

Holiday industry celebrates at 'Tourism Oscars'

THE cream of the Westcountry's holiday industry was celebrating last night as the winners of the South West Tourism Excellence Awards were announced.

The awards, regarded as the "Tourism Oscars", celebrate the very best of the tourism industry in the South West and are run in association with First Great Western.

Tourism businesses and individuals including attractions and accommodation were presented with prestigious gold and silver awards at a ceremony at the Tortworth Court Hotel, near Bristol.

Entrants needed to demonstrate exemplary facilities and exceptionally high qualities of customer care, reflecting the demands of today's customers.

In addition, it was important that the applicants showed a commitment to sustainability, recycling and the environment. Winners were also commended for their use of regional produce and investment in the local community.

Among the success stories celebrated at last night's ceremony was the Bedruthan Steps Hotel at Mawgan Porth, near Newquay, which won the gold award for the large hotel of the year.

The hotel also scooped the silver awards for business tourism and sustainable tourism.

A spokesman for the hotel said: "The awards are a tribute to the efforts of all our dedicated staff and demonstrates that sustainability is good for business."

Other gold award winners included the Lower Barn at

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● **TOASTING SUCCESS:** Bob Lindo, of Camel Valley Vineyard

Bosue, St Ewe, near St Austell, for bed and breakfast accommodation; Higher Wiscombe at Southleigh, Colyton, for self-catering; and Oakdown touring and holiday home park at Weston, Sidmouth, for holiday park of the year.

The small visitor attraction gold award went to Forde Abbey and Gardens at Chard, while the Camel Valley Vineyard at Nanstallon, near Bodmin, won the Taste of the South West Award.

The accessible tourism award went to Pollaughan Cottages at Portscatho, near St Mawes, and the outstanding customer service award went to Moreen Roberts, restaurant manager at Budock Vean Hotel, Falmouth.

Thirteen of the 16 gold winners will now go on to represent the South West region at the national Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in April 2007.

Speaking at last night's ceremony, South West Tourism chief executive Malcolm Bell said: "May I congratulate all of the winners. They have been chosen for their continual efforts to improve their tourism businesses, from staff training to sourcing local foods to investing in new amenities.

"The winning businesses have also shown a commitment to sustainability and accessibility and have proved they are worthy ambassadors of excellence for the South West. I wish the gold winners the best of luck, as they are put forward to the national awards in 2007, which is an accolade that every business and region would be proud of."

Julian Crow, First Great Western's general manager for the West of England, said: "Judges this year were again deeply impressed with the standard of entries from candidates representing the cream, if not the double cream of the South West as they strive for quality and excellence for their customers."

■ For more details of the awards, see the Celebrating Excellence supplement in today's WMN.