

# CREATING A SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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*Chairman, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)*

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# INTRODUCTION

## SMART Construction – Creating a Sustainable Built Environment

“In 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published ‘*Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future*’ which marked a step change in policies for delivering sustainable communities. This included a significant increase in resources, major reforms of housing and planning and a new approach to how we build and what we build. The public sector client - central, regional and local government, national and regional agencies, housing associations - is responsible for approximately 40% of the UK’s £83 billion construction activity each year. There are considerable economic, environmental and social benefits to be gained by the adoption of best practices – reductions in capital spend, operation/maintenance costs and environmental impact, as well as improved local skills base and more sustainable communities. Buildings and infrastructure play a fundamental part in all our lives and that is why it is so important that we do what we can to ensure that we promote quality in the process.”



**James E. Brathwaite, CBE**  
Chairman  
South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

# FOREWORD

Central Government recognises the importance of the built environment and is committed to driving change throughout the industry. Construction is set high on the agenda for Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and for the past 18 months the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has been the lead RDA for this sector.

The core function of a lead role is to increase regional influence in national policies and regional involvement in developing appropriate delivery mechanisms and to promote best practice. SEEDA has encouraged the sharing of best practice, knowledge and innovation across the RDA network in relation delivery of the Built Environment. This publication focuses on Government as a construction client and shares examples of where RDAs have already embraced best practice within their property activities. We have used the five best practice themes adopted from constructing excellence:

1. Adopting Constructing Excellence principles – partnering, supply chain management, value engineering, Respect for People.
2. Raising environmental standards – reducing construction process waste, currently 70% of landfill, through better design, recycling/reuse, reduced water consumption, increased specification and demand for renewable energies, improved BREEAM/ECO homes rating.

3. Introducing training agreements – to require and more crucially to enable local supply partners to recruit and invest in local labour markets.
4. Changing attitudes to brownfield sites - remediation and reintroduction.
5. Improving design – increasing use of mechanisms such as Design Quality Indicators, design champions and design panels.

Regional Development Agencies recognise the key role they can play in promoting and demonstrating a broad spectrum of “best practice” and have committed to sharing our learning with each other and with other partners. In this context, as the lead RDA on construction, SEEDA has sought examples from across the RDAs of one or more elements of these best practice themes which demonstrate how we are seeking to make a positive contribution to a quality built environment. We are pleased to be able to share this with partners and from July 2005 the lead RDA for construction is East Midlands Development Agency. SEEDA is pleased to be able to share this with partners.

The RDA contact details are included in each of the examples if you would like more information on individual projects or other RDA support for the built environment.

# PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND

## LDA – Decontamination/Remediation



Working with contractor, Birse CL, the London Development Agency (LDA) has remediated an area of 25 ha of derelict contaminated land at White Hart Triangle, which sits at the southern end of the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge, east of Woolwich. This land has the potential to develop one million sq ft of business space, creating 2,000 local jobs and leading to community prosperity and an enhanced and safe environment. The work included extensive environmental clean up and connection of two separate plots of land – one of which

was completely land-locked by an existing Thames sewer.

Two major challenges needed to be overcome. The first was to remove 30,000 m<sup>3</sup> of fly-tipped material and send it to fully licensed refuse and recycling centres. The second was to treat 20,000 m<sup>3</sup> of Japanese knotweed which covered the whole site but, rather than use traditional dig and dump methods, lay down areas were set up to enable translocation and in-situ treatment of the plant. Innovation was included in the in-situ treatment of the plant by diluting a chemical solution in order to prevent danger to aquatic life. This method showed that on-site treatment is viable, saved about £2 million and dramatically cut the project's environmental impact.

### POINTS OF INTEREST:

In 2004 the LDA and Birse CL were named National Green Champion in Building and Construction for the clean up of contaminated land in the White Hart Triangle. Judges recognised the innovative and sustainable approach to the regeneration of the site. Key successes on site were the disposal and recycling of 30,000m<sup>3</sup> of fly-tipped material, the innovative treatment of 20,000m<sup>3</sup> of Japanese knotweed and use of value-engineering for structures.

