



THE
RURAL
BUSINESS AWARDS

THE LARGEST CELEBRATION OF
RURAL BUSINESS IN THE UK



ENTRY GUIDELINES 2020/21

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This background information will help you to understand more about the Rural Business Awards - its ethos and aims, and how this aligns with the judging process.

The aim of the Rural Business Awards is to give recognition to businesses operating right across the Rural sector. We define rural businesses as fitting into three broad categories – Land Based businesses, Land Related Businesses and Other Businesses located in rural areas.

Our category selection aims to draw together businesses from across these three broad areas to acknowledge the breadth and depth of opportunity presented by the Great British countryside, as well as to celebrate the achievements of our rural businesses, from engineering through to artisan food producers and professional services organisations.

Importantly the awards are organised by rural business for rural business and judged by people who understand the rural sector. Businesses operating in the Rural sector employ in excess of 3.4million people within over 540,000 businesses, and the sector is growing rapidly.

The thirteen award categories will be decided by an independent panel of judges drawn from the rural business sector, official agencies and rural charitable organisations.

The Rural Business Awards is becoming the UK's most prestigious and respected Awards for rural businesses.

RBA OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Awards are:

- To acknowledge and celebrate the vital contributions made by companies to the development and success of the Rural sector and rural way of life.
 - To encourage entrepreneurial spirit in the Rural sector, and to give recognition to excellence in business set-up, operation and management.
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WHO CAN ENTER?

Broadly, the RBAs will accept entries from businesses who clearly demonstrate that they are either;

- a) Rurally based (using the government classification that defines areas as rural if they are outside settlements with more than 10,000 resident population)
- b) Businesses that serve mainly a rural population

This is somewhat open to interpretation; however we base our acceptance on where the majority of customers reside and which sectors businesses sell into.

If you are unsure, please get in touch.

Please note that for 2020/21 each business can only enter a maximum of two categories (excluding the Triumph Over Adversity award and the Sustainability and Environmental Impact Award which all entries are considered for).

ENTRY GUIDANCE

We want you to tell us why you're the best and why you, your business, project, product or service deserves to be recognised nationally as the best in its class.

THE ENTRY PROCESS

After registering on our online awards platform, you will be asked to answer a set of questions about your business and add items such as your business logo and website link. At the end of each entry, there is chance to upload additional information such as a supporting presentation, customer testimonials, photographs or videos - we strongly recommend that all entrants do this! There is a word count limit on each question in the entry form but if you feel that you don't have enough space, you can add a presentation or additional word document with further information about your business.

Guidance will be given but content is not restricted in terms of the use of images, video or otherwise.

WHAT DO I NEED IN MY ENTRY?

PLEASE REMEMBER TO VIEW THE CATEGORY DETAIL RELEVANT TO YOU!

- An introduction to your business
- A link to your website, together with contact information and email address
- The business ethos, aims and objectives
- Try to demonstrate your uniqueness, your successes and your vision.
- How are your values entrenched in the rural sector.
- How you plan, how you hope to grow and how you impact the rural economy and way of life.
- Overview Financial Information
- Images of your proudest moments or of the project itself.
- Your logo, supplied at print quality.
- Client testimonials

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

THE JUDGES FEEDBACK INCLUDED:

- Include overview financial information. Every single year, the judges comment that businesses would have scored more highly if they had included even basic financial information - this could just be in percentage form! All judges sign non-disclosure agreements and we take confidentiality very seriously.
- Attach a presentation / supporting information to meet the specific category criteria.
- Include evidence to back up points made in your entry.
- Include references to the entry criteria relevant to YOUR business.
- Read the category summary and entry criteria carefully relevant to the category you have entered.
- Include evidence to address each point as appropriately as you can.
- Need help? Want feedback from your entry last year? CALL US. We are here to help you.

SUBMITTING YOUR ENTRY

All submissions take place online.

How to enter

1. Go to www.ruralbusinessawards.co.uk/enter-2020 to start the entry process.
2. Register to create an account or log in if you are an existing user.
3. Start your entry and select your region (please check on our region map).
4. Complete the information required and submit your entry. There is no entry fee.
5. Attach supporting information and evidence to your entry - see below.

