

Awards celebrate excellent training

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PLYMOUTH apprentices and employers are among the finalists celebrating their achievements at the South West Skills Awards.

Rittal CSM engineer Brett Preston, Princess Yachts and Kawasaki Precision Machinery UK are among the 35 shortlisted candidates taking part in the awards ceremony in Exeter this evening, where this year's regional winners will be announced.

The awards, run by the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service, recognise and celebrate the achievements of apprentices, learners and employers who have excelled in the region.

The evening will combine the Skills Awards with the South West regional heat of the National Apprenticeship Awards.

Successful Apprenticeship Awards finalists will go on to the national ceremony at Westminster Plaza in central London on July 15, where they will be amongst the best from across England.

Dr John Chudley, regional director of the South West National Apprenticeship Service, said: "These awards recognise individuals at every stage of life and career and the contributions of employers, both large and small, spanning all sectors.

"By acknowledging the diverse learners and training opportunities in the region, we hope to encourage more individuals and organisations to take part in initiatives in the future. I wish all our finalists the best of luck."

Mr Preston was nominated for the Achieving Skills For Learning Award after gaining an advanced apprenticeship in engineering, plus a range of qualifications including a BTEC National Diploma in manufacturing engineering, NVQs in performing engineering operations and key skills at Level 2 in communication, ITC, Working With Others and Improving Own Learning.

Princess Yachts International was nominated for the Apprenticeship Large Employer of the Year Award. The Plymouth company currently employs 46 advanced apprentices in marine engineering and boat-building, in a programme that has been running for more than 14 years.

Kawasaki Precision Machinery UK, nominated for the Apprenticeship Medium Employer of the Year Award, has run apprenticeships for more than 30 years. The business currently has 12 apprentices and, over the last five years has trained 22.

Every month the apprentices rotate between all departments to give them maximum exposure to the workings and processes within the factory – this, the company believes, allows them to appreciate the entirety of the business process from the initial customer order through to the finished product.

Paul Lucken, skills director at the Skills Funding Agency South West, said: "I wish all our finalists the very best of luck with the awards.

"The effort and contribution made by this year's finalists has clearly had a positive impact on the organisations in which they work, their own personal development and, in turn, the wider South West economy.

"It's important to note that all entrants and shortlisted finalists make the South West a better place for us to live and work – and that's something worth celebrating."

(This article previously appeared in the Plymouth Herald).