

## **Business in the Community awards celebrate excellence in British business**

Reducing sickness absence by 40%; engaging 5.5 million school children in sustainability issues; saving 1.7 billion carrier bags and achieving a 97% retention rate of staff are just some of the results of innovative corporate responsibility projects celebrated during Business in the Community's (BITC) 2012 Awards for Excellence gala dinner in London, in the presence of BITC president HRH The Prince of Wales.

The Awards for Excellence recognise the powerful and positive role that business plays in society. They shine a spotlight on those organisations that are transforming themselves by integrating responsible business across all they do and by doing so, are transforming the communities in which they operate, making things better for society and the environment.

An audience of some of the most high profile names in business, including Waitrose, Managing Director and Chairman of BITC, Mark Price and Paul Drechsler, Chief Executive, Wates, gathered in London's Old Billingsgate Market for the event, hosted by musician Suggs and **BBC journalist Mishal Husain. In recognition of the theme of excellence**, Olympians Dame Kelly Holmes and Paralympian Liz Johnsons also joined the audience and winners – while George the Poet ([www.georgethepoetblog.tumblr.com](http://www.georgethepoetblog.tumblr.com)) and an array of freestyle athletes: Andrew Henderson, a freestyle footballer; Samy Chamouma, a freestyle basketballer and Jason Auld, an urban unicyclist, performed.

During the evening, HRH The Prince of Wales announced that Steve Holliday, Chief Executive, National Grid was his 2012 National Prince's Ambassador. Steve Holliday received this recognition for his inspiring personal leadership which has both transformed National Grid and inspired other organisations to take action. He has led BITC's Work Inspiration Campaign, which has now involved over 600 employers, who have pledged thousands of inspiring experiences of the world of work for young people.

The evening culminated with the announcement of the Responsible Business of the Year Award, won by Marks and Spencer. This is the third time that Marks and Spencer have won this prestigious award, which they received for putting significant energy behind Plan A, their vision to become the world's most sustainable retailer by 2015.

**Paul Drechsler, Chairman and Chief Executive, Wates Group** said: *"Marks & Spencer has achieved ambitious goals over the last five years since they launched "Plan A", showing us all how a company can robustly embed sustainability into the heart of how it does business. The judges wanted to recognise the scale of achievement of "Plan A" and were impressed with how brave M&S has been in doing this openly in the public domain. And the journey does not stop here. We have no doubt that they will continue to raise the bar for Responsible Business in the years ahead."*

**Other standout 2012 winners include:**

**Cleone Foods** won the Santander Responsible Small Business of the Year Award for embedding responsible behaviour throughout its business with robust environmental management practices, an on-going education programme and the mentoring of other small businesses. Owner and Managing Director Wade Lyn has created a local business making a big difference to local people.

**Citigroup** won the International Award for a microfinance programme which has funded 29 microfinance institutions in 16 countries, providing over 330,000 loans to predominantly female micro-entrepreneurs.

**EDF Energy** won the Jaguar Land Rover Building Stronger Communities Award for its energy advice development project which was helped over 31,000 households save an estimated £235 a year by adopting energy efficiently advice.

Commenting at the event **Stephen Howard, Chief Executive of Business in the Community**, said: *“Business can be a force for good and the companies we recognise tonight demonstrate that clearly. Our award winners are companies who have gone the extra mile to embed responsibility into the heart of their business. Critically they understand the mutual benefit that comes from being a responsible business. Tonight we are celebrating ideas that transform business models and practices, but also transform lives and provide opportunities in some of our most deprived communities.”*

The Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner was supported by Wates

#### **Awards in numbers**

With all national and regional award entries combined, BITC received 335 entries in 2012. 87 entries resulted in National Big Tick awards and 53 of these were shortlisted for the finals within their category. 105 companies had their 2010/2011 national Big Ticks reaccredited this year.

For full details and case studies of all the 2012 Awards for Excellence winners visit [www.bitc.org.uk/awards](http://www.bitc.org.uk/awards) from 00.01 on 28 June.

(Source: BITC)

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