THE YEAR: sponsor: Howden (Global Insurance Group): winner: Flowcopter: based: MIDLOTHIAN

Judges remarks: The judges were not only impressed with the very rapid rise in the staff and early growth, but also the immense potential in so many business sectors, both locally and internationally.

BEST INNOVATION IN BUSINESS: sponsor: Hargreaves Land: winner: Melville Golf Centre: based: Midlothian

Judges remarks: Judges were impressed with the forward thinking of using such a wide range of new technologies to enhance the customer experience, attracting more customers and saving money at the same time.

BEST COMMITMENT TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: sponsor: DYW (Developing the Young Workforce): based: Midlothian: winner: CSY Architects

Judges remarks: Judges thought it refreshing to see an old, established business of this nature so committed to encouraging young students of all ages to gain experience in such a creative environment and provide opportunities to develop to professional status.

BEST COMMUNITY IMPACT: sponsor – Hargreaves Land: winner:

Penicuik Storehouse: based: Midlothian

Judges remarks: Judges were particularly impressed with the training and encouraging of local volunteers to help support people with a wide range of special needs. The community helping the community.

BEST TOURISM BUSINESS: supporter: Edinburgh Napier University: winner: Rosslyn Chapel: based Midlothian

Judges remarks: This tourist venue is unique, has a story to tell and their visitor centre brings that story to life. The judges were very impressed with the attention to detail in their visitor presentation.

FOOD AND DRINK PRODUCER OF THE YEAR: sponsor: Agri-Epi Centre: winner: Stewart Brewing: based Midlothian

Judges remarks: In addition to brewing a great range of beers, the judges were impressed with their innovative concept of encouraging customers to engage with the product and its production. Traditional beer drinkers love to talk about beer, at Stewart Brewing, they can.

BEST EATERY: supporter: Edinburgh College: winner: The Radhuni: based Midlothian

Judges remarks: All the entrants in this category were superb, but the judges felt that Radhuni go the extra mile for service and community involvement and support which is outstanding.

FAMILY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR: sponsor: AAB: winner: Saltire Hospitality: based Midlothian

Judges remarks: A hugely-successful family business. The judges were impressed with their dedication to providing such a wide range of food in so many different types of events, whilst always being mindful of using local produce and commitment to all things green.

SME OF THE YEAR: sponsor: Thomson Cooper: winner: Audio Light Systems: based Midlothian

Judges remarks: Judges were impressed with the continued use

of technology to enhance and grow their client base and sustain a highly-profitable on-going business.

NEW BUSINESS OF THE YEAR: supporter: The HR Dept and the H&S Dept: winner: Gensource: based East Lothian

Judges remarks: The judges were impressed with the way Gensource have seen major business opportunities in what is a climate emergency facing our society and they are building a business dedicated to using innovative solutions to address its customers' needs. Very impressive.

BEST ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: sponsor: Vattenfall: winner: Agilico: based: Edinburgh

Judges remarks: Agilico's dedication to achieving net zero is outstanding throughout their business. Opening their recycling centres for old machines was inspirational and has proved to be hugely-successful.

MICRO BUSINESS OF THE YEAR: supporter: The Midlothian Science Zone (MSZ): winner: Beyond Green: based Edinburgh

Judges remarks: A small business dedicated to helping other small businesses becoming more efficient and more profitable and, most important of all, more environmentally friendly. The judges were impressed with that nuanced package.

PICTURE: Guests selfie before entering the awards. Pictures ***Nigel Duncan***









