

Deputy First Minister takes centre stage



Nicola Sturgeon wins top award ... and is Debater of the Year as well

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NICOLA Sturgeon last night emerged from the formidable shadow of SNP leader Alex Salmond to earn a place in the spotlight in her own right.

The First Minister will feel vindicated in advancing her career, as his Deputy First Minister and Health Secretary took not just the overall accolade as Scottish Politician of the Year, presented by The Herald, but also the title of Donald Dewar Debater of the Year, sponsored by eaga.

At the annual awards ceremony at Prestonfield House in Edinburgh, Chancellor Alistair Darling won the title of Best Scot at Westminster, an award that is sponsored by the Bank of Scotland.

The Chancellor won the accolade for the calm manner in which he has handled a year of unprecedented financial turmoil, assembling the rescue package for British banking which has been adopted as a template elsewhere in the world. Mr Darling, who was unable to attend the ceremony, said: "Thank you very much. I'm deeply honoured to receive the award. I'd love to have been there to collect it myself."

"However, I hope you understand that I am travelling to Washington to join finance ministers from around the world at the G20 summit to discuss the steps we need to take to support families and businesses across the world."

"I'm delighted that The Herald established these awards 10 years ago. Newspapers, quite rightly, hold politicians to account but it is nice to know that they can also recognise their achievements."

Sir Sean Connery won the International Scot Award for championing the cause of Scotland across the globe and for his charity work at home. Entrepreneur Ann Gloag and Olympic hero Chris Hoy were also shortlisted for that award, which is in its second year and is sponsored by Keppie Design.

The main prize saw a repeat of last year's shortlist with the

First Minister and his Finance Secretary John Swinney both in the frame following another successful period in office for the minority SNP administration.

Ms Sturgeon was also up against Mr Salmond, as well as Liberal Democrat leader Tavish Scott, for Donald Dewar Debater of the Year Award.

Her double victory reflected the feeling of the judging panel that she had performed brilliantly in a number of roles – as an excellent deputy at First Minister's Questions, in full charge of her brief even during challenges such as the ambulance crisis and hospital infection outbreaks, and as a key player in the SNP's stunning victory in the Glasgow East by-election.

Other winners of the night included Fife Labour MSP John Park, as The One to Watch, sponsored by Microsoft. His award, presented by Monarch of the Glen and Hollywood actress Kari Corbett, reflected the fact that just 18 months into his time in parliament he has reached Shadow Cabinet rank and could be a real contender for leadership in the future.

At the other end of the spectrum of experience, veteran Glasgow Conservative Bill Aitken won the Committee Award, for his impressive conrovership of the Justice Committee. The award, which is sponsored by npower renewables, was presented by Scotland football manager George Burley.

The SNP's Chris Harvie was a respected academic in Germany when he unexpectedly won a seat at Holyrood last year. As he fits an unconventional politician, he won the Free Spirit award for his colourful interventions on issues such as the demise of small town high streets, which managed to offend the citizens of Lockerbie when he called the town a "dump", and the dress sense of Scottish youngsters, whom he said he would prefer to see in knickerbockers than shell suits.

Mr Harvie was presented with the award by Rebus author Ian Rankin.

Lord Wallace of Tanker-

Politician of the Year



WINNER: Nicola Sturgeon (SNP), for strength of performances as both Health Secretary and deputy party leader.
RUNNERS-UP: Alex Salmond (SNP) and John Swinney (SNP).



ness, the former Scottish Liberal Democrat leader who served for six years as Deputy First Minister, was given the Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsored by Diageo, for his pivotal role in the devolution project which saw him become the first Liberal since Lloyd George to serve in government.

Clydeside Action on Asbestos was named as Public Campaign of the Year in recognition of its achievements in changing the law to help those afflicted by asbestos-related disease.

Last night's event was the 10th annual Herald Scottish Politician of the Year Awards ceremony and during the evening a video review of the awards over the past decade

was played to guests. A review of the year in politics was also shown. Charles McGhee, Editor of The Herald, said: "I would like to offer my congratulations to our Scottish Politician of the Year, Nicola Sturgeon, whose exceptional performance, particularly on the health agenda, was praised by all of the judges. I would also like to

congratulate all of our other winners and, of course, the nominees in each category. "The Herald is delighted to be celebrating the 10th anniversary of these awards, which were established in 1999 to celebrate the inaugural year of the Scottish Parliament. I would also like to thank our sponsors this evening. Their support – and that of our other sponsors over the past decade – has enabled the Scottish Politician of the Year Awards to grow in stature to become the premier event in the Scottish political calendar."

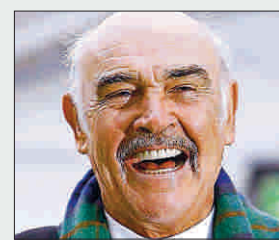
The pipe band of the Royal Highland Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland, performed at last night's event, opening the celebrations. Their colleagues have recently returned from a tour of duty in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, where one of the battalion's soldiers, Corporal Barry Dempsey, was killed by a roadside bomb laid by Taliban insurgents.