LDA - T: 020 7680 2000 E: [info@lda.gov.uk](mailto:info@lda.gov.uk) W: [www.lda.gov.uk](http://www.lda.gov.uk)

## EEDA - Brownfield Land Action Plan

Originating from guidance in the Sustainable Communities Plan, this study was commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) in order to better understand, at a local level, the range of actions that would be required to deliver a supply of developable brownfield land. The Brownfield Land Action Plan (BLAP) will provide data, commentary and views that will allow EEDA and its partners, as well as the development industry, to identify opportunities and constraints on developing brownfield sites for housing and other end uses in the three sub-regions of Harlow, Stevenage and Peterborough. The data is based upon National Land Use Database (NLUD)

returns, but is substantially boosted by additional site information. It has been developed with considerable input from: local authorities, regional and national agencies, and workshops with varied stakeholders (house builders, Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA), British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA) and environmental representatives). The final report highlights action (policy and resources) required to help ensure a continuous supply of developable brownfield land. The associated database developed is capable of manipulation and has search facilities, EEDA hopes to develop it and make it available to partners.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** Of the East of England's 478,000 proposed new homes, 60% need to take place on brownfield land, according to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The BLAP will be a key tool to assist in meeting this target.



EEDA - T: 01223 713900 E: [knowledge@eeda.org.uk](mailto:knowledge@eeda.org.uk) W: [www.eeda.org.uk](http://www.eeda.org.uk)

## NWDA – Newlands

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) is funding the £23 million Newlands scheme in the Northwest to economically and socially rejuvenate 435 hectares of derelict and underused land across the region and transform them into thriving, durable, community woodlands.

Working in partnership with the Forestry Commission, the Agency commissioned the Derelict and Underused Land (DUN) Survey to identify potential locations for attention across the region. The survey used aerial photography to survey DUN land, and was crucial in determining the scale of the project.

Once the sites were identified, they were assessed by The Public Benefit Recording System (PBRs), which is designed to measure the public benefit that could be delivered through their regeneration. This system identified the key economic, social, environmental and health issues affecting the area of each site, which was essential to maximise the quality and impact of the proposals.

Newlands sites will be cleaned up and reclaimed via an integrated and innovative approach to derelict land regeneration. With a programme of activity, developed according to local circumstances and a strong emphasis

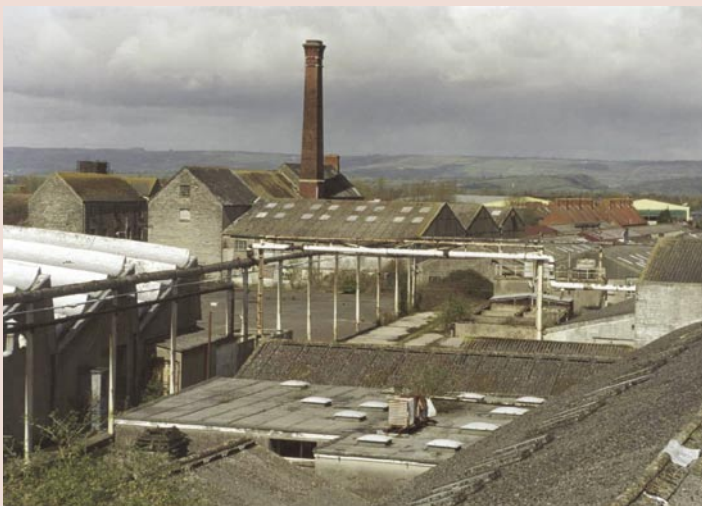


on community involvement and development, Newlands will deliver major economic benefits for England's Northwest.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** To deliver the Newlands scheme, the NWDA works in close partnership with key organisations in the region to co-ordinate with existing activities and initiatives to tackle the priority sites that have the potential to have the greatest impact. Currently, nine delivery schemes exist - five in each of the Northwest's sub regions and three other specialist schemes.

