

NEWS RELEASE

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Under embargo until 29 October 2008

Final line-up announced for the prestigious Tourism ExSEllence Awards

The final results of the Tourism ExSEllence Awards covering the whole of the South East were announced last night at a Gala Event. Winners, Runners Up and Highly Commended organisations from the 12 shortlisted businesses in East and West Sussex across 15 categories can now be revealed.

The winners are sailing centre **Sailnet UK Ltd**, based at **Brighton Marina** (Winner of two categories - Best Tourism Experience and Sports Tourism) and **Hastings Food and Wine Festival** (Flavour of the South East category).

There was significant success across East and West Sussex with Runners Up and Highly Commended Awards going to 9 organisations. Runners Up included **Pallant House Gallery, Chichester** (Access for All category), **Hovel and Hop House**, Windmill Hill (Self Catering), **Crowhurst Park, Battle** (Tourism Website), **Best Western Gatwick Moathouse** (Business Tourism) and [employee](#) **Nancy Joy from Butlins in Bognor Regis** (Outstanding Customer Service). The four businesses awarded a Highly Commended were **Pallant House** (Business Tourism), **Rye Lodge Hotel, Rye** (Small Hotel), **M's Cycle Hire, Worthing** (Sports Tourism) and **Visit Eastbourne** (Tourism Website).

With a total of 15 Award categories, including 'Sports Tourism', 'Best Tourism Experience' and 'Business Tourism', the Tourism ExSEllence Awards are the premier awards for the tourism industry in the South East, managed by Tourism South East. They cover all kinds of tourism organisations, from small Bed & Breakfast businesses to large exclusive hotels and visitor experiences. Winners in this region will go on to compete in the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in 2009.

Judges are looking for excellence, quality and innovation covering all aspects of the business, from Customer Service, Sales & Marketing, to Training & Development for staff. Judge of the Best Tourism Experience category Roger Budden felt **Sailnet** to be the outright winner due to its 'Excellent product range that has been invested in and developed over the last year to offer an increasingly wide range of experiences for the customer.' He was impressed by the move to provide new on-site self-catering accommodation, and to buy a luxury yacht to broaden the training and experience offered. Flavour of the South judge Henriette Reinders described **Hasting Food and Wine Festival** as 'An excellent festival that has grown considerably over the last few years' and a 'Great promotion for local food and fish – contributing millions to the local economy.' And it was **Sailnet** again that impressed judge of the Sports Tourism category Lindsey Horton so much that she declared the centre as the winner, describing it as 'A fantastic product ...with promising signs of becoming a high level sports tourism product.'

Pallant House was also pleased to feature twice – as Runner Up and receiving a Highly Commended in the Award scheme. Judge of the Access for All category, Brian Seaman, was very impressed with the effort that had gone into providing facilities for disabled people. And Judge of the Business Tourism category, Alan Blenkinsopp, described the Gallery as a 'A wonderful venue for an away day, corporate event or dinner party.'

Judge of the Outstanding Customer Service category Stephanie Edwards (Managing Director of Customer 1st International Ltd), explains that Runner Up **Nancy Joy from Butlins in Bognor** 'lives and breaths Butlins, visiting as a child and never wanting to work anywhere else.' Stephanie continues; 'Because she cares passionately about her customers she has excelled. Nancy personally visits customers in their chalets if they are unwell, if it is a guest's birthday she will organize balloons, if they complain she will deal with the problem immediately.'

And the **Hovel and Hop House** impressed judges of the Self Catering category Ros Debling and Joan Patten who made it their Runner Up. They described the owners as 'a very enthusiastic couple who run and win the business.' Of particular note was the locally-sourced welcome pack with home made jam and fruit from their own farms.

Robert Collier, chief executive of Tourism South East, comments on this year's successes, "It's a delight to see such a high standard of entry – it gets better every year. We look forward to

seeing more success as the winners go forward to the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in 2009.

More information about this year's Tourism ExSEllence Awards can be found at

www.getdiscovered2008.co.uk.

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Note to Editors:

Quotes from judges and images of all Award recipients are available by emailing the above contacts

Full final line-up for the Tourism ExSEllence Awards in East and West Sussex are as follows (full list across the South East available on request):

Winners

Sailnet UK , Brighton Marina, Best Tourism Experience and Sports Tourism
Hastings Food and Wine Festival, Flavour of the South

Runners Up

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, Access for All
Nancy Joy, Butlins, Bognor Regis, Outstanding Customer Service
Hovel and Hop House, Windmill Hill, East Sussex, Self Catering
www.crowhurstpark.co.uk, Battle, Tourism Website
Best Western Gatwick Moat House, Business Tourism

Highly Commended

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, Business Tourism
Rye Lodge Hotel, Rye, Small Hotel
M's Cycle Hire, Worthing, Sports Tourism
Visit Eastbourne (Tourism website)

Sponsors of the Tourism ExSEllence 2008 Awards include:

Customer Maze – further information from www.customermaze.com

Enjoy England www.enjoyengland.com

Pure Brand Media www.purebrandmedia.com

South East Food Group www.sefgp.co.uk

Sport England www.sportengland.com

Take One www.takeonemedia.com

The Visitor Network www.thevisitornetwork.com

Tourism for All www.tourismforall.org.uk