

THE REGIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR SEEDA - DECEMBER 2001

# REVIEWING THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY: HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



(Left to right) SEEDA Chief Executive, Anthony Dunnett with the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Planning, Lord Falconer and Michael Foster, MP for Hastings

More details of Lord Falconer's visit to Hastings on Pages 6 & 7

## SECOND YEAR OF SUCCESS

Two outstanding years of significant progress and achievement for the South East have just been highlighted by SEEDA at its Annual Public Open Meeting. The event was attended by more than 100 guests, half from private sector backgrounds.

Key issues reviewed, included SEEDA's business focus resulting in more than 700 businesses becoming involved in addressing constraints to business growth such as employee skill levels, supply chains, accommodation and technology resulting in active assistance for 7,000 companies.

Chief Executive Anthony Dunnett explained how SEEDA's Inward Investment activity had a record year with 41 businesses established in the region and the promise of further positive news through 334 projects in progress and more than 200 leads being followed up.

An increasing number of people are benefiting from SEEDA's work on improving skills levels across the region.

"Unquestionably, skills or the lack of them is the number  
 Continued on Page 5 ▶

The new Regional Economic Strategy (RES) will be published next year and SEEDA, believes that it is essential to begin the consultation process with the region as early as possible.

Dates have now been agreed with the region's economic partnerships for six major consultation events around the South East throughout February and March 2002.

SUB-REGION	DATE	THEME
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Wednesday, February 6	Rural: <i>Building tomorrow's rural economy</i>
Kent and Medway	Thursday, February 14	Regeneration: <i>Releasing the region's opportunities at the community level</i>
Surrey	Wednesday, February 27	Enterprise and Innovation: <i>Exploiting the knowledge base</i>
Brighton & Hove, East and West Sussex	Tuesday, March 5	Urban Renaissance: <i>Building a sustainable future for our towns and cities</i>
Thames Valley	Thursday, March 14	Learning, Skills and Workforce: <i>Developing a culture of Lifelong Learning</i>
Milton Keynes, North/Central Bucks, North/Central Oxon	Tuesday, March 19	Manufacturing/Productivity: <i>Competing internationally</i>

There are three ways you can become involved.

- Individual input ●
- As part of your organisation ●
- Attending a consultation event ●

A consultation draft of the RES will be published in April 2002, after the completion of these events. There will also be a formal consultation period between April and June 2002.

There is full information about how to get involved on the SEEDA website at [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)



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# What has SEEDA been doing for physical and community regeneration to deliver an Urban Renaissance?

Over the last two years SEEDA has been working with partners across the region in support of a wide range of activities. These have tackled social exclusion and deprivation through improving the physical environment, supporting community development and providing new opportunities for employment.

SEEDA's activities have focused on delivering the priorities outlined in the World Class Communities and Urban Renaissance chapter in the (RES):

- Strategic regeneration of deprived parts of the region
- Disseminating best practice
- Promoting social inclusion
- Encouraging community development
- Stimulating urban renaissance

Some of the specific initiatives

## Outputs

Since SEEDA commenced operations in April 1999, the following have directly resulted from SEEDA's investments:

- ◆ 450 hectares of land reclaimed
- ◆ 320,000 square metres of employment space created, providing quality accommodation to support around 100,000 jobs
- ◆ £100m of assistance provided in community regeneration
- ◆ The establishment at Chatham Maritime of one of only three schemes in the UK with more than 100 homes with a BREEAM Eco-Home rating of environmental excellence
- ◆ Attraction of more than £250m in private sector investment into regeneration schemes across the region



by Paul Hudson  
Director of Infrastructure & Regeneration

to support a physical and community renaissance are:

## ◆ Sustainable Development

Informed by SEEDA's Sustainable Development Board Committee and Regional Sustainable Development Framework, SEEDA has committed itself to structure, appraise and undertake all its projects building on national best practice.

Ten conferences have been held to promote sustainable development across the region, working closely with the Regional Assembly and GOSE.

## ◆ Area Investment Frameworks (AIFs)

SEEDA has built on past national best practice to establish AIFs. This novel approach ensures that all the potential plans for investment from the public, private,

## Key Facts

- With a population of more than 8m, the South East is the largest of the English regions. While it has the lowest level of employment in the UK, the absolute number of unemployed stands sixth highest out of the UK regions
- There are 119 wards in the South East falling in the 20 per cent most deprived wards in the country
- More than 600,000 adults in the South East do not have the basic literacy skills of a 10-year-old.
- The South East has the second highest amount of 'poor housing' of any region in the UK.

academic and voluntary sectors are taken into account when creating and delivering the comprehensive regeneration of a large urban area.

A pilot programme has been completed in Southampton, while further AIFs are being undertaken in north Kent; Sussex Coast; east Kent and Thanet; the Hastings and Rother area and the Isle of Wight.

AIFs will be completed for all priority regeneration areas and inform and enable the prioritisation of future spend by SEEDA and its local partners.



Contact: Sally Coyne,  
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# Providing space to grow

SEEDA has undertaken a number of developments in deprived areas, providing the necessary appropriate space for individuals to start and grow their new businesses.

Examples include:

In the *Isle of Wight*, SEEDA has invested in the *St Cross Business Park* with local partners to provide for a business centre, incubation space and production facilities to support local businesses and inward investment from world leaders in lamination technology.

At the *Shearway Business Park* in *Folkestone*, having acquired the site, SEEDA is

involved in the remediation and servicing of 10 hectares of derelict land adjacent to the M20.

At *Broadmarsh Business Centre* in *Havant*, working with private sector developer *Basepoint*, SEEDA has enabled the provision of almost 3,000 sq m of managed workspace (53 units) on a derelict former landfill site, providing new local employment opportunities.



Contact: Sally Coyne,  
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*Discussing the ideas for changing an area can help to bring a community together.*



Over the last two years, SEEDA has doubled the amount of funding directed to community regeneration through local Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) Partnerships to tackle social exclusion.

In Southampton, Portsmouth and Brighton, comprehensive neighbourhood investment programmes are underway. Other key locations around the region, east Oxford, Slough, Reading, Woking, High Wycombe, the south coast towns, east Kent and Thames Gateway are also in receipt of SEEDA funding.

### **Economic inclusion**

The result is an urban renaissance, equipping local communities to improve their skills, prospects and environment and to create jobs to enable economic inclusion.

SEEDA has provided more than £100m since 1999 to more than 70 SRB Partnerships, all of them very different in size and the nature of the projects they are handling.

One case study is east Oxford, where SEEDA is providing £2.9m over five years to East Oxford Action to deliver regeneration programmes. The area is the city's bed-sit land with Victorian houses divided up to house students, social services' clients and nearly all the city's 2000 asylum seekers. As a consequence the area's two wards, have high levels of housing deprivation and business failure, and turnover rates are high.

The regeneration programme has focused on working with and building on the potential of the local population. Local working groups and local appraisers assess projects, which helps to develop cross working linkages and maximises value for money. A good example is the Oxford Refugee Support Project (ORSP).

A year ago, ORSP was an under-funded voluntary organisation, trying to meet the mental health needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Ten per cent of new patients with mental health problems in Oxford are asylum seekers or refugees - not surprising given the conditions they have fled and their difficulties in obtaining work and resulting isolation and frustration.

### **Employers' needs**

ORSP developed a proposal for identifying the skills and potential of asylum seekers and matching these with local employers' needs.

The East Oxford Action Board agreed to fund the project for its first year, recognising that a small organisation like ORSP sometimes needs one funder to show confidence in order to bring in others.

This has indeed proved to be the case - ORSP is now receiving a European Social Fund grant, a grant from the Princess Diana Memorial Fund and commitments from a range of statutory agencies.



*Through the ORSP in Oxford, asylum seekers have taken part in local community events, like Mapping Matters and the Cowley Road Carnival.*

# Tackling social exclusion to benefit the entire region

REGENERATION

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# Flagship development that is setting the standard for the UK

Chatham Maritime is SEEDA's largest direct development project and one of the largest Government supported projects outside London.

Covering more than 140 hectares, SEEDA is investing more than £10m a year at the site, regenerating and developing the area into a World Class residential, leisure and business destination. This is bringing benefits to the Medway people and economy, as well as to the wider Thames Gateway area.

The project is hailed by the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions as a national best practice example in mixed use development and the Department has recently re-endorsed SEEDA's Chatham Maritime Business Plan fully recognising the strategic importance of this development within the Thames Gateway.

## Transformation

Chatham Maritime provides more than 800,000 square feet of offices and educational facilities on site, with 185,000 sq ft of new offices under construction or shortly to begin.

A dramatic transformation has taken place - not

only new schemes, but the refurbishment of historic former Naval Dockyard buildings as well. A good example is the Ship and Trades pub, hotel and convenience store. This building overlooks the Marina, offering a 300-berth capacity and is managed by Marina Developments Ltd.

## Heritage

Work is underway on the specialty shopping centre within one of the most important heritage buildings, the 19th century Machine Shop. Due to open at Easter 2003, the centre is expected to attract two to three million visitors per year.