NWDA - T: 01925 400100 E: [information@nwda.co.uk](mailto:information@nwda.co.uk) W: [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

## SOUTH WEST RDA – Sustainability in Action



Morlands Enterprise Park, a 40 acre former tannery site between Glastonbury and Street in Somerset, was identified as an exemplar of sustainable development even before the consultants were commissioned!

The South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA), in partnership with Mendip District Council, is developing the site into a mixed-use sustainable development that will include industrial and

commercial space for businesses as well as social, community, recreational and tourism facilities. Extensive public consultation, including input from local schools, has endorsed the mixed-use scheme.

Where possible, buildings have been retained and will be brought back into reuse. Demolition is complete on the other buildings with 70% of the demolition waste being recycled on site or at reclamation yards.

Sustainability principles to be incorporated include bio-remediation techniques, sustainable urban drainage systems and reuse of road planings in surface treatments. These, alongside a Combined Heat and Power plant, provide an holistic approach to the development.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The work is part of the South West RDA's wider regeneration of the former tannery site, which has been derelict for 15 years. The Morlands Enterprise Park, when finished, will contain 18,100 m<sup>2</sup> of light industrial and office space in a mixture of high quality new, and listed, buildings - from Grade II loft-style conversions through to purpose built units set in carefully planned landscaping.

SOUTH WEST RDA - T: 01392 214747 E: [enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk) W: [www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk)

# BUSINESS

*Dennis Lenard, CEO, Constructing Excellence*

RDAs have a tough job, being responsible for driving sustainable development across all business and community sectors. This summary shows that RDAs are demonstrably committed to promoting widespread enlightened construction procurement practices and integrated teams that can consistently deliver both best value and world class construction. RDAs are clearly committed, as are we, to bringing the 'change' we all wish to see and we welcome the opportunity to share best practice.



## ONE - CENE

Constructing Excellence in the North East (CENE) has been established in the region to showcase innovations and spread best practice in construction. CENE aims to improve the performance and the image of the industry to help increase customer confidence and generate more business. Improving performance and image will demonstrate that value for money can be provided and lead to more business and recruits to the construction industry.

Working alongside those already operating in the industry to spur a change and create a new operating culture will be more prosperous for the industry. The Regional Economic Strategy states that the region has to meet the property needs of the 21st Century. CENE will co-ordinate, and be the liaison, between existing housing, innovation and construction bodies, helping to streamline processes and bring about the changes needed. CENE will also bring clients, industry and government, together to share and learn from one another's innovations and share best practice.

The group will arrange workshops, presentations, site visits, practical demonstrations, the production of guides, as well as offering support directly to organisations looking to embrace the changes necessary for future success.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** Three main programmes will change supply chain working: 'Drivers for Change' will ensure that the decision-makers and leadership in the



industry are committed to the need for change and a more customer-focused approach to projects from the outset. 'Improving the Project Process' will engage with the supply chain to make them fuller partners and make projects more sustainable through innovative new techniques. 'Targets for Improvement' will help to cut costs, reduce the time taken to deliver projects, increase the satisfaction of clients and guarantee the health and safety of those working in the sector.

ONE - T: 0191 229 6200 E: [enquiries@onenortheast.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@onenortheast.co.uk) W: [www.onenortheast.co.uk](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk)

## NWDA – CCI Business Clubs

The construction industry in the Northwest makes a major contribution to the regional economy, with an output of £8.1 billion and employing 150,000 people in over 18,000 construction companies. Its importance to the region has resulted in the establishment of eight Construction Best Practice Clubs in the Northwest, supported by both the NWDA, Constructing Excellence and the Centre for Construction Innovation (CCI)



as part of a wider sector strategy.