Donald Dewar Debater of the Year



WINNER: Nicola Sturgeon (SNP), who expertly handled both good news and bad in her challenging health brief and deputised at FMQs.
RUNNERS-UP: Alex Salmond (SNP) and Tavish Scott (LibDems).

International Scot Award



WINNER: Sir Sean Connery, who uses his role as the most famous Scot in the world to advance Scottish causes.
RUNNERS-UP: Ann Gloag and Chris Hoy.

Best Scot at Westminster



WINNER: Alistair Darling (Lab), for his quiet handling of unprecedented international financial and banking crisis.
RUNNERS-UP: Gordon Brown (Lab) and Jim Murphy (Lab).

The One to Watch



WINNER: John Park (Lab), Holyrood newcomer promoted into Shadow Cabinet for skills agenda carried from STUC background.
RUNNERS-UP: Richard Baker (Lab) and Derek Brownlee (Con).

The Committee Award



WINNER: Bill Aitken (Con), for his impressive conrovership of the Justice Committee.
RUNNERS-UP: Finance Committee and Health Committee.

Free Spirit of the Year



WINNER: Chris Harvie (SNP), an academic with an international reputation who has become a charmingly eccentric MSP.
RUNNERS-UP: Patrick Harvie (Green) and Hugh O'Donnell (LibDem).

Public Campaign of the Year



WINNER: Clydeside Action on Asbestos (Phyllis Craig and Gordon Skivington, above), which stands on the brink of achieving a second change in the law.
RUNNERS-UP: Tina McGeever and John Muir.

Lifetime Achievement Award



WINNER: Lord Wallace of Tankerness, the former Scottish Liberal Democrat leader who played a pivotal role in the devolution process and served as Deputy First Minister for six years.

The judges

Charles McGhee, Editor of The Herald.
Robbie Dinwoodie, The Herald.
Iain Macwhirter, The Herald and Sunday Herald.
Colin Mackay, Bauer Radio.
Joe Quinn, Press Association.
Brian Taylor, BBC Scotland.
Liz Cameron, Scottish Chambers of Commerce.

Sir Sean's international role is recognised

HE is renowned across the globe as the world's most famous Scotsman and last night Sir Sean Connery was recognised back in his home city for his contribution to politics, charity and the advancement of his nation.

The award of International Scot of the Year, sponsored by Keppie Design, went to the 78-year-old Oscar-winning actor, who has been strongly associated with the SNP over the years. But in 1997, when the incoming Labour government held a referendum on its devolution proposals, Sir Sean campaigned alongside Gordon Brown and Alex Salmond.

He was also happy to lend his considerable international weight to the previous Labour-led Holyrood administration in its efforts to build up Tartan

Day in the United States, and he lobbied strongly in support of Glasgow's bid for the Commonwealth Games.

Sir Sean, who was knighted in 2000, used his fee from Diamonds Are Forever in 1971 to establish the Scottish International Education Trust, which offers grants to individual students, young scientists, arts organisations or projects which will contribute to the cultural, social or economic wellbeing of Scotland. He has continued his charitable work down the years.

His film career transcended James Bond and he won a Bafta for The Name of the Rose in 1986, and an Oscar as best supporting actor opposite Kevin Costner in The Untouchables the following year.

Sir Sean, who was unable to attend

last night's ceremony, said: "Thank you for this honour. It has been one of my greatest joys to see Scotland walking tall in recent years."

"The spirit of the Scottish people – innovation, drive, entrepreneurialism, fairness, global responsibility and, yes, the sense of independence – has long predated the 1997 referendum and the 2007 result. And now, I believe our elected officials are starting to catch up with that spirit."

"The work of the Scottish International Education Trust has long been an investment in this spirit of optimism by supporting our young people. And, like other Scots, I've been happy to play my part in promoting Scotland abroad. It's been pointed out to me that since I've never given

up my Scottish accent in film, I have, perhaps inadvertently, been promoting Scotland all along – when playing Lithuanian submarine captains, English monks and Irish-American police officers. My whole life I have wanted nothing more or less than a Scotland that rejoins the community of nations on an equal basis."

The shortlist also included Scotland's greatest Olympian, four-times gold medalist Chris Hoy, and entrepreneur Ann Gloag, who has achieved international business success and has given more than £4m to the Mercy Ships charity.

Mark Beaumont, who broke the world record earlier this year for circumnavigating the world on a bike, announced the winner.

Asbestos campaigners praised for their work

CAMPAGNERS seeking political change have to be prepared to travel a long and difficult road, often with little prospect of success.

Clydeside Action on Asbestos, the group formed 23 years ago to tackle one of the deadliest legacies of Scotland's industrial past, has travelled that road but it has also gone on to achieve incredible successes, and was honoured last night by being named the Public Campaign of the Year, an award presented by actress Barbara Rafferty.

In recent years, the action group has scored two dramatic legal victories. Less than two years ago, members secured an amendment to the Mesothelioma Damages Bill to end the agonising choice faced by victims forced to decide between claiming damages for themselves, or waiting so that their relatives could perhaps secure greater compensation after their death.