On St Mary's Island, 600 new homes have been completed, with 200 under construction - including the Fishing Village, commended by the Royal Institute of British Architects for their quality of design and innovation. This year, SEEDA held a highly successful international housing design competition for the next phase of St Mary's Island, focusing on providing excellence of design and incorporating the latest technological advances in house building. Over 300 practices across Europe expressing an interest and more than 80 firms submitting a proposal this

## Repairing deep scars

Few people are aware that there was a former coalfield in east Kent that closed 10 years ago. The three sites at Tilmanstone, Betteshanger and Snowdown had lain derelict since closure until SEEDA started to acquire them.

In the past two years Tilmanstone has been fully remediated and regenerated.

Fifteen hectares of land were sold to GEEST and a 15,000 sq m factory has been built, providing 50 new jobs and safeguarding another 250 in salad preparation and food production. A 10,000 sq m expansion is already planned. Land has also been sold to develop 2,500 sq m of new manufacturing units and to allow the expansion of a local steel fabrication business

At Betteshanger, regeneration is

fully underway after extensive local consultation, with a local regeneration and development masterplan due in January 2002. Unsafe, derelict buildings have been demolished and reclamation of the extensive pit site is getting underway. Office buildings are being refurbished to provide 'incubator' space for new and expanding local businesses.

## Commitment

In Snowdown, a Regeneration Forum has been established, galvanising the community and SEEDA is preparing to compulsory purchase the site to enable works to commence.

As part of an ongoing commitment to the area, SEEDA has organised, together with the Coalfield Communities Campaign, an annual confer-

ence and the second of these took place in mid November at the Aylesham Community Centre. Attended by more than 100 delegates, the conferences have provided an opportunity for SEEDA and other local delivery partners to report back on the progress being made and people to share ideas and good practice.

"I'm pleased to say there is real progress to report," said SEEDA Chief Executive Anthony Dunnett.

"Much of what is happening in Kent is acknowledged as a role model for coalfields elsewhere and this conference will allow all involved to share that good practice and be better prepared for the challenges that lie ahead."



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*One of Chatham Maritime's dramatic transformations, left and below, the new Ship and Trades pubic house, hotel and convenience store overlooking the flourishing Marina*



*Houses in Chatham Maritime's Fishing Village have been commended by the Royal Institute of British Architects for their quality of design and innovation*



has been the most successful competition of its type in the UK.

An important part of the work carried out by SEEDA has been respecting and reflecting the past, while working towards a sustainable future.

Three months of restoration work of a scheduled ancient monument came to an end when the Bell Mast was re-erected at the new entrance to the Historic Dockyard. One of Medway's best known landmarks, the wrought iron mast - 100ft tall and weighing 20 tonnes - is more than 120 years old and saw service as the main mast on board HMS Undaunted, a Royal Navy warship built in Chatham between 1859 and 1861. From 1903 until the Dockyard closed in 1984, the Dockyard mast bell signalled each change of shift for shipyard employees.

### Time Capsule

SEEDA Project Director, Jonathan Sadler said: "With commercial, residential and leisure facilities all open at Chatham Maritime, we are delighted to be able to resurrect such an important historical landmark. We place great emphasis on conservation led regeneration and this is just one of our projects to renovate a listed structure or building."

Preparations for the future were also made at the start of November - when local MP Paul Clark and SEEDA's Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration Paul Hudson buried a time capsule donated by SEEDA on the Island, near to the new Neighbourhood Playground.

Although the Playground, being prepared by Countryside Maritime Ltd (a joint venture company between SEEDA and Countryside Properties plc) is not due to be opened for a few more months, the time capsule needed to be buried before the rest of the work could proceed.

Items of art and schoolwork prepared by the Island's Primary School, the Chatham Maritime Business Plan, and other memorabilia were sealed in the capsule to help future generations to understand the history and development of the area.



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*MP Paul Clark (right) assisted by SEEDA Director of Regeneration & Infrastructure Paul Hudson (next right) buries a SEEDA-donated time capsule on St Mary's Island, near to the new Neighbourhood Playground*

► Continued from Front Page one issue in the South East. 16,500 people benefited last year from SEEDA's investment in learning and skills with £15m invested in 60 projects since the Agency was formed," said Anthony Dunnett.

"There are more than 600,000 adults in the South East, 22 per cent of the adult population, who do not have the basic literacy and numeracy skills expected of an 11-year-old. In response to this problem, we have delivered 2,338 specific skills training places and trained 264 basic skills tutors," he said.

In the area of Community Regeneration, 21 schemes were started in the past year and 220 hectares of land reclaimed with 190 houses built on brownfield land.

Specific reference was made to the three Kent Coalfield properties that had been lying dormant for 10 years. SEEDA's involvement has resulted in the completed regeneration of one site safeguarding 250 jobs and creating 500 new ones. A second coalfield site is under master-planning and work is about to commence on the third.

A copy of the Annual Report can be obtained from the SEEDA Offices, or visit the website: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk). SEEDA has also produced five specific leaflets SEEDA's Achievements 1999 - 2001 in the areas of Business, Learning, Skills & Workforce Development, The Rural Economy, Sustainable Development, Delivering an Urban Renaissance through Physical and Community Regeneration, also available on the website.



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## Dynamic future for Hastings

Lord Falconer, Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Planning, has met with the Hastings and Rother Task Force to review the comprehensive regeneration proposals for the Hastings and Rother area, prior to the start of consultation with the local community. The proposals outline a Five Point Plan of work that would help to deliver a dynamic new future for the area.

The meeting with the Hastings and Rother Task Force follows discussions between Lord Falconer and the Task Force in October. Following this meeting, Lord Falconer asked local partners to work up the likely financial implications of the Five Point Plan they had presented.

Lord Falconer said; "I was very impressed with the determination of the partners to turn around the fortunes of Hastings and Rother. These were hugely productive meetings in which a wide range of issues were discussed.

"This kind of partnership is vital if we are serious about seeing real change on the ground. We in central government are determined to do all we can to support a positive future for this area," said Lord Falconer.

The Five Point Plan includes:

- **Additional University provision and improvements in the primary / secondary school / further education virtual networks**
- **A comprehensive broadband network for business, education and the community**
- **A package of regeneration linked transport improvements**
- **An Enterprise Hub to provide training in entrepreneurship and technology support for new businesses**
- **A comprehensive package of regeneration measures for new housing, jobs and the community**

SEEDA Chairman, Allan Willett, and Cllr Jeremy Birch, Leader of Hastings Borough Council, welcomed the Minister to Hastings.

Allan Willett said: "The two-phased plan for public and private investment offers, for the first time, a real prospect of attracting the vibrant economy that is typical in the Thames Valley, to Hastings and Rother. It is important that we continue to invest in the area, as well as looking to the future."

The endorsement from the Minister means that the



*Hastings Pier*



*Arial views of Hastings town*

Task Force may now enter into wide consultations within the local community to determine the details of how the various elements should be taken forward.

Anthony Dunnett, Chair of the Hastings and Rother Task Force and Chief Executive of SEEDA, said, "We are breaking new ground in Hastings. Lord Falconer's visit marked a turning point. We have now received a strong endorsement from government for the Task Force's framework and we are able to go to the local community for its views and ideas. The Task Force has identified many potential government programme-funding streams to finance some of the key elements of the Five Point Plan.

"However, until the details are developed it is not possible to fully quantify the cost of the package, or to establish precisely which funding sources can be used.

"In January we will be holding a number of consultation events with the local community, statutory bodies and a broad range of partners in the Hastings and Bexhill area. For the first time in any major regeneration scheme in the UK, we will also be undertaking a sustainability audit and an urban master-planning study to inform the final determination of 'what should happen where'. It is vital that the community drive the detail forward, informed by the best independent advice available," said Anthony Dunnett.

"The Five Point Plan highlights the government's and local partners' commitment to find a lasting solution to the problems facing Hastings and Bexhill. It directly addresses the issues raised when the by-passes were turned down.

"The cross-departmental, cross-party, cross-organisation approach has resulted in a flexible profile that will help us to address the needs in the area. The sum of this work is certainly greater than the parts."

The statistics surrounding the Hastings area have surprised many people. Hastings hosts 10 (almost 10 per cent) of the South East's 119 most deprived wards (as measured by the Multiple Index of Deprivation) with 28 per cent of the population in Hastings living in wards which rank within the most deprived 10 per cent in England.

It takes as long to get to Hastings from London as it does to travel from London to Bristol. Hastings is 25 miles, in any direction, from any significant length of dual carriageway, with only 11 miles of dual carriageway in the whole of E0ast Sussex.

Rail travel times from Hastings are equally shocking - the 62 miles into London taking 1hr 45mins and the 26

# Government supports regeneration package for Hastings & Rother

miles to Ashford - 48mins. The fastest train journeys to London (Charing Cross) are only three minutes quicker than they were 80 years ago and are actually slower than they were 20 years ago.

Wage levels in Hastings are 22 per cent below the national average and, according to the New Earnings Survey, among the lowest in England and Wales. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in East Sussex is 63 per cent of the UK national average, the lowest in the South East, and Hastings has the lowest GDP in East Sussex.

Forty per cent of the long term unemployed in East Sussex live in Hastings, with education achievement at all levels and ages falling below the regional and national levels. Crime rates in East Sussex are also more than 50 per cent greater than the national average.

Hastings MP, Michael Foster, said: "My discussions with Lord Falconer have made me confident that he is aware of the special needs of Hastings. Clearly the Five Point Plan will provide the necessary tools to give our local community a hand up so that we can avoid hand outs in the future."

