



Scottish Council for  
Development and Industry

## PRESS RELEASE

### UNDERWATER CENTRE EMERGES WITH MARINE AWARD

*18 September 2009*

A Fort William-based company's growing reputation as an international leader in the marine energy sector has been rewarded with a prestigious prize at the regional business awards of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry.

The Crown Estate Award for Excellence in a Marine Business was last night presented to The Underwater Centre a world-class commercial site for subsea trials, diver and Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) training. Employing 60 people and 15 in Australia, it attracts students from around the world to the Outdoor Capital of the UK and leads the way in teaching industry relevant skills.

Since it was bought by Fort William company, The Crannog Concept, in 2004, a substantial investment programme combined with a focus on its core capabilities has led to income growth of 350%. Forthcoming investment will meet the needs of the growing offshore renewables market as well as the worldwide subsea oil and gas industry with the aim of consolidating the The Underwater Centre's universally recognised reputation as the global leader in subsea training. Based on the shores of Loch Linnhe, which is in parts deeper than the North Sea, the centre also offers unique testing facilities for subsea technology trials.

The presentation was made by HSBC's Chief Executive Officer for Scotland, John Rendall, at the Scottish Council for Development and Industry's 10<sup>th</sup> Highlands and Islands Annual Dinner and Business Excellence Awards, which attracted 350 guests from around the region.

**Steve Ham, General Manager, The Underwater Centre, said:**

"We are delighted to have won this prestigious award as it really underlines the success that we have achieved since buying The Underwater Centre. Our reputation as the leading global provider of subsea training is now firmly cemented.

"Companies are having to extract hydrocarbons at increasingly greater depths, meaning not only is there an increased need for ROVs and commercial divers, but new subsea technology needs to be tested and we are the location of choice because of the unique, industry relevant conditions that we can provide.

"We have invested significantly in The Underwater Centre and are confident that we will see our position further bolstered, both within the subsea industry, as well as the rapidly expanding renewable energy sector."



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**Alasdair Rankin, Head of Marine Business Development Scotland, The Crown Estate, said:**

“The Underwater Centre stood out from a very distinguished field of entrants in this category in the degree of investment they embarked upon and the remarkable performance and recognition their business has enjoyed as a result. This places it in a pre-eminent position to provide for the sub-sea training requirements that will emerge from the future development of Scotland’s marine business potential.

The full winners list of winners was:

- Caledonian MacBrayne Award for Excellence in Tourism - Grenitote Travel, North Uist
- Crown Estate Award for Excellence in a Marine Business - The Underwater Centre, Fort William
- Global Energy Award for Excellence in People Development - Alcan Aluminium UK, Fort William
- Gordon & MacPhail Award for Excellence in Entrepreneurship - Freda Newton, Owner and Managing Director, Jacobite Cruises, Inverness
- HSBC Award for Excellence in International Business - Lossie Seafoods, Buckie
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise Award for Excellence in Research and Innovation – Blueshell Mussels, Shetland
- SEPA Award for Excellence in Environmental Sustainability - Touchwood Recycling, Uig, Skye
- SCDI Award for Highlands and Islands Young Engineers Club of the Year – Tarbert Academy, Argyll
- SCDI Highlands and Islands Chairman’s Award for Outstanding Business Achievement – Marine Harvest, Fort William

This year’s event was the 10<sup>th</sup> SCDI Highlands and Islands Annual Dinner and Business Excellence Awards and it was held at The Drumossie Hotel in Inverness. The evening was hosted by Fred MacAulay and after dinner entertainment was provided by Sandi Toksvig.

**ENDS**