

City star Debra Stephenson to headline returning Hull and East Yorkshire Business Awards

Home-grown actor Debra Stephenson is to play a leading role in helping make the best impression when Hull and East Yorkshire Business Awards return in a new era.

The city-born star of stage and screen is to host the calendar highlight, taken on for 2024 by Top 30 Under 30 founder Simon Jones.

Debra will open the event at Hull's DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel on November 21. It represents a change of tone and approach to the awards, with a stand-up set to inject energy and vibrancy into the evening.

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Debra attended South Hunsley School, and her ability to entertain emerged in talent shows across East Yorkshire, where she often appeared as a mimic. Teenage television appearances were capped with her acclaimed breakthrough as Shell Dockley in *Bad Girls*, which led her onto the cobbles of *Coronation Street* for a lengthy stay, both with ITV.

Now she's one of the UK's best-loved impressionists and comedy performers, having built up an incredible CV. *Holby City* was added to the television series list, with entertainment credits including *The Friday Night Project*, *8 Out Of 10 Cats*, *Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special*, and *Let's Dance for*

Sports Relief. Late last year she guested in Mrs Brown's Boys.

As a comedic impressionist she has taken on a plethora of personas in television and radio programmes that have dominated the genre, from the BBC's Dead Ringers and The Impressions Show, to ITV's Spitting Image and Newzoids.

And there's still plenty of opportunity to be in with a chance of rubbing shoulders with city royalty, by entering one of 12 awards categories, with a deadline of September 29 set.

This year, the 24th for the event previously organised by principal media partner Reach Plc – publisher of Hull Live and Hull Daily Mail – those taking the accolades will be presented with opportunities to build on the recognised success. Packages suited to the category are being crafted with high profile sponsors and partners playing an active part in the future development of winners.

Simon, who has the highly respected event organiser Jane Smallwood beside him to deliver the awards, said: "Debra is one of the greatest success stories to come out of the region, and the evening is all about helping identify those in the business world who can follow in her footsteps.

"It is a statement of intent from us, injecting energy and vibrancy from the get-go, to make it a night to remember for all the right reasons."

[Connexin](#) is confirmed as headline partner, with [Bondholders,C3 Group,East Riding of Yorkshire Council, For Entrepreneurs Only,Fred Marketing, GW Power-Safe,Horncastle Group,Hull City Council,MKM,Sewell Group, University of Hull](#) and [Wilkin Chapman](#) also on board.

This year's categories:

- Outstanding Contribution / Lifetime Achievement Award
- Start-Up Business of the Year (Less than two years old)

- Small Business of the Year (Less than 50 employees)
- Best Place to Work
- Environmental & Sustainability Award
- Charity of the Year
- Innovation Award
- Entrepreneur of the Year
- Team of the Year
- Large Business of the Year
- Growth Award
- Rising Star

Full details of how to enter and the criteria for each category can be found on the new [website](http://www.heybusinessawards.co.uk) – www.heybusinessawards.co.uk