Battle and Bexhill, MP Gregory Barker, said: "We are now getting down to the nitty-gritty of delivering this ambitious package. My concerns that economic development be environmentally sustainable are clearly addressed. The long-term environmental future of Rother should be secured if we succeed."



The members of the Hastings and Rother Task Force include:

- South East England Development Agency (Chair)
- East Sussex County Council
- Hastings Borough Council
- Rother District Council
- Sussex Enterprise
- 1066 Enterprise
- Sussex Learning and Skills Council
- University of Brighton
- Hastings Further Education College
- Bexhill Further Education College
- Housing Corporation
- East Sussex Economic Partnership
- English Heritage
- Sussex Careers Services
- Employment Service
- Government Office for the South East

While the multi-million pound regeneration package is being worked up, SEEDA continues to meet current commitments to Hastings.

To address the areas growing demand for dedicated IT and call centre training facilities, Hastings College has been working in partnership with SEEDA to develop the 'Smooth Operator' project.

By investigating the type of skills required, the College has been able to devise bespoke training to business and industry, tackling skills shortages at regional and national levels and offering a wide variety of flexible training programmes. SEEDA contributed £132,000 and 'in-kind' support towards the £250,000 project to design and install the state of the art training facility, which was formally opened in November by Michael Foster MP.

Steeplejacks have started dismantling the Broomgrove power station - one of the largest brownfield sites in Hastings - to provide space for new homes and employment opportunities.

SEEDA is contributing some £1.8m of the £1.96m total project cost, working with Hastings Borough Council and the Hastings Regeneration Partnership to regenerate the vitally important Broomgrove site.

The chimneys are being dismantled in a 'brick by brick' fashion. This is an important part of protecting the ecology of the site.

A survey and environmental impact assessment revealed two badger setts and a protected reptile population inhabiting the site. All of the reptiles are being relocated to a temporary home, with measures taken to ensure that newts do not take over the habitat. This will ensure that the regeneration of the site can occur without having a negative effect on the local wildlife.

*Steeplejacks begin to dismantle the two chimneys at the Broomgrove site in Hastings, one of the largest brownfield sites in Hastings*



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## Rural Minister calls at SEEDA

Alun Michael MP, the Minister for Rural Affairs, visited SEEDA as part of a tour organised by the Government Office for the South East, taking in rural projects in Surrey.

The Minister met with SEEDA Chief Executive Anthony Dunnett, Rural Sector Director, Valerie Carter and Director of Business and International Marianne Neville-Rolfe.

The group discussed SEEDA's support to rural areas, focusing on the economic recovery in the region post Foot and Mouth.

*From left to right: Marianne Neville-Rolfe, Valerie Carter, Alun Michael MP and Anthony Dunnett*



# Diversification grant is helping all the family

*Below: Farmer John Maiklem gives a word of encouragement to some of the children at the new Montessori Day School*

A new Montessori Day School and Nursery has opened at Pound Farm in Cobham, Surrey, creating much needed places for youngsters from babies to school age, and enabling parents to return to work.

The sensitive restoration and conversion of former farm buildings has been completed with the help of a Farm Diversification Grant of £15,000 from SEEDA.

The project has created new jobs, and the nursery uses local organic produce for its catering.

Diversifying farm incomes to secure viable businesses, support of local producers and new local employment all work towards increasing the sustainability of rural communities across the South East.



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# Foot and mouth recovery fund helps save jobs

SEEDA's Business Recovery Fund has been a vital source of help to many rural based businesses across the region.

Delivered via the region's six Business Links, the Fund has so far granted aid to 133 businesses and safeguarded 457 jobs.

The fund has helped a variety of businesses, but especially in the tourism, entertainment and retail sectors that were worst hit because of lack of visitors to the countryside between March and July this year.

The Business Recovery Fund is only one part of SEEDA's £2m package of rural support.

Other elements are advice and counselling, also delivered through Business Links; support for a campaign to restore confidence in the countryside as a major tourist destination; and the Livestock Revival Plan, which is looking at ways to restore the region's local meat industry.

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# Helping put market towns back in the heart of local communities

SEEDA and the Countryside Agency are working together to help restore the fortunes of the small market towns across the region.

These include Faringdon in Oxfordshire, where the Countryside Agency is providing a 'Health Check' for the town.

SEEDA is providing funding through the Rural Towns, Rural Life project, managed by the South East Rural Towns Partnership, to initiatives for 34 towns across the region.

The Faringdon project will receive £47,000 to support:

- A community transport service within the town - working with the Countryside Agency supported Rural Transport Partnership
- The Faringdon Family Centre - open five days a week to provide advice/counselling, parenting skills courses, pre-school and after school activities
- A youth cyber-bus, a mobile youth drop-in cyber café and outreach worker

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# Planning seminars

SEEDA, together with the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs, the Countryside Agency and the Regional Assembly is staging a series of seminars on planning and changing rural priorities.

The first event is in Pulborough, Sussex on December 4,

with others to follow on January 16, 22 and 24.

A detailed programme of rural projects will be outlined in a future edition of SEView.

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# £11.7bn export challenge to South East businesses

Firms in the South East have been challenged to boost the region's export potential by seven per cent a year to achieve a target of £35.5bn worth of goods being exported by 2005.

The target amounts to an increase of £11.7bn and is one of the key goals in the South East International Trade Strategy that aims to increase the number of exporters in the region by:

- **Launching the Trade Partners UK Your Passport to Export Success**
- **Developing e-commerce initiatives for exporters**
- **Improving co-ordination with regional partners**
- **Establishing a network of export mentors**
- **Simplifying access to Trade Partners UK services across the region**

Launching the Strategy, Group Chief Executive of British Trade International, Sir David Wright

said: "Our future economic prosperity depends significantly on how well our businesses compete overseas. International trade stimulates business growth through learning from and competing with the best in the world. Firms that trade internationally generally have higher

productivity, turnover, profitability and employment.

"SEEDA and Trade Partners UK have worked closely with key partners in the region to draw up a Strategy which places international trade at the heart of the competitiveness and productivity agenda in the region," said Sir David.

Chairman of the International Trade Forum for the South East and SEEDA Board Member Bryan Davies said: "We have a tradition of international trade in the South East and we want to maximise the potential of businesses to export profitably.

"SEEDA, together with its partners, made it clear in the Regional Economic Strategy two years ago, that our businesses must be encouraged to access the highest quality of business support services if they are to impact on their results and the region's competitiveness."

Explaining what the Strategy will achieve over the next four years Trade Partners UK International Trade Director for the South East Lewis Scott said: "Only a small fraction of companies in the South East actually export. More than 97 per cent of the value of these exports lies with just a quarter of exporting firms.

## Support services

"The proportion of businesses exporting in the South East is above the UK average, but compares poorly to many regions in the EU.

"Our strengths include the many examples of good practice in business support provision by Business Links and the wide variety of support services available," said Mr Scott.

"Trade Partners UK has three key objectives in delivering this International Trade Strategy; to raise awareness of the services available, to simplify access to services and to develop more effective branding. By developing the potential of new exporters and enhancing the performance of existing ones, our strategy is to raise the value of exports annually in the South East by seven per cent."

Minister for Trade and Investment, Baroness Symons welcomed the Strategy during her recent visit to the region, saying: "International trade stimulates innovation and growth, enhancing business competitiveness and the competitiveness of regional and national economies. I am, therefore, delighted to endorse the South East International Trade Strategy. It is an important document that will drive international trade development in the region over the next four years and an excellent example of the close collaboration between a number of key partners in the region."



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*Left to right: Lewis Scott, International Trade Director for the South East, Trade Partners UK, Baroness Symons, Minister for International Trade and Investment and Bryan Davies, Chairman of the South East International Trade Forum*

## SEEDA flies IT flag in India

SEEDA recently joined the Indo-British Partnership Stand at IT.com, in the software capital of Asia - Bangalore, India.

Held in early November, the event gave SEEDA an opportunity to market the strengths of the region to the IT Software and Service Sector as the number one Software industry location in Europe.

Even with the current economic climate, business was swift with a number of project leads developed and the opportunity to build on existing investor contacts.

Potential inward investors were able to attend an investment seminar for companies considering locating in the UK with a presentation by the Farn-

ham-based software research agency Ovum Holway on the health of the UK software and services sector.

Also attending this key event was the Minister for E-commerce and Competitiveness, Douglas Alexander.



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Speaking at the first SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards Presentation, held at Epsom Racecourse, Environment Minister Michael Meacher MP gave clear backing to SEEDA's initiative in setting up the Awards Scheme.

In stressing the need for the region's businesses to take their environmental responsibilities seriously, Mr Meacher highlighted the key challenges facing businesses and the need to respond to climate change and the growing requirement for companies to reduce their environmental impacts. However, he also saw the possibility of new business opportunities emerging as a result.

The Minister was impressed by both the quality and achievements of the 14 finalists for the SEEDA Awards and he urged other businesses to learn from their example.

Mr Meacher emphasised that making a business more sustainable - especially through reducing environmental impacts - can often produce savings on the balance sheet and be turned to competitive advantage.

For example, one of the finalists had reduced company travel through taking every opportunity to use videoconferencing instead of face to face meetings - and was saving over £50,000 per year as a result.

