

Building a future for Britain

Just days after Housing Minister Yvette Cooper announced a further fund of £510m to councils, to help bring empty homes back into use and build more new homes, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) called for greater investment in training the construction workforce to meet the new challenges for more affordable homes.

Speaking at APSE's apprentice award ceremony for housing, construction and building maintenance, Paul O'Brien, APSE's Chief Executive, called on the Government to recognise **"The outstanding contribution that councils have made to developing skills in the construction sector"** He added **"Housing need is the UK's number one priority. Councils can rise to meet the challenges set by Ms Cooper but building and construction skills need to be developed at a community level, embracing the diversity we see in our neighbourhoods"**

The APSE apprentice of the year awards led to fierce competition amongst councils and social housing providers throughout the UK. The winners of the 2008 building skills apprenticeship awards are:-

Male building skills apprentice of the year

(Sponsored by UCATT)

Winner: Thomas Ritchie, South Lanarkshire Council

Female building skills apprentice of the year

(Sponsored by Construction Youth Trust)

Winner: Callie Duncan, Hackney Homes

Male mechanical and electrical apprentice of the year

(Sponsored by Hays)

Winner: Len McDonald, North Ayrshire Council

Female mechanical and electrical apprentice of the year

(Sponsored by construction youth trust)

Winner: Jane Bell, Newcastle City Council

Commenting on the successes of the winners of the awards Councillor Leon Unzcur, APSE's national chair said **"Each and every winner of these apprentice awards has demonstrated a dedication to developing their own skills in the sector. They should be extremely proud of their achievements"**.

Notes to editors

APSE is a not for profit local government organisation working with over 300 councils throughout the UK in the development of excellence in public services

The apprentice of the year awards are designed to recognise those councils and social housing providers who have invested in training and development of the construction and building skills workforce

The apprentice of the year awards for females were developed with the construction youth trust to recognise the importance of encouraging women, who are under represented in the building and construction sector, to consider the sector as a career option for women and to support councils encouraging more women into the sector.

The full list of apprentice finalists is listed below.

Press ready jpeg images are available for press use of the awards ceremony.

For more details about the apprentice awards or indeed APSE's work on housing policy please contact Mo Baines on mbaines@apse.org.uk or telephone 0161 772 1810 or mobile 07971 843515.

List of finalists (incorporating winners)

Male building skills apprentice of the year

John Hope
East Ayrshire Council (Joiner)

Sean McCormick
Falkirk Council (Slater)

John Burke
Fife Council (Roofer)

Thomas Ritchie
South Lanarkshire Council (Joiner)

Carl Smith
Swansea City Council (Bricklayer)

Male mechanical and electrical apprentice of the year

Christopher Longworth
East Riding of Yorkshire Council (Electrician)

Matthew Laverick
Kirklees Council (Heating engineer)

MerleCanigan
Newcastle City Council (Electrician)

Len McDonald
North Ayrshire Council (Electrician)

Greg Matthews
Swansea City Council (Electrician)

Female building skills apprentice of the year

CallieDuncan
Hackney Homes (Carpenter)

Heidi Spivey
Kirklees MBC Joiner

Natalie Laird
North Lanarkshire Council (Plasterer)

Leanne Nicholls
Swansea City Council (Carpenter)

Female mechanical and electrical apprentice of the year

Vicki LeClerc
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (Plumber)

Jane Bell
Newcastle City Council (Plumber)

Heather Newton
2010 Rotherham Ltd (Electrician)

Ends.