

Moray boss wins Silver Thistle

FURTHER FOUR NORTH SUCCESSES AT THIS YEAR'S SCOTTISH TOURISM AWARDS

BY IAN FORSYTH

A leading Moray hotelier last night received the Scottish Silver Thistle Award at the country's premier tourism honours.

Gavin Ellis, owner of Knockomie House Hotel, Forres, was recognised at the annual Scottish Thistle Awards organised by VisitScotland.

There were a further four north winners at the ceremony in Edinburgh: Doune Dining Room, Knoydart; Catherine Bunn, of Highland Campervans, Inverness; Jacobite - Experience Loch Ness, Inverness, and the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival, at Beaully.

VisitScotland said Mr Ellis had been honoured in recognition of his ability to never miss an opportunity to promote collaborative working in the pursuit of growth, and that he was an inspiration in terms of advocating excellence in quality and customer care across Scotland's tourism industry.

VisitScotland chairman Peter Lederer said: "Gavin is the epitome of everything positive in the Scottish tourist industry today; an inspirational leader who has shaped and steered tourism to the highest standards of quality that it is today.

"In his many years in the industry, he has been instrumental in developing the industry locally and nationally and an asset to the tourism industry."

Tourism Minister Jim Mather said: "The Scottish Thistle Awards are a real opportunity to celebrate quality

and innovation in Scottish tourism. In the current economic climate, Gavin and all the other Thistle Award winners have shown a huge amount of dedication and hard work and I would like to thank them for not only boosting their own individual businesses, but also Scotland's economy as a whole.

"Tourism is crucial to Scotland's economic wellbeing and the Scottish Government is determined to work with the industry to build on our successes, boost tourism figures and increase sustainable economic growth."

About 600 people attended last night's event in the Edinburgh International Conference Centre.

WINNERS:

Silver Thistle: Gavin Ellis, owner of Knockomie House Hotel, Forres.

Business Leadership: Horsecross Arts, Perth.

Business Tourism: The Famous Grouse Experience, Crieff.

Extra Mile (small business): Piling House Apartments, Edinburgh.

Extra Mile (medium business): Jacobite - Experience Loch Ness, Inverness.

Extra Mile (large business): Rabble's Trail Burners, Edinburgh.

Events and Festivals (international): Golden Oldies World Rugby Festival, Edinburgh.

Events and Festivals (regional): Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival, Beaully.

Innovation: Cruise Loch Lomond, Tarbet.

Marketing Initiative: The Old Course Hotel, Golf Resort and Spa, St Andrews.

Operator Programme of the Year: Rabble's Trail Burners, Edinburgh.

Sustainable Tourism: Maximillion, Edinburgh.

Taste of Scotland: Doune Dining Room, Knoydart.

Young Tourism Entrepreneur: Catherine Bunn, Highland Campervans, Inverness.



INSPIRATIONAL LEADER: Gavin Ellis . . . asset to the tourism industry