# SEEDA's Sustainability Awards are here to last



*SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett with the winner of Sustainable Business Award 2001, Mark Fairbrass, Chairman of The Beacon Press (centre) and Juliet Morris, host for the evening*

The Minister commended SEEDA for creating the Sustainable Business Awards for the South East, and hoped that other regions would follow its example.

In presenting the Awards, SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett emphasised that while SEEDA's key objective is to improve the economic performance of the South East - the "locomotive" of the UK economy - it would be failing if it achieved that objective at the expense of our quality of life.

"SEEDA has taken a much broader approach, which integrates economic, social and environmental objectives and which, ultimately, will deliver sustainable

development across the South East," said Allan Willett.

Through the Sustainable Business Awards, SEEDA aims to highlight best practice and celebrate real achievement by business in the region and, in doing so, to encourage other businesses to take a look at their own operations and take the first steps towards sustainability.

Both the Minister and Allan Willett encouraged businesses to make full use of the help on offer from their local Business-Environment Forums or Sustainability Partnerships of which there are six in the South East.

The judging panel faced a very difficult task in choosing a winner from the 14 excellent finalists and were so impressed with the candidates that they insisted on giving two 'highly commended' awards, as well as identifying an overall winner.

The 'highly commended' finalists were: Independent Insurance Services, of Folkestone, Kent and National Air Traffic Services, of Gatwick, West Sussex.

The overall winner was The Beacon Press, of Uckfield, East Sussex, who won the award 'for its commitment and determination to achieve a sustainable operation, its continuing efforts to reduce environmental impact, for work with local communities and for setting an excellent example for others to follow'.

SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett told the audience that the SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards would be an annual event and details of next year's expanded Awards Scheme would be announced in the new year.



**Contact:**  
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**SEEDA Guildford,**  
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## Getting better by design

More than 120 representatives from Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) across the South East have been brought together at the Design in Business Week 2001 regional event.

The 'Inspired Business' event offered an insight into design in business, opportunities to learn about and experience design and a chance to network.

The Design Council organised event, sponsored by SEEDA, the Government Office for the South East and Business Link, included presentations and case studies.

SEEDA Board Member and Chair

of the Regional Business Support Board Caroline Williams, spoke on Design in the South East.

### Research

In her presentation Mrs Williams encouraged the participants to take advantage of the resources available to SMEs through the university and research organisations that concentrate on research, design and technology.

The three case studies provided excellent examples of design and included a SMART Award winner.

Through the joint sponsorship of this event, SEEDA and GOSE were

able to promote the DTI's SMART scheme that encourages the development of rapid growth, science and technology based business, using innovation in new products and processes.

Individuals and small businesses may apply to SMART for support in carrying out a feasibility study or development project.

For further information on the SMART scheme please contact Tony Howells at GOSE on 01483 882325.



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**Carruthers, SEEDA**  
**Guildford, 01483 500721**

# Partnership in action

The Aerospace & Defence Sector Group represents one of the critical business sectors in the South East that SEEDA has identified as essential to the future prosperity of the region.

Chris West, a senior industrialist who has held top managerial positions in leading aerospace companies such as BAe, Westland and Marconi, chairs the Sector Group.

The Group's membership comes from industry, training organisations, trade associations and public sector bodies. It is supported by Sector Group Adviser Bob Young who has a long history in the aerospace industry including working at British Aerospace and Westland and as the Engineering Director of Meggitt Avionics.

The Sector Group is working to improve the competitiveness of the Aerospace and Defence Sector by:

- Influencing the Regional Economic Strategy for the South East and SEEDA's Business Plan



*Chris West  
Chairman  
of the  
Aerospace &  
Defence  
Sector  
Group*

- Initiating and securing funding for key initiatives that have been identified by the Aerospace & Defence Sector

- Using Sector Group task forces to lead initiatives and facilitate activities through networks.

Current initiatives include:

#### **Lean Manufacturing**

Building on the tremendous success of the pilot phase, proposals are being prepared to develop the Lean Manufacturing programme across the South East, covering 300 companies in the aerospace, defence, marine and other advanced engineering sectors. This programme will be

spread over four years and impact on the productivity of the companies involved.

#### **Technology Transfer**

The region is rich in research establishments and universities with strong research facilities. The Technology Transfer Task Group has been set up to investigate methods of improving the flow of technology from these establishments to companies in the South East.

#### **E-business**

The goal of this group is to support the increased use of e-business tools to improve the efficiency of companies. The task group is identifying the key issues, ranging from basic skills to advanced procurement, and current providers to reveal gaps and propose activities to improve the current provision.

#### **Promoting Engineering**

Many high technology companies in the South East are reporting skills shortages in key areas, despite the many and varied schemes aimed at encouraging

the selection of engineering career. The task group is working to understand these issues and identify the best practice schemes.

#### **South East Database**

There are around 100,000 sales from organisations in the Aerospace and Defence sectors in the South East. Many of these organisations have their own databases of contact information. Those businesses are working to create a complete database to support the sector particularly in the areas of:

*Supply Chain Management  
Inward Investment  
Exporting  
Cluster Analysis  
Partnerships  
Networking  
Skills Enhancement*



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## SEEDA helps give sector some of the rapid answers it's been seeking

The Lean Manufacturing/ Rapid Improvement Programme has been championed by the SEEDA Aerospace and Defence Sector Group and funded by the SEEDA Fund for Learning and Skills.

This key initiative, providing productivity improvements directly to South East companies, has proved to be an enormous success and the final report has just been published by the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF South).

Developed last year in response to industry needs by Farnborough Aerospace Consortium (FAC) and EEF South, the programme is designed to help companies to introduce 'lean' manufacturing. These initial steps include the establishment of trained personnel based within the company who can support the ongoing implementation of 'lean' methodologies. Lean manufacturing refers to the systematic reduction of waste within a company and its supply chain.

EEF South has successfully developed and delivered the unique rapid improvement programme which linked six companies together in shared train-



ing and development activities.

The companies receive technical support at all levels during the implementation and implementation of lean techniques. At the core of staff within the organisation's, the programme includes Rapid Improvement techniques, and the automatic improvement of business operations.

Each participating company has a number of working environments where they have implemented their learning.

All participants are enthusiastic about the 'Rapid Improvement' methodologies.

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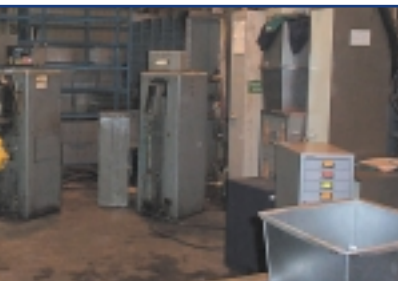


*The aerospace and defence industry is becoming globally even more competitive. The awarding of the USA Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) contract to the Lockheed Martin team, has given South East aerospace & defence companies exciting new opportunities.*

*In the UK, the Lockheed Martin JSF team will create approximately 3,400 jobs during the development phase, while during the 30-year production and support phase, 8,400 direct long-term, skilled, highly-paid jobs and many thousands more indirect jobs will be created. The production of 3,000 aircraft will generate approximately £27bn for UK companies.*

*Export projections are for an additional 3,000 aircraft leading to an extra £24bn for UK companies over the life of the programme. Additional long-term UK business opportunities exist through spares production, design evolutions and upgrade programmes.*

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*Classic before and after pictures from F. C. Brown factory floor at Bisley*

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A spokesperson for one of the companies who attended, typified the results of 'Rapid Improvement' when they said: "It would have taken several years normally to introduce the ideas we have introduced in one week."

Eamon McGovern of CTP Coil, another company which attended the workshops, said: "Of all the change programmes I have experienced, this is the best."

The reported benefits have been remarkable with improvements such as:

- **Productivity increased by 160 per cent at CTP Coil.**
- **Throughput lead times reduced from days to minutes at F. C. Brown of Bisley.**

Typical results from the 'Rapid

Improvement' workshop show a reduction in stock holding, work in progress and the improvement of space utilisation.

The use of the concept has been shown to realise significant gains during a one-week timeframe. The methodologies were applicable to, and successful in, a wide range of operational environments, enabling the staff that would ultimately operate the improved process to identify opportunities and plan for the improvements. Changes included the introduction of new systems, working practices and improved layout of production facilities.

An additional benefit over and above the operational performance improvements has been

the transformation in the attitude of staff towards change events.

In its final report EEF South stated: "The benefit of the programme to the companies has been substantial and, although each business made significant investment in time and equipment, there is no doubt that these benefits would not have been realised without the valuable support made available by SEEDA, who inspired the programme."

In all cases the Rapid Improvement workshop methodology has helped the companies develop practices to become more competitive. The task now is to capitalise on the tools and techniques and apply them across the whole of their business.

Further programmes are being developed with SEEDA's support to ensure more companies benefit from this lean manufacturing programme.



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# European approval for Enterprise Hub Virtual Institute

SEEDA has received preliminary approval by the European Commission to establish a Virtual Institute for Advanced Composites.

Approved under the Framework Five Programme that reviews competitiveness in industry, the Virtual Institute will be developed around the Enterprise Hub concept, which encourages growth through the provision of support for local entrepreneurs. Advanced composite materials have applications across a number of the South East's leading business sectors including marine, automotive and aerospace.

This is another boost for the composites and advanced materials sector in the South East following an Enterprise Hub collaboration that recently secured £500,000 of funding to upgrade skills in the sector.

