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## **Hertfordshire MD claims British Chambers' Entrepreneur of the Year Award**

An enterprising female Managing Director that has seen turnover increase 98% since she took over the business has been awarded the Entrepreneur of the Year title at the British Chambers of Commerce Chamber Awards.

Claire Austin, who heads up Austin's Funeral Service, beat off competition from enterprising bosses from across Britain to bring the prestigious honour back to Hertfordshire.

Under her leadership, the company now arranges 1200 funerals across its eight branches every year and also operates Harwood Park Crematorium in Stevenage.

She has focused on offering a level of service that sets the independent firm apart from its national competitors and has used feedback and a mystery shopper review to introduce a number of innovations for the sector.

These include the free Little Green Book, 24/7 availability and the development of a bespoke pre-paid funeral plan.

Over 500 guests were on hand at the Guildhall in London to witness the culmination of the competition, which is the flagship event in the Chamber's 'Business is Good for Britain' campaign.

Joining Claire Austin on the podium were eight other organisations, including an eco-friendly hair salon, a global pharmaceutical specialist and an international wholesale exporter.

The winners were:

- Biotec Services International (Achievement in International Business)
- Elan Hair Design (Sustainability)
- Freshney Place Shopping Centre (Marketing Campaign of the Year)
- Prism Total IT Solutions (Excellence in Customer Service)
- Ramsden International (Business of the Year and Outstanding Business Achievement)
- Simply Bows and Chair Covers (Most Promising New Business)

- Thomsons Online Benefits (Excellence in Innovation)
- The Trafford Centre (Commitment to People Development)

President of the British Chambers of Commerce Martyn Pellew said: “At the start of this year we asked businesses to show us why they are good for Britain and I’m delighted with how they have responded.

“We had a record number of entries from all over the UK, with some excellent tales of innovation, job creation, growth and export success.”

He continued: “Claire Austin is a fitting winner of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award and shows what can be achieved when you innovate and continually improve the way you do business.”

Now in its 9th year, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Chamber Awards 2012 are supported by the RBS Group, BT Business, Dell, DHL Express, Westfield Health, Club Wembley and Acua Limited.

**ENDS**

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### **British Chamber Awards**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the national voice of local business.

The BCC sits at the heart of a powerful nationwide network of Accredited Chambers of Commerce, serving over **100,000 businesses** across the UK, which **employ over five million people**.

For more information visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)