

Award  
winners  
2004

Kent  
BUSINESS AWARDS  
2004

SEEDA SOUTH EAST  
ENGLAND  
DEVELOPMENT  
AGENCY  
Working for England's World Class Region

## Rural Business Award

### Rural Business Award

For the company or organisation demonstrating outstanding achievement in developing its business in the rural areas of Kent.

#### Winner:

The Hop Shop, Castle Farm, Shoreham, Sevenoaks

Specialist farm shop, lavender growers and farmers

#### Runner up:

The Hop Farm Country Park, Beltring, Paddock Wood

Tourist attraction

#### Principal judge

Valerie Carter  
Rural Sector Director  
South East England  
Development Agency



### The Hop Shop Shoreham, Sevenoaks

Judges were impressed with the way The Hop Shop at Castle Farm in Shoreham has responded to the changes in farming by diversifying into new activities.

Caroline and William Alexander have been growing flowers and Kentish hops for drying on their family farm in the Darent Valley since 1986.

However, when this market declined they listened to their customers' comments and needs and started growing crops for essential lavender and rosemary oils – as well as their existing stock



Caroline and William Alexander of the Hop Shop

of hop bines, hop plants, gift bouquets, wheatsheafs, wheat stooks and Norfolk Royal Apples.

They manage the landscape through farming, employ local people and sell their own

local produce as well as that of local farmers.

The Hop Shop also links with other local businesses and Caroline and William have a clear idea of how they want to expand their business.