The Virtual Institute will exploit the high quality and quantity of advanced composite material research that exists across Europe. Promoting a high level of innovation and technology transfer to the Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) and start-up companies in this sector will enable those firms to compete more effectively with Japan and the USA.

SEEDA will work with European partners to develop a pan-European network, through innovation centres, businesses, research centres and Enterprise Hubs. This network will offer help to SMEs and start-ups to overcome their difficulty in accessing the resources, particularly the European knowledge base, that larger firms take for granted. These common barriers to growth include access to early stage finance, technology, human resources, management skills, marketing and, most importantly, world-class research.

SEEDA plans to have this network in place for submission to the European Commission for final approval by the March 2002.

Once the final submission is approved, the network will be developed into the Virtual Institute for Advanced Composites receiving 100 per cent funding from the European Commission for three years, double the usual funding allocated.

Advanced composite material researchers in various regions and member states will be brought together via the Virtual Institute to operate at a trans-European level. Bringing together disparate knowledge from Europe using the Virtual

Institute will strengthen the South East's technology transfer capabilities and foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

By supporting the development of new products and the better integration of the European sector, the Virtual Institute will increase the Industry's competitiveness, protecting the South East market for advanced composites.

Specific targets of the Virtual Institute for Advanced Composite Materials are:

- To enhance networking and exchange of best practice across Europe and the USA
- To identify skills gap and training needs
- To encourage spin-out and supply chain integration
- To create cross technology collaborations within the sector
- To promote the latest development in advanced composite material technologies and
- To stimulate the commercial exploitation of new applications in specialist areas



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## Transport issues taken to EU officials

On October 22nd, in the first of a series of events aimed at addressing issues raised around the region, decision-makers involved with transport planning met with officials from three Directorate Generals - Transport and Energy; Research and Regional Policy in the European Commission. Using the recently published European White Paper on Transport - "European transport policy for 2010 : time to decide" as a focus, the one-day meeting addressed the future of transport in the South East and the potential role that European policies and programmes.

The meeting gave participants the opportunity to learn about the Commission's future plans and to raise local and regional transport issues with officers from three different Directorate Generals of the European Commission.

The event was organised and hosted by South

East England House in Brussels. South East England House is a partnership between SEEDA, the Assembly and four Local Authority led partners - the Kent Partnership; Hampshire, Isle of Wight and West Sussex Partnership; South East Partners and the Thames Valley Brussels Office.

Future events will concentrate on areas identified as priorities in the South East's European Strategy and Action Plan including:

- "Research and Innovation" - January 2002
- "Waste and Renewables" - date to be announced
- "Rural Development and Structural Funds" - date to be announced
- "Sustainable Development" - date to be announced.



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A fast growing German telecommunications company is expanding into West Berkshire, with the assistance of SEEDA.

Headquartered near Munich in Southern Germany, SAG-Abel has chosen SEEDA's Enterprise Hub at New Greenham Park, Newbury, as the headquarters of its UK operations.

A small company, currently co-located with its parent company RWE Solutions in London, SAG-Abel is expected to grow quickly and chose the Thames Valley for its new location because of the area's skilled workforce, high-quality working environment and established cluster of dynamic ICT and telecomms businesses.

Enterprise Hubs are SEEDA's unique concept - providing focal points for quality, flexible workspace, innovation and entrepreneurial activity across the South East. The Newbury Hub is exceptional in the Thames Valley in providing flexibility for start-up companies from small serviced offices, enabling a growing business to expand into larger office space, with storage and warehousing facilities, within one site.

SAG-Abel Chief Executive Michael Newman said: "We have been looking for office facilities with the flexibility to accommodate our expansion. What we also need is a facility that offers warehousing and open storage areas in addition to the flexible office space. We have found all this in SEEDA's Enterprise Hub in Newbury.

# German comms business chooses Newbury Hub

*SAG-Abel Chief Executive Michael Newman, left, with Newbury Enterprise Hub Director Ed Cooper*



"Geographically it is a great location for a telecommunications company such as ours - we are close to most of the major UK telcos and also well placed to attract good employees from the Thames Valley region."

Newbury Enterprise Hub Director Ed Cooper said: "We are thrilled that SAG-Abel has chosen to come to the Newbury Hub. The site is well located with excellent transport links throughout the Thames Valley and to the rest of the country. Newbury Hub is also able to offer a range of accommodation and I believe this flexibility and the support offered by the Hub will help SAG-Abel to grow quickly in the UK."

SEEDA's Director of Business and International Division Mar-

ianne Neville-Rolfe said: "This is a wonderful example of the range of economic development services that SEEDA is promoting across the region. The access to high-quality, flexible workspace and business support afforded by the Enterprise Hub programme has enabled us to attract companies like SAG-Abel, with high growth potential, into the South East.

"We hope that this will continue the trend of smaller high value foreign companies choosing the South East as their main UK or European base."

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## INTRANET BOOST FOR SEEDA HUBS

The Enterprise Hub network has been further strengthened with the purchase of intranet and video conferencing facilities.

SEEDA has funded 10 video conferencing units at £120,000 for each of the Enterprise Hubs. The equipment will provide entrepreneurs across the region with more effective access to the knowledge base, business-to-business mentoring and networking, business support and the opportunity to sharing best practice across the South East.

The provision of the Intranet will help the Hub Directors to work on joint bids, possibly recreating the recent success of the learning and skills composites bid.

# Kent picks horticulture expert

Dr David Parry has been appointed Hub Director of Kent's first Enterprise Hub at Horticulture Research International (HRI), East Malling with the lead role of driving forward initiatives to improve the survival rate of Kent entrepreneurs.

Dr Parry is currently Head of Entomology and Plant Pathology at HRI and has been part of the largest team of horticultural research and development scientists in the world.

SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett said: "I am delighted that David has agreed to become the East Malling Hub Director. He will be an invaluable asset, offering the support and mentoring local entrepreneurs' need. With his knowledge of plant technology he will also be providing expertise tailored for the specific needs of the food and bio-science sec-



*East Malling Enterprise Hub Director Dr David Parry*


tor and, with his experience of European funding, David will be an asset across the whole Hub network."

The new Enterprise Hub will have 7,000 sq ft of refurbished workspace containing 19 offices and 10 laboratories. SEEDA has given £300,000 towards the cost of the refurbishment, with further funding from Kent County Council, HRI and the East Malling Trust.

Dr Parry said: "Having the Enterprise Hub on the HRI site will provide new companies with access to the World Class scientific community and resources on site. I am keen to raise the profile of the food processing and bio-science sector, a key cluster in this area."

Enterprise Hubs create a network of incubator centres offering intensive business support, access to technology and knowledge base, early stage finance and business mentoring across the South East.

SEEDA will be investing £9m during the next five years to create 30 Enterprise Hubs, with 1,000,000 sq ft of workspace able to accommodate 2,000 companies.

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# Wired Region - South East on target to deliver vision

SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy announced the Wired Region project designed to connect people and organisations across the South East.

The idea was that individuals, businesses and other organisations need access to knowledge and the ability to transact business electronically.

Great progress has been made with the following objectives.

#### Reliable Broadband Infrastructure

At Newbury, SEEDA has an agreement with BT to provide broadband access to the New Greenham Business Park. This will allow a 500kb service for the use of the 150 tenants and will provide an addition to the already successful Newbury Enterprise Hub.

At Winchester, SEEDA has funded the study to quantify business demand for broadband access. We hope to move quickly to develop this demand study into action.

#### Comprehensive Intranet Style Network

As an attempt to use SEEDA as a pilot SME company, a high-speed broadband link to the University of Surrey will be installed in January 2002, SEEDA will be carefully examining the benefits.

More importantly, this will also give SEEDA the opportunity to deliver its Community and Regional Portals.

The recent appointment of three Web Masters who have designed the content for the portals means that the portals will be trialled early in 2002 for roll out later in the year.

#### Relevant Information and Services

A key stakeholder partnership with Kent County Council, entitled Kent Hosts, has provided training in management skills for tourism micro business in east Kent.

In partnership with Hampshire County Council, SEEDA has used Wired Region funding to help roll out integrated on-line tourist information services that will link on line tourist information across the South East.

At [www.skills-insight.org.uk](http://www.skills-insight.org.uk) stakeholders and SEEDA customers across the region can have access to a range of shared labour market intelligence relating to skill issues.

Significant results have been obtained by the e-skills into Business pilot now underway in Thanet, Swale, Dover and the Isle of Wight.



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## Competitive edge for manufacturers

Practical measures by SEEDA to assist manufacturers across the South East in becoming more productive have taken a significant step forward.

Recognising the importance of manufacturing to the South East, in an increasingly global marketplace, SEEDA has appointed the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) South to establish a Regional Centre for Manufacturing Excellence (RCME) in the South East Region to deliver the Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) in the region.

With manufacturers contributing more than £17bn to the South East economy in 2000, SEEDA has responded eagerly to this major initiative by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to support Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector. SEEDA is working with the DTI and the Small Business Service (SBS) to provide the funding and support to establish an RCME for the South East and is one of the first Regional Development Agencies to award their RCME manage-

ment contract.

It is expected to have the MAS operational by the new year.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry Patricia Hewitt said: "I am delighted that SEEDA is establishing this centre. The RCMEs will act as one-stop-shops, providing hands-on advice and practical aid to small firms."