The clubs provide a forum for individuals and companies to share and learn about best practice

within a local support network. They bring together groups of forward thinking, innovative individuals to discuss key issues affecting the industry, sharing their knowledge and experience in order to help enhance business performance and to develop a culture of continuous improvement.

To begin this process, the NWDA commissioned a study which consulted extensively with the industry and its intermediaries to determine priorities for the economic development of the industry. The resulting strategy aims to co-ordinate the plethora of industry support activities more effectively.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The regional strategy, of which this project is a key part, focuses on five key themes: Best Practice; Skills and Employment; Innovation; Sustainability and Regeneration. In addition, there are projects covering Modern Methods of Construction and Lean Construction.

NWDA - T: 01925 400100 E: [information@nwda.co.uk](mailto:information@nwda.co.uk) W: [www.nwda.co.uk](http://www.nwda.co.uk)

## SEEDA – South East Centre for the Built Environment

With direct investment by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), the South East Centre for the Built Environment (SECBE) is now a key regional body improving business performance across the region for this crucial sector – worth over £18 billion per annum with over 55,000 businesses.

As the regional centre for Constructing Excellence, SECBE has helped galvanise the efforts of many regional partners – leading businesses, support organisations and academia – to increase performance and profitability. The management board and various working groups are made up of leading businesses, drawn from its growing sector-wide membership of clients, designers, contractors and manufacturers.

SECBE provides both strategic leadership and practical support to help key partners deliver greater value to their respective customers – whether members of trade associations accessing best practice knowledge and innovation, or construction clients procuring world class buildings. Strategic leadership is given by upwardly informing various regional strategies/policies and better co-ordination of business improvement efforts down the supply chain to drive performance gains. Practical support in the last 12 months has included the growth and development of the region's six Constructing Excellence Clubs for over 500 businesses, the design and delivery

of Client Leadership intensive workshops, the production of an 'introductory guide to best practice' to cut through the jargon, development of local partnerships with Business Link, and the development and piloting of a domestic sector customer feedback system. In addition, a specific programme to drive productivity improvements has begun to raise business awareness and use of practical technologies and bench-marking systems – to deliver 10% gains year-on-year.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** SEEDA's approach to establish and invest in a not-for-profit company led by businesses, rather than policy makers and agencies, has reinvigorated drive for accelerated change. Current priorities, determined by businesses, are Planning Process, Client Leadership, Business Performance and People Performance.

SEEDA - T: 01483 484200 E: [seeda@seeda.co.uk](mailto:seeda@seeda.co.uk) W: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

# DESIGN

*Richard Simmons, CEO, Commission of Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)*

Design excellence is an essential element of a built environment that meets all our current and future needs. It is not a precursor to construction or independent of facility operation, but part of a continuous integrated development cycle. RDAs are already among the leaders in inspiring people to demand more from their buildings and spaces, and their own construction programmes, and strategic influencing activities demonstrate this.



## EEDA – Design Action Manager



To raise the quality of design, the first regional pilot between the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and an RDA took the form of a joint initiative with EEDA.

A Regional Design Action Manager post was established to champion design quality in development and regeneration in the region. A Design Task Group was established almost immediately to raise the quality of development, particularly housing, in the growth areas. Two events have been held, the first focusing on masterplanning for Urban Development Companies (UDCs), Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) and other delivery vehicles, and the second using the CABE Housing audit as a tool for evaluating the success of housing schemes.

The initiative has also involved commissioning exemplar approaches to the development of masterplans and

local strategies, piloting an innovative Design Clinic and running design events in the Thames Gateway and M11 corridor to raise the profile of design and quality in the growth agenda. A Design and Historic Environment Champions network was established in January 2005, while other planned initiatives include a Design Review Panel and the development of Design Quality Measures as a benchmark for development projects.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The Design Quality Measures will be used as a tool to select best practice case studies for dissemination in the region, to appraise projects applying for public sector funding as a monitoring tool and to evaluate development projects following completion. They will also provide a benchmark for the work of the Design Review Panel.

