**Young Fishmonger of the Year Announced by Seafood Development Agency, BIM**

BIM, the Seafood Development Agency today (Monday 25th November 2013) announced that the 2014 Young Fishmonger of the Year is James Kirwan of East Coast Seafood in Naas, Co. Kildare. James was selected as the overall winner from a shortlist of five finalists, all of whom exhibited a dynamic and innovative approach to seafood retailing, coupled with an outstanding knowledge of seafood. Senator Feargal Quinn was the guest speaker at today’s event in Dublin, where he congratulated all the finalists, commending their passion for the business.

This is the inaugural Young Fishmonger of the Year Awards, created by BIM to recognise and reward young fishmongers. Speaking at the Awards Ceremony today, Jason Whooley, CEO of BIM said, ‘This initiative is part of BIM’s ongoing commitment to attracting and supporting young people in the seafood sector. Young entrants to the industry are crucial to its ongoing development. Today’s finalists bring together some of Irelands most competent, knowledgeable and progressive young fishmongers’.

He continued by saying, ‘BIM was delighted with the calibre of entries which paint a bright future for the seafood retailing sector. Throughout all stages of the competition, the judges consistently said how impressed they were at the overall knowledge, skills and commitment demonstrated by all the finalists. We look forward to running the competition again in the years to come and encourage all young talented Fishmongers out there to give it a shot!’

As overall winner of the competition James Kirwan will be offered a study trip to France, a placement in a top seafood restaurant kitchen and free attendance at BIM’s retail development workshops. Along with a specially designed trophy, James will also receive a business development package to assist with the future development of his outlet.

The four finalists were also presented with a trophy and a business development package by Senator Feargal Quinn on behalf of BIM.

The competition judges focused on each of the applicant’s technical skills, their product knowledge, business planning and their overall customer service. The applicants underwent three different stages of scoring, including two unannounced shop visits where they were put through their paces by judges seeking to assess their technical and customer service skills. Each finalist also had to undergo a skills assessment, where they were asked to perform a variety of technical tasks within a 30 minute timeframe. Finalists were also required to discuss their plans, opportunities and challenges for their business and outline how they would use the business development package.

The five finalists excelled at all stages of the process

The other finalists for BIM’s 2014 Young Fishmonger of the Year are:

John Feeney, Galway Bay Seafoods, New Docks Galway,

Graham Rogerson, George's Fish Shop, Monkstown Farm, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin,

George Stephens Jnr, Stephens Fish Market, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath & Maynooth, Co. Kildare,

Arnaud Lepricey, Wrights of Howth, 14 West Pier, Howth, Dublin 13

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For more information contact Mairead Mallon, T: 087 9197 312

**Editors Notes**

**Background Biographies**

***Winner of 2014 Young Fishmonger of the Year Award***

***James Kirwan, East Coast Seafood, Unit 8 Friary Business Park, Friary Road, Naas, Co. Kildare.***

Born and reared in the fishing port of Clogherhead, James has fish and fishing in his veins. He started out as a fisherman, securing a class 3 engineering ticket but came ashore a little over three years ago to set up his own retail shop in Naas.

James personally fillets all the fish sold in the shop which allows him to control the quality of the product. He describes himself as highly driven, serious and passionate about seafood and his motto is “I’m only as good as the last piece of fish I’ve sold”.

He also likes to tell his customers that - *from Clogherhead to Naas we’re the best in the plaice!!*

***Shortlist Finalists***

***John Feeney, Galway Bay Seafoods, New Docks Galway,***

Even though John is the youngest finalist in the competition he is not a newcomer to seafood. In the last while, John tells us he spends many hours fishing crab and lobster with the local fishermen.

When John joined Galway Bay Seafood two and a half years ago he worked in the wholesale area where his knowledge of seafood grew enormously. The next move was to the in-house smokehouse where the work involved preparing, smoking and packing seafood for sale in the shop.

John now works in the retail area where he enjoys interacting with customers and sharing his knowledge of seafood with them. All week long John stocks a vast array of seafood on his counter along with a range of products like herb crusted salmon which are prepared in store.

John believes that the best way to increase business and grow sales is by making fish more accessible and convenient for the customers.

***Graham Rogerson, George's Fish Shop, Monkstown Farm, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin***

Graham comes from a long line of fishmongers as his parents have run a very successful seafood wholesaling business for over 30 years. He grew up around fish, so it is no surprise that four years ago, along with his sister Lisa, he opened George’s Fish Shop.

With access to a fantastic range of seafood through the wholesale arm of the business, customers to the shop are treated daily to spanking fresh fish which staff are is happy to prepare for them.

Graham loves educating his customers on the lesser known varieties of fish and encourages them to experiment. He is also developing a range of added-value product to complement the fresh and frozen offering.

In the future, with all locally caught fish, Graham is planning on displaying the name of the vessel, date and location of catch as he believes traceability is now more important than ever.

***George Stephens Jnr, Stephens Fish Market, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath & Maynooth, Co. Kildare,***

Before opening his first fish shop in Mullingar in 2008, George trained as a chef and worked in some of the top kitchens in the country, including l’Ecrivain. The Mullingar shop went from strength to strength under George’s watchful eye and in December 2012 he opened a second outlet in Maynooth.

George stocks a large range of fish in both shops – usually with over 35 products on display for the customer to choose from, as always, quality is key. George loves to help his customers select the most suitable fish for them and their families and is happy to prepare the fish to their specification. Both shops also offer a range of pies, chowders and fish cakes made in-store.

***Arnaud Lepricey, Wrights of Howth, 14 West Pier, Howth, Dublin 13***

Arnaud originally hails from Normandy in France where, as a child, he used to go sea fishing with his Dad.

He trained as a fishmonger working in local markets and then on supermarket counters. After completing his degree in accounting and management in 2002, Arnaud came to Ireland to brush up on his English. He worked in a number of fish shops in Howth before returning to France to gain more experience in the seafood sector.

Arnaud now works in Wright’s of Howth where he loves creating eye catching displays, encouraging his customers to try out different species and sharing delicious recipe ideas.

He says he started his working life as a fishmonger and he hopes to retire as one too!