#### Initiative

SEEDA's Business & International Division Director Marianne Neville-Rolfe said: "With more than 20,000 manufacturing SMEs in our region employing more than 12 per cent of the South East's workforce, I am delighted that we are forging ahead with this exciting initiative. Together with the DTI and SBS, we have been seeking competitive tenders from organisations with the skills and experience to manage the RCME in the South East. EEF South will spearhead a wide range of partners, bringing together all the centres of expertise to focus on the needs of manufacturing companies in the region."

Some of the support measures for manufacturers in the South East that the RCME expects to provide are:

- High calibre MAS consultants from a range of manufacturing specialisms who are able to visit companies to offer practical advice on improving productivity
- An enquiry service via a telephone hotline and a secure Internet bulletin board. Where experts are able to give immediate responses to concerns or act as a go between the client and another business with previous experience in overcoming a similar problem
- Events and seminars for manufacturers across the South East enabling the transfer and exchange of information and best practice.



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Eleven innovative projects to improve literacy and numeracy in the workplace have benefited from a £1m drive by SEEDA to improve these skills.

Nationally, up to 7m adults are unable to read and write to the standard of an 11-year-old. In the South East more than 300,000 workers have their employment prospects hampered by low-level literacy and numeracy skills.

### Pioneering Approach

SEEDA identified basic skills education in the workplace as critical to developing a World Class workforce and ensuring the future prosperity of the South East.

Its approach was pioneered in 2000 by distributing £1m from SEEDA's Fund for Learning and Skills to a series of 15 ground-breaking workplace initiatives.

Another £1m committed over this year will consolidate and extend opportunities across the region through a further 11 partnership projects.

"Basic literacy and numeracy skills are just as important as specific vocational and professional skills," said SEEDA's Director of Learning and Skills, Professor John Parsonage.

"Individuals, industry and communities stand to benefit from our initiatives to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy in the region's workforce.

"Poor basic skills are often linked to social deprivation and disadvantage and it is vital that this cycle is broken.

### Progression

"The changing pattern of employment has shown a dramatic decline in low-skilled jobs and if we are to develop a World Class workforce and inclusive society in the UK and South East, then we must improve the basic skills of employees and aid their personal progression while bolstering the skills base of the region as a whole."

Professor Parsonage

said: "Once again we are working with a range of local and national organisations, charities and employers to train tutors and also to deliver workplace learning programmes.

"By the end of the financial year more than 5,000 people will have had basic skills training as a result of these partnership initiatives, a small but positive contribution. We hope that these innovative approaches will be adopted elsewhere leading to greater numbers participating in the future."

### Poor Prospects

Regional co-ordinator for the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit (ABSSU), John Tempest, spelt out the scale of the problem facing the South East.

"Some 600,000 people, 22 per cent of the adult population, have difficulties with basic literacy and numeracy skills and more than 50 per cent are in employment with little prospect of progressing beyond low skilled work.

### Huge Problem

"This is a huge problem, but it is not just about teaching people to read and write, it is about helping people with their lives and giving them the tools to cope in a society that demands increasingly high levels of communication skills."

Mr Tempest said: "We do have short term targets for Basic Skills. For example, by 2004 we aim to have 101,000 people in the South East completing accredited train-

ing, but this is not a quick fix initiative.

"Realistically, it will take us many years to get to the top of the league table of advanced nations in respect of adult literacy and numeracy."

Representatives from the 11 projects that successfully bid for a share of the £1m earmarked for Basic Skills met to share their experiences and knowledge of basic skills training at a seminar organised by SEEDA at Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking.

The event involved the presentation of certificates by Professor Parsonage to each of the bid winners.



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*Bid winners get on board SEEDA's Basic Skills drive in the South East*

# Spearheading literacy and numeracy drive

# Boosting skills to keep up with pace of going digital

IT professionals are to be given a vital £96,000 boost at the University of Brighton.

As the nation rapidly converts to digital television, such growth in the market means there are not enough professionals with the skills needed to work in this area.

The university plans to run innovative short courses in digital and interactive media funded by the SEEDA Fund for Learning and Skills.

## Fast-moving

The courses will enable individuals and firms to acquire new skills or upgrade existing skills to embrace the new technologies. The need for Continual Professional Development (CPD) is critical in such a fast-moving environment.

Delegates who attend the courses will be able to develop practical and relevant training in the technologies that drive set-top boxes for digital and interactive television. They will also acquire new skills in digital-media project management and interactive design.

The UK is currently the most

advanced digital television market in the world. More than 30 per cent of households have already converted to digital and it is estimated that 50 per cent will have converted by the end of 2002.

The University also offers the first UK Masters course in Digital TV, set up in collaboration with the Brighton-based interactive media company Victoria Real. Victoria Real Chief Executive Rob Love said: "It is excellent to see investment in initiatives such as these, which will ensure the quality of digital and interactive television for the future."

The University of Brighton has targeted the new media sector as a growth area.

## Creative

The university's IT and New Media Business Manager Julie O'Sullivan said: "We're really excited about delivering such innovative courses. Although we have a highly creative hub in the region, our market research shows core skills in interactive television are very limited. The University will bridge this gap and is well

supported by the industry to do just that."

SEEDA Deputy Chairman, Professor Clive Booth, said: "SEEDA is delighted to support a project delivering high-quality provision in a leading-edge sector."

## Technical

"We recognise the need to raise achievement levels across the South East and to develop opportunities to increase the numbers of people with intermediate and high-level technical skills.

"We need to invest in emerging technologies and this University of Brighton project aims to meet the real challenges technological change poses for the development of many businesses in the new-media sector in this region.

"This project will ensure the skills base delivers what is required in technical and business skills to maximise productivity improvements for the South East."



## Contact:

**Pauline Roussos,**  
SEEDA Guildford,  
01483 484264

## Launch of Wired Hosts project

Computers and the Internet are an essential part of marketing and managing a business today, but facing the challenge of getting set up and on-line and using the latest techniques can be a bit daunting.

Wired Hosts is a new partnership project funded by SEEDA, Kent County Council and East Kent District and Borough councils with the aim of providing expert advice on these subjects to local accommodation providers and visitor attractions.

Each partner, along with the Wired Hosts team, is actively involved in promoting a series of practical, hands-on training sessions that have been specifically designed to assist tourism businesses in east Kent in remaining competitive in the ever-changing holiday market.

'Marketing for Success', 'Management for Success' and computer courses for both beginners and those keen to set up web sites, will be looking at ways of maximising

business potential using the latest technology as well as offering sound advice on generating more business and customer-focused management.

In addition to the workshops, Wired Hosts is offering a number of free computers to workshop participants.

The Complete Wired Hosts package is a unique opportunity to take advantage of the workshops and receive a brand new computer, software and printer.

To be eligible to apply for a free computer, businesses must be members of their local tourism associations and, in the case of accommodation providers, be inspected and graded and participate in the marketing, management and attend one of the computer workshops.

The first workshops in the series began last month.



**Contact: Pauline Roussos,**  
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Minister for Science and Innovation Lord Sainsbury joined businesses and industry representatives in the HG Wells Centre, Woking to launch the Rapid Product Development Group (RPDG). This unique group, supported by SEEDA, promotes the techniques of super fast product development to industry and education institutions.

Providing specialist skills training, bespoke short training courses and advice on rapid product development (RPD) the Group helps businesses learn the processes of RPD and the applications to their own product development, enabling them to compete more effectively with businesses overseas. It also promotes RPD as a career and as a taught subject in schools, colleges and universities.

Some 90 delegates from the South East region attended the launch, including representatives from companies involved in product concept and design, particularly Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), as well as agencies with business links. They were able to see, at first hand, a prototype build of a mobile phone in just an hour using Thermojet prototyping technology.

Part funded by £750,000 from the SEEDA Fund for Learning and Skills, the RPDG is a new public/private sector partnership initiative that brings together Buckinghamshire & Chilterns University College, Portsmouth University and an innovative SME called 3T RPD Ltd.

The group is unique in that it is able to provide the most comprehensive range of skills, equipment and technologies available anywhere in the UK. It can help companies to become more competitive by reducing the time to market of new products by up to 70 per cent and, by reducing errors, ensure manufactured parts reach the market more efficiently.

SEEDA Chief Executive Anthony Dunnett referred to the importance of investing in skills and maintaining a leading edge in engineering and manufacturing in the region in his opening address. This is particularly important as, he said:

“The South East is the engine of the UK economy and has more manufacturing than any other region in England.

“We know that South East businesses have made considerable investment in IT and new technologies, but have not made the corresponding

● **RPD in the aviation and defence industry - see centre pages** ●

investment in the skills of their employees to apply these technologies.

“Partnerships like the Rapid Product Development Group are essential in addressing these skills needs and encouraging businesses to make the vital investment in training their employees.

“The partners have pooled their expertise and their

facilities taking the knowledge and development in the universities out to business to increase their competitive edge,” said Mr Dunnett.

Lord Sainsbury emphasised the importance of a strong manufacturing sector to the British economy and the need

by companies to adopt rapid prototyping technologies, three dimensional CAD and rapid tooling techniques.

He said: “Manufacturers must respond rapidly to changing customer demands. Shorter product life cycles and greater product innovation driven by new technology and a more demanding consumer, place ever greater pressures on manufacturers to deliver new and improved products.