Entries can be changed and added to right up until the entry deadline of the 16th October 2020, even after submitting. Entries can also be saved in progress and then completed at a later date (before the entry deadline).

Just remember to submit your entry before 16th October 2020.

Need help?

Call us - we are here to help you: 0116 3800 525 or email: office@ruralbusinessawards.co.uk

SUPPORTING INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE

Even though this stage of the RBA entry process is optional, we highly recommend that you attach additional information to your entry. This isn't because we want to make extra work for our entrants - honestly! In previous years we have found that entries with extra information have scored more highly and are therefore more likely to be shortlisted as finalists. This is your chance to show your business' personality and why you deserve to be recognised as the best!

WHAT CAN I INCLUDE?

Below are just a few ideas of what you might include as additional information for your entry:

- Presentation about your business (e.g. Powerpoint, Word document)
- Videos (attach the YouTube or Vimeo link)
- Certificates (e.g. for assurance or accreditation schemes)
- Images of your product
- Photographs of your business, you and your business activities
- Customer and staff testimonials
- Financial Information (keep it brief - an overview is fine). All our judges sign NDAs and this information will be treated in the highest confidence.

This is not an exhaustive list, feel free to be as creative as you want! Last year some of our entrants also sent physical samples of their products - we are more than happy to accept these too (just drop us a line at the office first so we can keep an eye out for their arrival).

Always add at least 3 or 4 high resolution photographs to your entry!

JUDGING CRITERIA

All our judging panels are formed of a range of individuals drawn from industry, business, charitable organisations and/or the rural sector. These are completely independent from us and no member of the RBA team participates in judging - meaning that we can assist you in the entry process. We are proud to say that our judging meets the highest standards of impartiality and transparency; this is something we pride ourselves on.

The process for our judging is unique in that a points based system is used and, as such, the judges will not know the results of their judging until it is announced.

When judging each submitted entry, the panel will refer to the category specific entry criteria (found in these guidelines or on your entry on the awards platform) and will also score against our overall ethos and aims to ensure that entries are relevant and demonstrate commitment to the rural sector. These are:

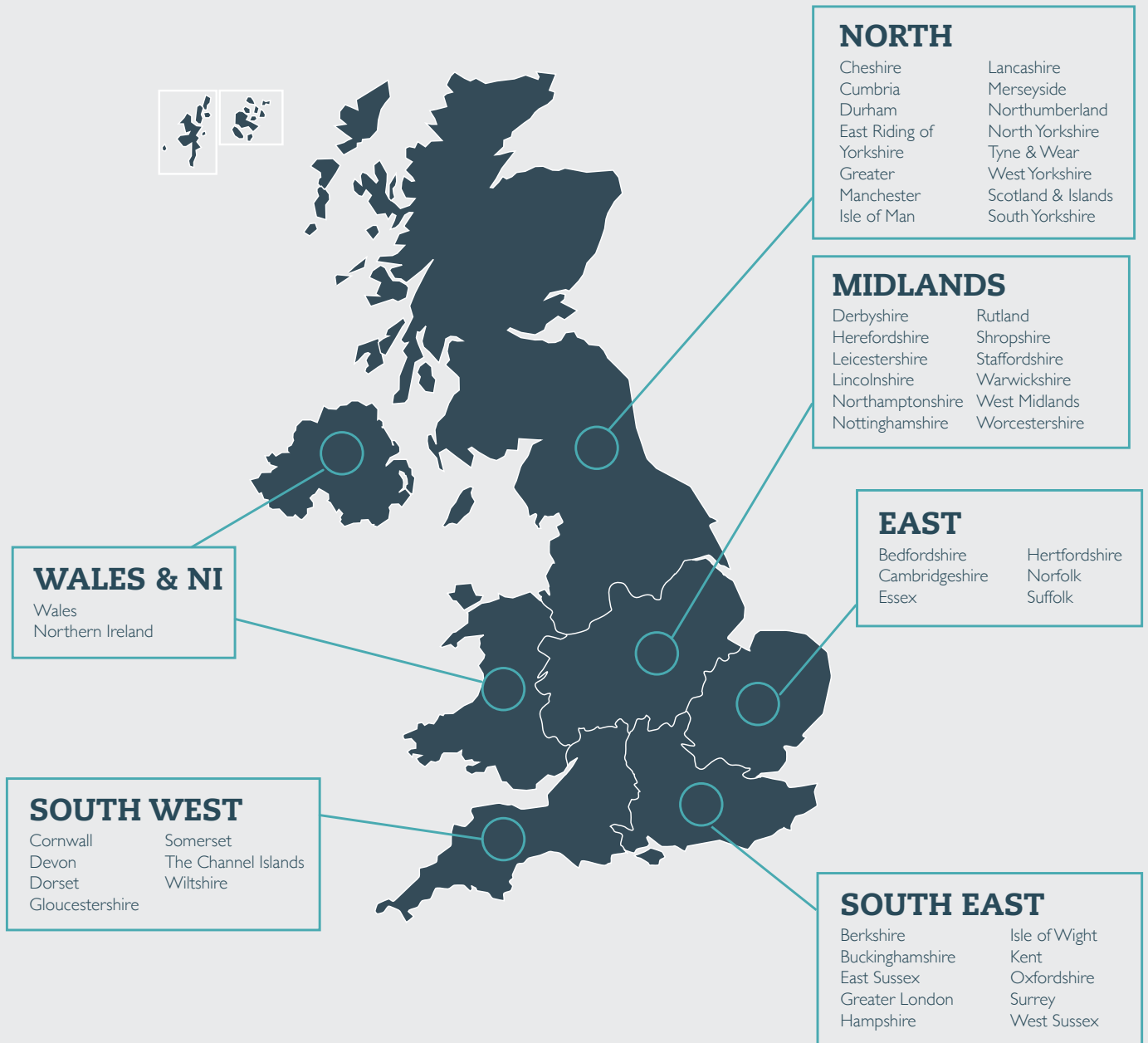
- Contribution to the rural and wider business economy.
- Effective Financial Management.
- Job creation.
- Service and Infrastructure development.
- Positive impact on communities or people.
- How your product, service, project or offering makes life easier or better for people living or working in rural locations.

TIMESCALES

1. Entries close on Friday 16th October 2020.
2. The deadline for submitting entries is midnight on Friday 16th October 2020. Entries must have been submitted by this date to be judged. Please be advised that whilst we make every effort to chase up entry material, it is your responsibility to ensure we have your material on time.
3. Shortlisting Judging to determine national finalists will take place at the end of October 2020. All entries from across the country in a category will be judged together (not by region as in previous years).
4. A shortlist of National Finalists will be announced on our website and social media on Monday 16th November 2020. We cannot personally respond to all entrants, but all entrants will be informed when the shortlist is announced on our website.
5. Shortlisted finalists will then have the opportunity to go back to their entry and make any amends ready for the final judging round.
6. Tickets for the National Final awards ceremony will be available shortly after the shortlist is announced. Shortlisted finalists will have priority access to tickets until the end of December 2020 after which they will then be on general release.
7. National judging will take place in early December 2020. Judges will decide on national winners and runners up for each category but results are not shared until the national awards ceremony.
8. The National Final Awards Ceremony will be held in February 2021.

Please note, that while we will do our very best to avoid any changes to dates and events, we may need to make alterations to these timescales or events in the future due to restrictions and the continuing impact of coronavirus.

THE RBA REGIONS



KEY DATES

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|------------------------------|--|
| Wednesday 11th December 2019 | 2020/21 Entries Open |
| Friday 16th October 2020 | 2020/21 Entries Close |
| w/c 26th October 2020 | Shortlist Judging takes place |
| w/c 16th November 2020 | National Finalists Shortlist announced |
| w/c 30th November 2020 | National Judging takes place |
| Thursday 25th February 2021 | National Final Awards Ceremony |

CATEGORY SUMMARY LIST

THE RURAL BUSINESS AWARD CATEGORIES ARE:

1. Best Rural Start Up Business
 2. Best Rural Diversification Project
 3. Best Rural Retail Business
 4. Best Rural Professional Services Business
 5. Best Rural Creative or Artisan Business
 6. Best Rural Social Enterprise, Charity or Community Project
 7. Best Rural Tourism Business
 8. Best Rural Recreational or Outdoor Pursuits Business
 9. Best Rural Food Business
 10. Best Rural Drink Business
 11. Best Rural Innovation
 12. The Sustainability and Environmental Impact Award
 13. The Triumph Over Adversity Award
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I. BEST RURAL START-UP BUSINESS

This award celebrates new businesses and will recognise those that show the journey that they have taken towards establishing a business that is excelling in its chosen market. This will be demonstrated by sharing with us a clear strategy, with an understanding of the marketplace as well as targets that have been met or exceeded in relation to growth and financial performance.

The winning business will have created the foundations for continued commercial success.

This award will go to the company that best demonstrates the following:

- A well articulated strategy for growth.
- Strong business ethics and financial competency.
- Achievement of the aims and objectives identified upon start up.
- Potential for sustained growth.
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling.
- An Innovative or entrepreneurial approach to business.
- Customer and staff engagement.
- Effective leadership, operation and management.

This award is open to any UK organisation that began trading after 1st November 2016.

2. BEST RURAL DIVERSIFICATION PROJECT

This award celebrates businesses that have emerged from traditional country businesses and are generally land based. We aim to recognise those that demonstrate a compelling justification for diversification and who have established a strong position in their marketplace. The project may be a commercial operation or not-for-profit.

The winning business will have created the foundations for continued operation and will address our overarching ethos by demonstrating a business or a people focus, growth and commitment to the rural sector through:

- A well articulated strategy.
- Job creation.
- Contribution to the rural and wider business economy.
- Service and Infrastructure development.
- The impact on communities or people and the environment.
- How your product, service, project or offering makes life easier or better for people living or working in rural locations.

Examples of eligible businesses include farm shops and restaurants, pick your own enterprises, farm attractions and children's play areas, wedding businesses, and many more.

3. BEST RURAL RETAIL BUSINESS

This category covers entrants from both online and traditional retailers. Credit will be given to businesses who are championing a rural theme or who are basing their businesses in a rural location. We will consider the contribution the business has made to the rural economy. The winners will represent the country's finest rural retail businesses.

The winning business will be able to clearly demonstrate the following:

- Strong business ethics and financial competency
- A sustainable business strategy
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling
- How their rural location or rural theme positively impacts their business
- Uniqueness in offering – what sets the business apart from the competition
- Links with local communities and businesses for the benefit of all

Examples of eligible businesses include shops located on farms, in rural villages or in the countryside, shops selling countrywear or lifestyle products, online retailers based in a rural location, and online retailers selling products relating to a rural theme or lifestyle. Businesses may manufacture and sell their own products, or sell those of other brands or producers.

4. BEST RURAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES BUSINESS

This award aims to celebrate any Professional Services business that has established a position in a rural locale or that serves a rural client group. These businesses will have embraced the challenges of operating within a rural marketplace, demonstrated by the development of a clear business strategy, which addresses the unique challenges of working with individuals and companies operating rural and land based businesses. The businesses will show a strong ethical approach and involvement and understanding of the businesses who they serve.

The winning business will demonstrate:

- How and why the business better serves rural clients than urban or city based businesses and how the approach differs.
- Excellent customer care – going the extra mile.
- An understanding of the challenges of living, working or running a business in the rural marketplace.
- An understanding of the rural marketplace and how to address the communication challenges of keeping in touch with grass roots.
- What makes the business different and why clients choose their businesses services over those of competitors.

Examples of eligible businesses include solicitors, accountants, surveyors, land agents, veterinarians, planning advisors, rights of way and access experts, business consultants, architects, education and training providers, marketing and pr agencies, graphic and web designers, social media consultants, advertising and media businesses and more.

5. BEST RURAL CREATIVE OR ARTISAN BUSINESS

This award aims to celebrate businesses that have their origin in creativity, skill and individual talent. Winning businesses will have demonstrated commercial success from a rural base, or developed products that embrace a rural theme or tradition. Entrants might create works of art, design or make products, or reimagine traditional rural crafts for the modern business world.