## SEEDA – South East Design Champions Club

In June 2003, SEEDA asked all 74 local authorities in the South East to join with them in creating the South East Design Champions Club. The Club:

- provides an opportunity for Design Champions to network;
- re-enforces the role of design in delivering the urban renaissance;
- offers practical guidance on how the role of Champion can be approached;
- present Champions with real case studies from which they can start to explore the design issues that will challenge their organisations; and
- enables Design Champions to influence design policy across the region.

Each authority was asked to nominate a senior Councillor and Officer as its Design Champions. The majority (79%) of authorities are members of the Club. In its first 20 months the Club has explored common issues such as: the Champions' relationship with Planning Committees and in the Masterplanning process; looked at how design has been incorporated into implementation through a study tour to Lille and through study tours hosted by Oxford City, Brighton and Hove City and Tonbridge

and Malling Councils; and more recently Champions from local authorities met with their counterparts in the NHS to look at common agendas and opportunities for closer working. SEEDA is also talking to the Housing Corporation about the scope for the Club to work with Design Champions representing Registered Social Landlords.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The Club provides mutual support and learning opportunities.

The nature of the support is evolving to reflect the views of the Design Champions. The networking is starting to enable best practice to flow more easily and effectively, and in turn this will help enhance skill levels. Based on the South East experience, CABA has encouraged the development of similar Clubs in other regions enabling the South East to exchange ideas and learn from their experiences.

SEEDA - T: 01483 484200 E: [seeda@seeda.co.uk](mailto:seeda@seeda.co.uk) W: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

## SEEDA - South East Regional Design Panel



The South East Regional Design Panel was established in 2002, its remit is to champion design excellence and sustainability. The Panel provides a free design review service to a wide range of public and private organisations, and consists of 33 appointed members selected for their knowledge and experience of design

related issues and drawn from different professional disciplines. The Panel tries to work at the early stages of a project before ideas and financial commitments are fixed. Projects are submitted to the Panel on a voluntary basis. There is a recognised skills deficit in both the public and the private sector, so in the South East, where substantial growth is being proposed, the Regional Design Panel plays an important role in supporting the delivery of sustainable, high quality and well planned developments throughout the region.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The South East Regional Design Panel was the first regional design Panel and

is being seen as a potential model for other regions. From the schemes that the Panel has seen in the last two years, the following good practice messages have emerged:

- many projects have benefited from being part of a wider masterplan or equivalent development framework;
- best practice tends to result from early consultation with the planning authority and the input of the Design Panel can be most effective when consulted early in the design process;
- successful projects generally have a realistically costed and timetabled brief from the commissioner to the designer, equally important is the quality of site briefs from planning departments that set a clear goal of the type of development they wish to see; and
- the better schemes that the panel have seen have been informed by a careful analysis of the existing context and have used the design statement to show the integrity of their work.

SEEDA - T: 01483 484200 E: [seeda@seeda.co.uk](mailto:seeda@seeda.co.uk) W: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)

# ENVIRONMENT

## *Ian Coull, Chairman, Sustainability Forum*

We are all increasingly recognising the interdependence of our environment and our businesses. We know that we must demand, now more than ever before, the highest standards to reduce our collective demands on the planet's limited resources and 'carrying capacity'. RDAs are key to driving strategic awareness and adoption of new thinking and practices that deliver a wholly sustainable world class built environment for this, and future, generations.



## **ONE – Green Office/Conference Centre**

The Rivergreen Centre, a 48,000 sq ft business and conference venue, built on a sloping hillside overlooking Durham Cathedral, is one of the most environmentally friendly and ambitious office and conference developments ever seen in the North of England. The roof will be covered with a living blanket of sedum to reduce the amount of rainwater run-off and ensure that the building blends in with the landscape. Timber will be locally sourced and used widely in the construction, including the external walls which will also have a lime harl finish. Rainwater will be collected and used for most non-drinking purposes in the building while all toilet waste will be collected and composted. Central heating

will be provided by a ground water heat pump linked to boreholes sunk deep below the building. A 6m high earth rammed wall will run the full length of the main 70m long internal circulation route – a dramatic central “street” which will be sunlit from above.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The Rivergreen Centre will be a building of minimal impact in every respect in the use of raw materials, in sourcing those materials close to home to minimise transportation, and in making the building as self-sustaining as possible in terms of insulation and energy efficiency and recycling.