“The launch of this Rapid Product Development Group initiative will help raise the awareness of our companies to the potential of these new technologies.”

The Group has made considerable progress since its establishment in October 2000. Project Manager Graham Bennett

said: “Some 250 individuals have attended seminars on RPD resulting in more than 200 companies introducing RPD techniques to improve their competitiveness. Also more than 100 university students have received education in RPD techniques and two Teaching Company Schemes have been established to promote technology transfer from universities to industry.”

Mr Bennett also referred to the links that have been established with 21 schools. More than 170 school pupils have been involved with taster days using advanced computer aided design and rapid prototyping.



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# Lord Sainsbury launches unique skills project



*Lord Sainsbury, Minister for Science and Innovation, at the launch of the Rapid Product Development Group. He is pictured with a publicity model of Dunlop's latest tennis racquet, Inferno. The application of Rapid Prototyping techniques to this product reduced halved the normal development time.*

*Left to right: Graham Bennett, RPDG Project Manager, Buckinghamshire & Chilterns University College; Anthony Dunnett, Chief Executive of SEEDA; Nick Bennett, RPDG Project Manager, Portsmouth University; Lord Sainsbury and Tim Plunkett, RPDG Project Manager, 3T RPD*



*From left: SEEDA's Director for Learning & Skills, Professor John Parsonage; Acting Head of Skills, Employment Division of the Department for Education and Skills, Liz Morrey; broadcaster, Alastair Stewart, and Chief Executive of e-skills NTO, Karen Price at the Microsoft Campus, Thames Valley Business Park, Reading*

# 'IT skills critical to growth'

SEEDA has collaborated with e-skills NTO, the National Training Organisation for the Information Age, and Berkshire Learning and Skills Council on the South East Regional Hearing on IT4all, in Reading.

IT4all, is an e-skills NTO initiative, with the objective of raising awareness on the importance of IT user skills and prompting action across partners and employers to ensure everyone has the skills necessary for today's workplace.

## Demand

The hearing brought together employers, educators and government to address the demand from employers for improved IT user skills amongst both existing and potential workforces.

The event was opened by Chief Executive of the e-skills NTO, Karen Price and facilitated by broadcaster, Alastair Stewart. SEEDA's Director for Learning and Skills, Professor John Parsonage, spoke to the conference.

He said: "IT skills are critical for the growth of the South East in creating a talented and flexible workforce.

"We at SEEDA are keen to work with partners, including business, to ensure that everyone in the region has the opportunity to gain

the IT skills they need for the future."

SEEDA has already supported a range of projects aimed at increasing the IT skills of hundreds of users.

Professor Parsonage joined other speakers who included Head of Education for Microsoft, David Burrows, Human Resources Manager within Royal & SunAlliance, Brenda White and farmer Mark Howard.

Acting Head of Skills for the Employment Division of the Department for Education and Skills, Liz Morrey, responded on behalf of government.

In order for UK industry to compete on a global scale it is essential for existing workers and new recruits to improve their IT user skills.

These skills are required by all members of an organisation using information and communications systems as tools to support their day-to-day functional activities.

## Trends

IT4all aims to develop a greater understanding of the IT user skills required in the UK. The initiative will look at the implications of technology trends on business and examine the IT user skills needed by employers. The focus of IT4all is to develop a UK

IT use skills strategy for improving skills amongst the UK's existing and potential workforce.

The South East event was he first step towards setting out a skills strategy for the region.

Karen Price said: "IT is the new literacy of the 21st century. Industry expects its workers to have basic IT skills, in the same way that it expects them to be able to read and write.

## Educated

"The UK's competitiveness relies on having an educated workforce and IT literacy is central to this. It is no longer an add-on skill, it is core."

Berkshire Learning and Skills Council Executive Director Jay Mercer also stressed the importance of good IT skills.

He said: "Almost all businesses now use IT intensively. Employers need more specialists to manage their systems and software but they also need most of their workforce to acquire higher level skills in effective use of applications such as spreadsheets and databases."

Information on the IT4all initiative is available at [www.e-skills-nto.org.uk/IT4all](http://www.e-skills-nto.org.uk/IT4all)



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Long-term economic prospects for the South East are positive, but could be dented by a shortage of skills in the region.

That is the picture emerging from Skills Insight, the South East regional research unit that has launched its quarterly Skills & Economic Regional Bulletin.

Focusing on output, industrial and occupational structure, earnings and house prices, the bulletin is a rich source of data and intelligence on the South East regional economy and its unique characteristics.

### Latest bulletin

Featured in the latest bulletin are the key findings from the South East Skills Audit in which 11,200 economically active people were interviewed across the region.

SEEDA Director of Learning and Skills John Parsonage said: "The Skills Insight Audit has confirmed where resource should be applied within the region to help people improve their prospects and enjoy a more secure and rewarding future. The rate of change in the workplace and the type of business structures and styles emerging make improving the skills base of people in this and other regions a matter of great importance. Our role is to maximise the opportunities for people in the South East.

Chair of Skills Insight Mark Froud said: "I see the Skills Insight Bulletin as an important vehicle for raising awareness on the skills issues which are constraining economic growth in the region, and for the discussion and dissemination of skills and economic issues. It is reassuring that managers and policy makers will have easy access to this crucial publication on the Skills Insight web-site and to other valuable intelligence collected by our research team."

### Sustained growth

Skills Insight is based with SEEDA at its Guildford Headquarters and is working with SEEDA and its partner organisations to build the skills base that is critical for the sustained growth and development of the South East.

A copy of the report can be found at [www.skills-insight.org.uk](http://www.skills-insight.org.uk)



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# Research confirms South East skills shortages



(left to right) Simon Kyte, senior economic & skills analyst; Elizabeth Chan, research assistant; Matthew Bell, economic & skills analyst; Julie Evans, information analyst and Ephraïde Rinomhota, executive director make up the Skills Insight team which produce the Skills and Economic Regional Bulletin

## Key facts about the region's skills

### THE SOUTH EAST HAS:

- Fifty per cent of adults are qualified to NVQ level 3 or above and 28 per cent qualified to level 4 or above
- Vacancy levels are running at 25 per cent above the national average
- The highest employment rate of all English regions at 80.3 per cent
- A higher rate of skilled managerial employment than the UK average, accounting for 19.3 per cent of employees (16.4 per cent UK)
- A high concentration of employment (23 per cent) in the banking, finance and insurance service industry
- Twelve per cent of workers are employed in manufacturing, which in the South East is predominantly of a hi-tech nature and accounts for 15 per cent of GDP

# Skills across the region

## **Improving Young People's Basic Skills through the Prospect of a Job - led by The Prince's Trust**

This £239,000 project, with £97,000 SEEDA funding, aims to maximise the life chances of 60 young adults aged 16-25 with low levels of literacy and numeracy, who are currently excluded from the workforce and learning opportunities.

It will enable young people to **access learning, basic skills support and employment through participation on the 12-week Prince's Trust Volunteers programme** delivered through a network of partners including Highbury College, based in Portsmouth; Guildford College in Surrey; Youth Clubs Sussex Ltd and Scottish Power Learning offering courses in Folkestone and Dover.

### **PROJECTS IN SURREY**

#### **Surrey Shortcuts to Basic Skills - led by North East Surrey College**

This £78,400 project with £44,000 SEEDA funding is concerned with building a workplace basic skills model that will be rolled out across Surrey.

It involves six Surrey colleges that are developing basic skills training programmes for **employees with low levels of literacy and numeracy. The project will target six large employers and 18 Small and Medium Sized Enterprises** with the programmes being offered in a variety of forms including on-line courses delivered through Learndirect.

The partners include South West Surrey Community Services, Learndirect in Surrey, four Further Education Colleges - North East Surrey, Brooklands, East Surrey and Guildford - and two sixth form colleges - Spelthorne and Woking.

### **PROJECTS IN BERKSHIRE**

#### **Berkshire Basics for Business - led by Reading College & School of Arts & Design**

This £100,000 project, including £61,000 from SEEDA, provides a unique opportunity to **further the basic skills needs of employees of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in Berkshire.**

This service is entirely free to enable employers to cover costs incurred releasing staff on training. The employees gain upgraded, marketable basic skills and the business benefits from a more productive workforce.

The project is managed by Basic Skills Co-ordinators from four Further Education colleges - Reading College & School of Arts & Design, Bracknell & Wokingham College, Newbury College and Berkshire College of Agriculture.

### **PROJECTS IN OXFORDSHIRE**

#### **Oxfordshire Workplace Basic Skills - led by Oxfordshire County Council**

This £120,000 project, with more than £92,000 SEEDA funding, targets **unskilled or semi-skilled employees from large organisations in Oxfordshire** by offering basic skills programmes in literacy and numeracy.

The courses will mainly be delivered in the workplace and the scheme aims to help companies set up and deliver their own basic skills courses.

Up-skilling in IT is offered as well as provision for those who need to learn English as a second language.

The project is run in collaboration with Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council.

### **PROJECTS IN KENT**

#### **IT Break into Health - led by Kent Adult Education Service**

A project worth £104,000 with £99,000 SEEDA funding, **addressing basic skills needs of low skilled workers in the Health sector.**

Training will be given using laptop computers and seeks to provide a flexible approach to learning, particularly helpful to shift workers.