Whatever entrants create, it will be of exceptional quality, and the winner will combine their creativity with a keen sense of business acumen.

The winning business will be able to demonstrate the following:

- A clear strategy for business growth and sustainability
- Achievement of their aims and objectives.
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Strong business ethics and financial competency .
- How being rural shapes the way that the business operates.
- Customer and/or staff engagement.
- Effective leadership, operation and management.
- Uniqueness in offering - what sets the business apart from the competition.

Examples of eligible businesses include artists and sculptors, illustrators, jewellery-makers, cabinet-makers, carpenters and joiners, blacksmiths or metalworkers, wool or fabric mills or creators, tanners and leather workers, designers of clothing, accessories or interior and lifestyle products, and more.

6. BEST RURAL SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, CHARITY OR COMMUNITY PROJECT

This award aims to celebrate an enterprise, charity or project that is shaping a rural community or impacting the rural way of life in a positive way. We are looking for inspiring stories of triumph over adversity and coming together of people to demonstrate the strength and passion of our rural communities.

- The winning business will be able to demonstrate the following:
- Absolute passion and commitment to the project and the rural way of life.
- A vision for continued success, sustainability, growth and clear strategic direction.
- Clear leadership and management of the organisation.
- A high degree of customer satisfaction.
- Clearly evidenced social, environmental and community impact.
- Good awareness and communication outputs.
- Evidence of creativity and innovation.

Examples of eligible charities, social enterprises, or community projects include care farms, education and skills providers, healthcare organisations, landscape preservation partnerships and committees, museums, community-run shops, hubs and services, arts and culture providers for rural theatre or cinema, organisations to conserve wildlife, historical landmarks, or heritage, and many more.

7. BEST RURAL TOURISM BUSINESSES

This award aims to celebrate a business that attracts visitors to our rural backwaters and heartlands. Projecting all that is wonderful about our rural tourism sector, we will reward businesses that are truly outstanding and offer something a bit different or innovative. With rural values, philosophy and commitment to customer care the winning business will stand out as a flagship of excellence.

The winning business will be able to clearly demonstrate the following:

- Strong business ethics and financial competency.
- Strategy for sustaining quality and continuous improvement.
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling.
- That consideration has been given to addressing accessibility and inclusivity.
- That the business is sustainable has excellent green credentials and consideration has been given to environmental impact.
- Exceptional customer care and the willingness to go the extra mile for customers.
- Uniqueness in offering – what sets the business apart from the competition.
- Commitment to ongoing improvement both in terms of customer experience and staff satisfaction.
- Links with local communities and businesses for the benefit of all.

Examples of eligible businesses include, hotels, B&Bs, self-catering accommodation providers, camping and glamping businesses, tour companies, visitor attractions and experience providers, wedding venues and more.

8. BEST RURAL RECREATIONAL OR OUTDOOR PURSUITS BUSINESS

Rural Britain offers a vast range of sporting and other recreational opportunities. This award aims to celebrate businesses with a keen sense of seeking to educate and encourage people from diverse backgrounds to get involved and enjoy the countryside and its outdoor pursuits.

Credit will be given to businesses that are successful not only in terms of the contribution they make to the rural economy and people, but are also entrenched in the rural way of life and display a clear passion for the countryside.

The winning business will be able to clearly demonstrate the following:

- Strong business ethics and financial competency
- A sustainable business strategy
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling
- That consideration has been given to educating and enabling people from diverse backgrounds and walks of life to take part and experience the countryside and the sporting and recreational pastimes it presents
- Uniqueness in offering – what sets the business apart from the competition
- Links with local communities and businesses for the benefit of all.

Examples of eligible businesses include falconry providers, riding schools, fieldsports businesses, outdoor adventure or experience companies, venues for paintballing, mountain biking, motor sports, and more.

10. BEST RURAL FOOD BUSINESS

This award will celebrate innovative food businesses, brands or products, that are leading the way and pushing the boundaries of what being a 'traditional' British producer, supplier or retailer means. With a commitment to promoting 'The Best of British', using sustainable quality ingredients and skills based approaches to production as well as developing a commercially successful business, this award will highlight some of the innovative up and coming stars of the rural food sector as well as those who continue to make traditional produce into sustainable business.