Then, in October last year, came a bombshell ruling from the House of Lords ending the right of those diagnosed with another asbestos-

related condition, pleural plaques, to claim compensation.

The campaigners and their solicitors, Thompsons, drafted legislation, the Damages (Asbestos-related Conditions) (Scotland) Bill, and the bill has successfully passed through its committee stage and is well on the way to becoming law.

The legal firm said: "This short, sharp and successful campaign is a classic example of a grassroots organisation using its awareness of the impact of legislation on ordinary people to galvanise public and political support to restore justice to the victims of asbestos exposure."

The judging panel was also full of praise for two other campaigns. John Muir raised 16,000 signatures for a petition demanding tougher laws on knife crime after his son, Damian, was stabbed to death in an unprovoked attack on the streets of Greenock.

Meanwhile, Tina McGeever fought on after the death of her husband for the right of cancer patients to pay for top-up drugs within the NHS.

Lord Wallace's lifetime of achievement rewarded

IT may seem strange to give a Lifetime Achievement award to someone who has just turned 54 and has not long embarked on a new career, but Lord Wallace has had a profound impact on Scottish politics.

As Baron Wallace of Tankerness, he has yet to make his full impact on the House of Lords, but as plain Jim Wallace he was a driving force behind devolution and, in becoming Deputy First Minister of Scotland, he was the first Liberal since Lloyd George to serve in government.

A native of Annan in Dumfriesshire, he became an adopted Orcadian when as a young advocate he succeeded Jo Grimond as Liberal MP for Orkney and Shetland in 1983, rising to become an employment spokesman and Liberal Democrat chief whip during 18 years at Westminster. But it was his commitment to Home Rule that saw him make his real mark. He became Scottish Liberal Democrat leader in 1992 and immersed himself in the work of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

He worked there with the then

general-secretary of the Labour Party in Scotland, Jack McConnell, and brokered the deal by which the Scottish Parliament would be elected by proportional representation.

After the 1979 referendum campaign, he stood as LibDem candidate for Orkney, having also secured the deal whereby Shetland would receive a separate MSP. Tavish Scott, MSP for Shetland and newly-elected leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, presented his colleague with his award, sponsored by Diageo, last night.

Mr Wallace led the LibDems into coalition talks with Labour after the 1999 Holyrood election, becoming Deputy First Minister under Donald Dewar, Henry McLeish, and then Mr McConnell, deputising as First Minister during each change of office. He served as Justice Minister and then Enterprise Minister.

Under his leadership, he took the Liberal Democrats to their highest-ever share of the vote in Scotland, maintaining 17 seats in the first and second terms of Holyrood.



WIN a piece of Scottish art worth £4500

The Herald and scotlandart.com galleries are offering one lucky reader the exciting possibility of winning an original piece of art, The Manageress (below), by renowned Scottish artist Alexandra Gardner worth £4500. Six runners-up will also receive a piece of Scottish art from the following: Rose Street Night Light by Lesley Banks, Crouch by Donald Macdonald, Waverley Bridge Dusk by Lesley Anne Derks, On The Edge by Patsy McArthur, Bass Rock by Pat Kramek and Quiet Session in Bobolovsky's by Alexandra Gardner.

Alexandra Gardner studied at Glasgow School of Art and lectured there until 1988. She has won many awards and her highly individual paintings encompass a wide range of subjects – still life, figure and portrait studies, nudes, landscapes and her hallmark moody bars, diners and barber shops.

Founded in Glasgow in 1999, the scotlandart.com galleries have revolutionised the way that people purchase and experience contemporary original art. scotlandart.com's website contains over 1500 original paintings and sculptures which can be bought online or viewed at its galleries in Edinburgh and Glasgow. All works within the collection are originals by a range of British artists.

In addition to their unique philosophy, scotlandart.com offers a range of services including free art consultations at the customer's home or business, gift vouchers for any amount, worldwide carriage and its popular wedding list facility. The gallery's staff welcomes the opportunity to advise customers on any matter and customers may take home artwork on approval before making a final decision. The galleries also offer the Own Art scheme which allows customers to purchase artwork over 10 monthly instalments at 0% finance up to the price of £2000.

scotlandart.com's galleries are located at 6 Burnfield Road, Giffnock, Glasgow, G46 70B (0141 638 1200), and in Edinburgh at 2 St Stephen Place, Stockbridge, EH3 5AJ (0131 225 6257). Customers can drop by for a tea or coffee and a chat and to browse the artwork on the walls and gallery screens which display the entire collection available. The scotlandart.com galleries have a busy exhibition schedule by both new artists and regular gallery exhibitors.

TO ENTER:

Readers must collect 5 out of 7 differently numbered tokens, which can include one bonus token from the Sunday Herald, and answer the set question on the entry form. Tokens will appear daily in The Herald until tomorrow. The bonus token was printed in the Sunday Herald tomorrow. The entry form will be published again on Saturday November 15. Full terms and conditions can be viewed at www.theherald.co.uk, click on Terms of Use and then Art Contest Terms and Conditions.

See The Herald tomorrow for Token 7

