

**People Awards 2009  
Mary Mulligan Speech  
Friday 1 May 2009**

Thanks Isla for your introduction.

When I was approached to take part in the judging process, in fact to Chair the judging panel I was pleased but also a little daunted. Although I have experience of housing throughout my political career – starting as Chair of Housing here in Edinburgh both with the District and City Councils, then as a Housing Minister in the last Scottish Executive and now a member of the Parliament Committee responsible for housing and Shadow Housing Spokesperson, my experience is policy-based and not technical.

However, I then remembered with a father, brothers and cousins who all work or did, in the building industry, maybe I had some technical understanding if not expertise.

Then it occurred to me there were a couple of reasons why I should not be overly concerned. Firstly, my fellow judges more than made up for any short-comings I may have. Can I take this opportunity to thank:

Kennedy Foster from CML Scotland  
Helen Stuart from Scotland's New Homebuyer magazine  
Graham Ogilvy from Construction Skills  
Bill Jamieson, the Scotsman's Executive Editor  
and Nick Barley from The Lighthouse

I know each of them will be well known to the majority of today's audience. What you should also know is that they took their role as judges very seriously and I believe have come up with a list of commendations and award winners of whom the industry can feel proud. But I will come back to the judging process.

My second reason for being reassured was because the Awards are for people and as an elected representative people are my business too. All of you in this industry will be very aware that you are involved in providing not just houses but homes. For the people I represent, their home is central to their life. Whether they own or rent it, people need their home to be right, if it's not other aspects of their life will be a problem – their health, their job, even their relationship.

I have managed to get this far through my speech without mentioning the current economic difficulties. Let there be no doubt I recognise the challenges across the construction industry and in house building in particular. As a policy-maker I want to work with the industry to get through this challenging time and look to the future. As the Chairman has said today there is a future for this industry but we all have to consider what that might be. Over the last 10 years we have seen good times in the construction industry but it is likely we will face a different economic future and because, as I have said housing is central to everyone's life, we need to consider how to approach new economic circumstances.

Whatever the tenure might be, people will still need a suitable property and that's where you come in.

As the housing market comes out of recession you will need to consider your market. Let me give you two areas to consider:

Firstly, very soon the biggest group in the age range will be the over 60s. The baby boomers are approaching pension age.

Secondly, if you look at the other end of the age spectrum, what can you offer those in their 20s and early 30s? If they have insecure jobs or they are leaving university with debts, there is no way they can find big deposits.

I am sure you will all want to address future demand, I want to ensure my constituents have their housing needs met. We all want to build strong, sustainable communities.

As I have acknowledged this is a difficult time for the industry. So I think there was some trepidation about launching this year's Awards but we need not have worried, the nominations flowed in. The Awards were split into 7 individual categories:

Architecture and Design, Land and Planning, Construction, Environment, Sales and Marketing, Customer Care and Regeneration.

And a 8<sup>th</sup> general one of industry achievement.

The judges split the categories between them for review but came together to affirm the final decisions. And all the judges considered the Industry Achievement. What struck me about the assessment was that all the nominees were excellent in what they did but I believe there was much agreement about commendations and award winners because they were the people who went the extra mile.

A full report from the judging panel will be circulated electronically to all members.

Finally, can I end by offering a few thanks.

Firstly, to those who took the time to make the nominations. Clearly, you believe that achievement should be recognised and I agree.

Secondly, to all those who were nominated. You all have reason to be proud of yourselves.

Thirdly, to my fellow judges for their time and effort. I hope they enjoyed the experience as much as I did.

Finally, the Homes for Scotland staff, especially Jennifer Kennedy and Allan Lundmark - without them there would be no Awards and we would have lost the chance to recognise skills and achievements that deserve to be recognised.

Can I offer my thanks for being part of today's Awards, and wish everyone a more productive 2009.

Thank you.

Mary Mulligan MSP