**Under Secretary of State highlights how small companies can play their part in net zero progress at the SCDI Highlands Awards**

After what has been an incredibly tough year for the Highlands and Islands economy, last night’s Highland’s and Islands Business Excellence Awards, hosted by the Scottish Council for Industry and Development (SCDI), provided a welcome celebration of organisations who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic.

Impressionist Alister McGowan presented the online awards, introducing a striking list of winners, who are innovating at Global and local levels, and making a strong contribution in areas like sustainability and the environment, across a broad range of sectors.

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, David Duguid, recognised the importance recognising good practice by business, in particular positive action on the environment by saying:

*“We need to continue to work with companies like SCDI to benefit and leverage your expertise and the relationships with businesses in our policy development. I was particularly impressed by the recent publication of ‘5 Steps to Net Zero’* [*https://www.scdi.org.uk/net-zero/fivesteps/*](https://www.scdi.org.uk/net-zero/fivesteps/) *showing how smaller companies and organisations can play their part in climate change.”*

Martin Murray, owner of Dunnet Bay Distillers, was delighted to receive the Chair’s Award for Outstanding Business Achievement, saying:

*“I am honoured to accept this award on behalf of our team at Dunnet Bay Distillers. We are a small, innovative team that are a proud of what we do and where we do it.*

*In 7 quick years we’ve made incredible progress and we are excited about our future projects and products.”*

Jane Cumming, Chair of the SCDI Highlands and Islands Committee commented:

*“It’s wonderful to have the opportunity to celebrate success following such a difficult time for us all.”*

*“Rock Rose gin has become something of an icon on the shelves with their striking ceramic bottles. I’ve been hugely impressed watching their progress – they are a company that is always moving forward. The introduction of Highland vodka and their freepost refillable pouches are just two examples of their drive for innovation.*

*To me they exemplify what is great about our wonderful part of the world – their location is an asset, not an obstacle and they are flexible and innovative in their approach. This has put them at the forefront of gin production in a region more usually associated with Scotch whisky and I am delighted to honour them with the Chair’s Award for Outstanding Business Achievement.”*

Sara Thiam, SCDI CEO, commented:

*“We are delighted to recognise the people who have kept the Highlands and Islands economy going through the hardest of years. Not only have many continued to provide much needed products and services to communities, many have transformed their businesses for the better.*

*The ability to work across public, private and third sectors marks SCDI members out and their commitment to people and planet will ensure that they will continue to create prosperity in the Highlands and Islands for many years to come.”*

*Picture caption: Martin & Claire Murray of Dunnet Bay Distillery celebrate with a glass of their award-winning gin.*

**2021 Winners:**

***SCDI Highlands & Islands Chair’s Award for Outstanding Business Achievement***

* Dunnet Bay Distillers

***Alvance Aluminium Award for Outstanding Business Leader***

• BRONZE - James Mackenzie-Blackman – Eden Court Highlands

• SILVER - Harriet Fletcher – Highland Hiddle

• GOLD - Tony Story – Kingsmills Hotel Group

***Benromach Award for Excellence in International Business***

• SILVER - GlenAllachie

• GOLD – MOWI

***Ocean Winds Award for Excellence in Marine Innovation and Growing the Blue Economy***

• GOLD - SAMS

• BRONZE - Hebridean Adventures

• SILVER - Moray First Marine

***SCDI Award for Excellence in People Development***

• GOLD - Aquascot

• SILVER - Global Energy Group

• BRONZE - Visit Inverness Loch Ness

***The Crown Estate Scotland Award for Outstanding Supporter of Coastal Communities***

• GOLD - Cullen Bay Hotel

• BRONZE - MOWI

• SILVER - Port of Cromarty Firth

***The Harper Macleod Award for Excellence in Natural Capital, Climate Change and Sustainable Communities***

• BRONZE - McGowan Environmental Engineering

• GOLD - Plastic@bay

• SILVER – Robertson

***The Highland Council Award for Highland Spirit and Resilience***

• SILVER - Highland Hiddle

• BRONZE - Moray Shop Local

• GOLD - Williamson Foodservice

***The Highlands and Islands Enterprise Award for Excellence in Upskilling, Reskilling and Emerging Leaders***

• SILVER - Culloden Battlefield

• BRONZE - Rybka

• GOLD - AES Solar

***The Open University in Scotland Award for SME enterprise of the Year***

• BRONZE - Aquascot

• GOLD - Mesomorphic

• SILVER – Mikeysline

Thank you to our **Awards sponsors**: ALVANCE, Benromach, the Crown Estate, Harper Macleod, HIE, The Highland Council, Ocean Winds, The Open University

**About SCDI:** SCDI is an independent, not-for-profit membership network representing the private, public and third sectors. We seek to influence government and key stakeholders to deliver social, economic and environmental prosperity for all of Scotland. 2021 is our 90th year. (Registered in Scotland no.24724.)

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