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Six Yorkshire businesses in national finals of rural awards



Children from Mini-Explorers Nursery



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Creating a lasting monument

SIX Yorkshire businesses are through to the national finals of the Rural Business Awards (RBAs) 2017.

They include a farm-based school nursery, which has gone from only five children and seven staff in 2012 to more than 115 children and 22 staff today. It is a finalist in the outstanding rural diversification category.

Steph Pybus set up the Mini Explorers Nursery on her family's 260-acre arable farm at Crabtree Hall, near Leeming Bar, for her own six children. She wanted a nursery that would offer the same outdoor lifestyle they enjoyed at home.



She also believes passionately in the importance of educating them about the important role farming plays in maintaining the natural environment.

Mrs Pybus sold her textile business and took over the tenancy on two office units at the farm's business centre.

A huge success, it has also provided a valuable new source of income for the family's traditional small-scale arable enterprise.

Judges loved her "unique, brave and wonderful" idea.

Mrs Pybus said: "Creating the UK's first Farm School Nursery has been a huge team effort over the past few years. We have gone from a couple of derelict Victorian barns in a farmyard to a trail-blazing early years childcare facility, which is now home to more than 115 slightly muddy and very happy children.

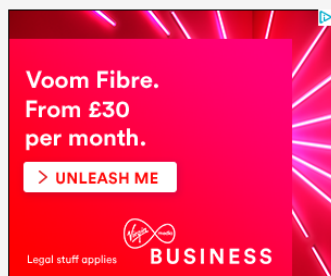
"To have got this far and to now find ourselves in the running for a national business award is a dream come true!"

Flowers from the Farm Ltd of Everingham, near Pocklington, is also a finalist in the same category.

A national not-for-profit network of cut flower growers, it stretches from the Isles of Scilly to Inverness.

Founded by Gill Hodgson at Fieldhouse Farm, Everingham, in 2011, members range from selling bunches at the farm gate to those offering a full wedding service. Others sell blooms at farmers' markets, farm shops, village stores or work with funeral directors.

Winners of the Environmental Initiative Award at the 2017 UK Grower Awards, the group has revived the British flower industry. Judges felt Flowers from the Farm was a "fantastic and unique business".



Wold Top Brewery is the third Yorkshire finalist in the category.

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Based on a 600-acre farm, high on the Yorkshire Wolds, the Mellor family first diversified into an award-winning brewery and specialist bottling business.

They later established a wedding and events venue – Muddy Souls Events – in their National Garden Scheme garden.

Other finalists include Herdysleep, from Leeds, in the best rural start-up category.

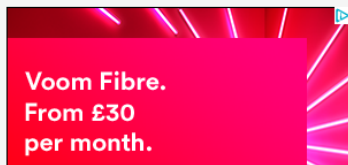
Herdysleep is a handcrafted mattress-in-a-box company founded in 2017 by Lake District brand Herdy in collaboration with mattress makers, Harrison Spinks.

The mattresses are made from the wool of Herdwick sheep – the Lake District’s native breed – and suppliers receive twice the market price for each kilo.

Humble Bee Leisure, of Flixton, near Scarborough, is a working arable farm with sheep and cattle. Up for best rural tourism business. It provides all-year-round glamping with wigwams, yurts, bell tents and en suite wigwams with wood-fired hot tubs, plus three cottages with hot tubs.

T Soanes & Son Poultry, of Middleton-on-the-Wolds, is up for rural employer of the year and best rural food and drink business.

The 70-year-old family-owned business rears more than five million birds a year on 11 farms, selling premium chicken to butchers, restaurateurs and independent retailers in Yorkshire and wholesalers nationwide. With a fleet of 14 vehicles and more than 20 staff, the business farms 3,000 acres.



The winners will be announced on Thursday, October 5.



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