



FORDE ABBEY WINS GOLD IN REGIONAL TOURISM AWARDS

Forde Abbey, the 800-year old former Cistercian monastery and 30-acre gardens on the Dorset/Somerset border near Chard has won South West Tourism's 'Celebrating Excellence' Gold Award for the region's Best Small Visitor Attraction. It will now go forward to the National Enjoy England Awards for Excellence in April 2007.

The Awards, which were made on Monday night, form part of South West Tourism and SWRDA's South West England campaign to promote the region as a year-round destination for holidays and business. Forde Abbey, whose award-winning gardens are open all year round, has been concentrating over the past few years on improving its 'visitor experience', and earlier this year was also awarded an important tourism quality accreditation by the Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service.

The 'Celebrating Excellence' Award states that 'the stately home is a unique place for all age groups to spend a day, and is a perfect destination for group visits, wedding parties, receptions and private celebrations.' It gives special mention to the restaurant and shop, the special initiatives introduced in 2006 for children, and the quality of the refurbishment programme which this year saw the laying of a specially designed carpet on the main staircase. Other features include the tallest fountain in England opened by Anne Swithenbank in 2005, and the programme of exhibitions for visitors inside the house, which this year included a photographic exhibition of the 'Hidden Abbey' and which next year will feature original photographs of many of the rooms taken over the years by Country Life magazine.

Owner Mark Roper says, "We have always tried very hard to make a visit to Forde Abbey something that all family members, from children to grandparents, will enjoy, and to make sure that our visitors go home with strong memories of the wonderful history of the house and the gardens. It is wonderful to have our efforts so publicly recognised, and a big thank-you must go to all the staff who make Forde Abbey the exciting and welcoming place that it is."

For Editors:

For more information on this event please contact Hannah Galvin on 01460 220231 or at hannah@fordeabbey.co.uk

Forde Abbey

Gardens Open daily throughout the year 10.00 am - 4.30pm

House Open 12 noon – 4pm Tues-Fri, Sun & Bank Hols, 1st April – end Oct