ONE - T: 0191 229 6200 E: [enquiries@onenortheast.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@onenortheast.co.uk) W: [www.onenortheast.co.uk](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk)

## emda – Green Beginnings

This £1.5 million pilot project at Sherwood Energy Village in Ollerton, Nottinghamshire, looked at developing a sustainable prototype for the humble “tin” shed (speculative industrial unit), by demonstrating the potential for applying a range of sustainable principles to the building design. The project saw effective natural ventilation for year-round comfort, a simple highly efficient heating system and inspiring a comfortable internal environment to maximise productivity. There is high quality, low-maintenance landscaping, native species, and local sourcing providing an excellent appearance for customer confidence. Porous block paving was used as part of a sustainable drainage system, while soil amelioration reduced requirements for importation/off-site disposal.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The overall performance of the building type is therefore improved as it is driven by very low cost, maximum speed in construction and is environmentally sustainable.

emda - T: 0115 988 8300 E: [info@emd.org.uk](mailto:info@emd.org.uk) W: [www.emda.org.uk](http://www.emda.org.uk)

## LDA – Design for Biodiversity



In 2004 the LDA launched ‘Design for Biodiversity’ guidance in conjunction with English Nature, GLA and London Biodiversity Partnership. The publication provides practical approaches to building biodiversity into development and showcases a number of built

developments where biodiversity has been incorporated. Leading by example, LDA also seeks to incorporate Design for Biodiversity principles into its developments and is working with the newly appointed Design for Biodiversity project manager to facilitate this.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The publication also has an introductory function outlining the biodiversity agenda in the UK, as part of LDA’s continuing commitment to achieving sustainable development within London. Developers seeking more information on designing for biodiversity, and case studies of on the ground examples, can visit the websites provided. Design for Biodiversity also presents a valuable tool and resource for local

authorities in the preparation of strategic planning and design policy and when undertaking development control negotiations.

LDA - T: 020 7680 2000 E: [info@lda.gov.uk](mailto:info@lda.gov.uk) W: [www.lda.gov.uk](http://www.lda.gov.uk)

## YORKSHIRE FORWARD – Green ‘Incubator Hub’ Building

Springboard, at the heart of Stokesley Industrial Park, is a 20-suite, two-storey building which will support new and young businesses in their first three years of operation. The first project of its kind in a rural area, the £2.4 million managed workspace development was designed to help fledgling businesses get off the ground. The development is particularly striking given its large roof ‘wing’ which, with its electronically-operated ventilators, does the job of traditional air conditioning. An open atrium running between the two floors also contributes to natural ventilation and solar-shading louvers, made from recycled metal, on the outside of the building can rotate to shade the building or draw in the sun’s warmth. Springboard, which was funded by the district council, Yorkshire Forward, the European Regional Development Fund, and the Learning and Skills Council, opened to businesses in December 2004.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The technology incorporated in the building means heating bills will be minimised. There is also a rainwater recycling system with further

recycling encouraged in the building with waste paper collections. The building also contains sustainable and energy efficient features, including water filtration and solar heating systems.