The winning business will be able to clearly demonstrate the following:

- A well articulated business strategy
- Strong business ethics and financial competency
- The achievement of the aims and objectives
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling
- That where possible they use local or sustainably sourced ingredients and/or produce
- Uniqueness in offering – what sets the business apart from the competition
- Availability for sale in the UK
- A platform for continued commercial success
- Customer and staff engagement
- Effective leadership, operation and management

Examples of eligible businesses include butchers, bakers, cheesemakers, ice-cream-makers, crisp companies, dip, oil or condiment makers and other food manufacturers.

10. BEST RURAL DRINK BUSINESS

This award will celebrate innovative drink businesses, brands or products, that are leading the way and pushing the boundaries of what being a 'traditional' British producer, supplier or retailer means. With a commitment to promoting 'The Best of British', using sustainable quality ingredients and skills based approaches to production as well as developing a commercially successful business, this award will highlight some of the innovative up and coming stars of the rural drink sector as well as those who continue to make traditional produce into sustainable business.

The winning business will be able to clearly demonstrate the following:

- A well articulated business strategy
- Strong business ethics and financial competency
- The achievement of the aims and objectives
- A clear understanding of the market and customers to whom the business is selling
- That where possible they use local or sustainably sourced ingredients and/or produce
- Uniqueness in offering – what sets the business apart from the competition
- Availability for sale in the UK
- A platform for continued commercial success
- Customer and staff engagement
- Effective leadership, operation and management

Examples of eligible businesses include vineyards, distilleries, breweries, cider companies, soft drink and fruit juice companies, and many more.

11. THE BEST RURAL INNOVATION AWARD

Innovation comes in many forms; from new products, processes and services to new ways of approaching old problems, or developing new business cultures, models and networks. This award celebrates the innovations that have had the greatest impact. Judges will look for evidence of how the innovation has been developed and applied to improve the lives of those living or working in rural locations (for example in pioneering creative responses to the challenges and opportunities surrounding an ageing population, clean growth, mobility of people, goods and services, and the new data economy), while improving businesses' commercial performance, operational effectiveness or customer engagement.

Open to any organisation operating in the public, private or third sector, this award will go to the company that can best demonstrate an innovation or innovative approach that has met one or more of the following criteria:

- Transformed or positively impacted rural communities, enterprise or wider industry
- Created competitive advantage
- Contributed to significant business growth and improved overall financial performance.
- Achieved significant improvements in operational excellence.
- Enabled the delivery of new ethical or sustainable practices.
- Helped staff deliver better customer service.
- Increased market share or customer loyalty.

12. THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AWARD

As climate change becomes an ever-pressing problem, we want to recognise those businesses who are tackling environmental issues within their activities or organisation.

Entrants must display a strong sense of environmental or social responsibility. It is essential that their actions are sustainable - having a long term impact rather than a short term one. Points will be awarded to businesses who have taken an innovative approach to minimising their environmental impact.

This will not be an award you can choose to enter, rather every shortlisted entry will be judged against the below criteria. Entrants will be asked optional questions during the entry process in order to obtain information pertinent to this award. The questions will be optional as they will not be relevant to all businesses, and so will not have any impact on the results of the other awards.

A Sustainability and Environmental Impact winner will be announced at the National Final in February 2021.

The winning business will demonstrate that they have taken steps toward at least one of the following:

- Reducing their carbon footprint.
- Reducing waste.
- Reducing food miles.
- Improving management of natural capital - including resources such as landscape, soil, water, air quality and biodiversity.
- Educating or influencing the behaviour of members of the public on environmental topics.

13. THE TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY AWARD

The Triumph Over Adversity Award recognizes and celebrates businesses or individuals who have overcome significant business or personal difficulties in order to be successful. This award is not a category that businesses can choose to enter, instead we will judge all shortlisted businesses against the Triumph Over Adversity criteria. Entrants will be asked optional questions during the entry process in order to obtain information pertinent to this award. The questions will be optional as they will not be relevant to all businesses, and so will not have any impact on the results of the other awards.

Triumph Over Adversity winners will be announced at the National Final in February 2021.



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