The project also seeks to involve GPs and health visitors to raise awareness and enable them to 'prescribe' learning for their patients.

'IT Break into Health' is being piloted in partnership with the East Kent Hospitals Trust, starting at the Kent and Canterbury Hospital then extending to the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate, the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford and also to hospitals in West Kent.

### **PROJECTS IN NORTH HAMPSHIRE**

#### **An In-company Strategy for Workforce Basic Skills in Basingstoke - led by Basingstoke College of Technology**

SEEDA has provided £90,000 to this £130,000 multi-agency programme, designed to help some of the estimated **8,000 adults in the Basingstoke area whose basic skills needs are impeding their progress at work.**

Development Manager at Basingstoke College of Technology, Alan

Gwyer, said: "With less than 0.8 per cent unemployment in Basingstoke, we need to move such practical support to the workplace."

The Manager of the Boots Distribution Centre in Basingstoke said: "We hope to achieve the training of 200 employees and 12 tutors in numerical and communications skills within the participating companies."

The project is linked to the forthcoming town modernisation programme.

### **PROJECTS IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT**

#### **Better Skills, Better Community - led by Community Solutions**

This project, which has £60,000 of SEEDA funding, is **bringing together employers, training organisations and community groups to provide basic skills support for people in employment and in the wider community.**

It is estimated that the Isle of Wight has more than 12,000 people with numeracy and literacy problems; and that more than half of these find it difficult to manage at work or in the community. Many are also unable to get work, or to develop a career.

In this project, 100 learners from both workplace and community settings will be matched to appropriate mentors or tutors from SMEs and community organisations. There will also be basic skills training for tutors.

### **PROJECTS IN EASTLEIGH AND SOUTHAMPTON**

#### **Engineering Networks with Basic Skills - led by Solent Skill Quest (formerly Eastleigh Action for Skills)**

SEEDA funding, worth slightly more than £66,000, has helped to expand this successful **basic skills project originally developed for Ford employees, their families, friends and the community surrounding the Eastleigh Plant.**

The new project, totally funded by SEEDA, will target supply chain engineering companies and small scale engineering operations in the area to introduce basic skills 'by stealth'.

A Workforce Development Manager has been appointed to encourage business involvement in an engineering learning network and to provide training needs analysis and tailor-made basic skills solutions, in the context of engineering.



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SEEDA backed Meridian Broadcasting's week-long Spotlight campaign 'Talking Families' that put the focus on families and family learning across the South East.

Recognising the importance of support and communication within families, SEEDA contributed £19,000 to the project that offered thousands of free learning opportunities to families across the South East of England. Meridian viewers were offered the chance to take up 'free computing for beginners' sessions at colleges and learning centres across the region.

Celebrity presenters Fred Dineage and Debbie Thrower launched the campaign with a two-hour live programme broadcast across the South East region and followed up with a second live broadcast.

# Links for family learning



*Fred Dineage and Debbie Thrower presented Meridian's Spotlight - Talking Families*

Spotlight was supported by an information booklet and a website. The booklet explained how to take up the opportunity to participate in the free computing for beginners' sessions available across the region and viewers were able to book places via a dedicated call centre. The website, [www.meridiantv.com/families](http://www.meridiantv.com/families) has interactive games and quizzes and a talking scrapbook which aims to

encourage families to search out their family history.

SEEDA Director of Learning and Skills, John Parsonage, said: "We wanted to see more people taking advantage of the learning opportunities available in our region. This innovative campaign put together by Meridian and Meridian Charitable Broadcasting Trust sought to do just that - to widen participation and encourage people to learn.

"The media is a powerful marketing tool. Meridian has the potential to reach an audience of more than 5m people and previous Spotlight programmes have achieved high response rates, so we are confident that many families across the region will have taken up this opportunity to learn computing skills.

"It is also encouraging to see what can be achieved by so many agencies - Campaign for Learning, DfES, the Learning and Skills Councils, Learndirect, Parentline Plus and SEEDA - working in partnership with the media."



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## SEEDA takes the 'Green' route for Christmas

Protecting the environment and conserving precious natural resources is high on the list of priorities for SEEDA - and to prove it the Agency has decided not to send out printed Christmas cards this year. Instead, SEEDA will communicate seasonal greetings to its thousands of contacts via the Internet.

To enable SEEDA to create a suitably eye-catching 'electronic Christmas card', Young Engineers Clubs in schools and colleges throughout the South East have

been invited to submit design ideas that reflect what it's like to live or work in the region. Designs will be short-listed for competition prizes totalling £2,500.

The winning e-card will be incorporated on the web sites of SEEDA and Young Engineers and emailed to businesses and organisations around the region.

Chief Executive of SEEDA, Anthony Dunnett, said: "We decided that this year we would not be sending out conventional Christmas cards but would try

to live up to our 'Green.' credentials by communicating our Christmas messages by email and on the web. This is far more environmentally sustainable than consuming yet more paper and card, and by running this competition for schools we hope that we have moved further towards our goal of a 'wired region', where more and more people communicate electronically."



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## Museums provide learning attraction

Museums play a significant role in attracting people into lifelong learning, claims SEEDA's Director of Learning and Skills, Professor John Parsonage.

He was speaking at the first conference of the Thames Valley Museums Group at the River & Rowing Museum in Henley-on-Thames.

Attended by representatives from local authorities, museums and interested parties, the main purpose of the conference was to identify ways in which museums and heritage sites throughout the Thames Valley could co-operate more closely to increase visitor numbers and promote their unique educational potential.

Professor Parsonage explored the possibility of bringing exhibits housed in museums to a wider audience by the use of new digital technologies. He also informed the audience that SEEDA is currently commissioning a study on how to encourage more people back into learning by the use of learning centres. These could be housed in museums and libraries besides other locations such as retail outlets and primary schools.

The River & Rowing Museum provided an appropriate venue for the conference. It is dedicated to lifelong learning and runs a full education programme for

schoolchildren, students, families and adults.

The museum celebrates three themes: the past, present and future of the River Thames, the historic riverside community of Henley-on-Thames and the international sport of rowing.

The conference included an address by Lord Evans, Chairman of Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries. He stressed the need for strong teamwork, co-operation and mutual dependency to encourage museums to work together in creative ways.

SEEDA has already funded an innovative project to increase the availability of management development activity in the cultural heritage sector.

Other speakers included Chief Executive of the River & Rowing Museum, Paul Mainds; Chief Executive of the South East Museums Agency, Helen Jackson and Museums Officer for Oxfordshire County Council, Martyn Brown.

Following the speeches, Director of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, Dr Christopher Brown, chaired a lively discussion session.



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# Workforce conference highlights key areas

SEEDA and the South Eastern Regional TUC (SERTUC) have held a joint conference to discuss how the social partners in the region can work together in building a 'World Class workforce' in the South East.

SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy, Building a World Class Region, identifies this as a strategic objective and the two organisations have jointly established a forum for social dialogue.

This forum, the SEEDA Workforce Development Group, has brought together senior managers and trade union officials to exchange ideas about best practice and how to promote it in the region.

The purpose of the conference was to encourage a wider debate on workforce development issues within the South East. The region's future prosperity relies on its workforce and the conference provided a unique opportunity to explore and develop themes such as economic sustainability, competitiveness with other EU regions, learning and skills initiatives, diversity and partnership.

Minister of State for the Regions and Employment Relations Alan Johnson was the keynote speaker. TUC General Secretary John Monks, SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett and Richie Furlong, Personnel Director, Birds Eye Wall's also addressed the conference.

As well as having the opportunity to put questions to speakers, delegates met in groups for discussions on how we secure the future of the South East as a World Class region.

The audience included trade unionists and employers from the private and public sectors and representatives of the Learning and Skills Councils, SEEDA and Government departments.



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(Left to right) Barry Camfield, SEEDA Board Member; Ron Edwards, Project Leader WDG; Alan Johnson MP, Minister of State for Employment Relations & Regions; Allan Willett CMG DL, SEEDA Chairman; Anthony Dunnett, SEEDA Chief Executive; Nigel Bourne, Regional Director CBI

## Partnership has much to offer regional debate

The first steps have been taken in developing a significant partnership between SEEDA and leading Trade Union personnel in the region.

The laying of foundations for co-operative working relations at a recent meeting were described by SEEDA Chairman Allan Willett as: "Important steps in the process of exchanging views and developing a context for a mutually supportive action group."

Mr. Willett went on to say: "There is clear agreement that we share a common cause and will benefit from closer communication in anticipating business needs and taking joint action."

Mick Connolly, Regional Secretary of the South Eastern Regional TUC, was guest speaker at the event. He emphasised that he was "Greatly encouraged that SEEDA recognised the importance of the role unions have in the development of the regional economy."

This theme was reinforced by the Assistant General Secretary of the TGWU and SEEDA Board Member, Barry Camfield, who said: "This is an excellent start in creating the opportunity for dialogue and developing close working relationships between Trade Unions and SEEDA."

The Group plans to meet on a regular basis to drive forward an action plan.



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### SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS TIP OF THE MONTH:

*A photocopier left on all night wastes enough energy to make 5,000 copies!  
Have you got any Sustainable ideas to share - please let us know.  
Email: [grahamtubb@seeda.co.uk](mailto:grahamtubb@seeda.co.uk) or fax 01483 576663.*

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