Yorkshire Forward - T: 0113 3949600 E: [janice.crich@yorkshire-forward.com](mailto:janice.crich@yorkshire-forward.com) W: [www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)

## ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS – Cow Bricks (turning waste into resource)

Cow bones are being turned into bricks in a pioneering re-cycling project involving two companies in the West Midlands. The concept, known as industrial symbiosis, aims to drastically reduce the amount of material being dumped in Britain’s ever-dwindling landfill sites. More than 10 million tonnes of waste is disposed of at tips in the West Midlands every year. The ‘cattle-into-bricks deal’ evolved after WRE Services, of Hagley, Worcestershire, and Akristos, of Chesterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, were brought together during a workshop organised by the National Industrial Symbiosis Programme (NISP) in the West Midlands. NISP West Midlands was launched with a £660,000 investment from Advantage West Midlands and will run in the region for the next three years. WRE Services processes about 10,000 tonnes of cattle a year which produces about 1,000 tonnes of bone ash, previously sent to costly landfill. Now Akristos uses this



bone ash to produce eco-friendly building bricks, which have won the company eight ‘green’ awards in the 18 months since its formation. A full range of eco-bricks – containing up to 50% of recycled materials – will be launched by the firm.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** The industrial symbiosis approach illustrates that there is almost no limits to waste that can be re-used and re-made into new and functional products if you are sufficiently flexible to identify the potential opportunities and capitalise on them. The signs suggest that the programme is set to deliver further land, energy and waste initiatives, with the added benefit of new businesses, new jobs and retention of existing jobs. This ground-breaking initiative is a genuine win-win for the region - improving environmental performance, business efficiency and competitiveness.

ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS - T: 0121 380 3500 E: [info@advantagewm.co.uk](mailto:info@advantagewm.co.uk) W: [www.advantagewm.co.uk](http://www.advantagewm.co.uk)

# SKILLS

*Peter Lobban, Chief Executive, CITB-ConstructionSkills*

Creating a sustainable built environment requires a sustainable construction industry. Training and developing skills need to be treated as long-term investments in our future and not short-term costs to be cut. RDAs can play an important part across the country in being both a catalyst for sector skills collaboration and an enabler of training best practice through their own construction contracts.



## NWDA – Constructing Excellence



In May 2003, the NWDA commissioned the Centre for Construction Innovation to deliver a two-year package of training and mentoring based on the Rethinking Construction and Better Public Buildings principles.

The project, Constructing Excellence, aims to deliver an extensive package of training and create a better understanding and awareness of the principles embodied in construction. However the project is not purely about training, these issues also have an impact on the way that the NWDA works and the ways in which partners engage with the Agency.

These extensive regional training workshops derive from the NWDA's intention to lead the region in improving the quality and efficiency of the construction industry. Eleven specific training modules form the core of the training, which is delivered to NWDA staff, strategic partners, professional bodies, developers, landlords and contractors in the region.

The subjects cover various aspects of the Constructing Excellence Agenda, including: Respect for People, Better Public Buildings, Sustainability, Lean Construction, Supply Chain Management, Procurement, Contractual Arrangements and Integrating Teams.

The project also established a key performance indicator system for Agency projects and assisted in updating the approved suppliers' selection criteria.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** To date, four external partner awareness raising events (AREs) and 10 out of the 11 training sessions have taken place. The training sessions and AREs have touched over 520 companies and more than 1200 individuals, including local authorities, development organisations, contractors, consultants and supply chain bodies. Events have been well attended and feedback has been very positive.

## LDA – BLCF (workforce diversity)

Building London Creating Futures (BLCF) is a construction sector initiative aimed at supporting beneficiaries facing discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, age, and disability or employment status in London. BLCF has brought together a broad range of partners to develop a co-ordinated approach to employment and training opportunities arising from new development in central London for residents. This aim has been achieved through partnership with a number of key construction employers, including Bovis Lend Lease, Mace, Metropolitan Housing Trust, Mulalley, Rail Link Engineering and St. George, over the last two years. The major delivery activity of BLCF is the Work Place Coordinators (WPCs). Based at major construction sites across London and employed by developers, contractors and Registered Social Landlords, WPCs work with employers to match local people to jobs and support ongoing workforce development, providing funding for pre-employment and on-the-job training courses for central London residents.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** As a result, over 100 residents have started sustainable careers in the construction industry. Important as the quantifiable targets achieved by BLCF are, the programme has created a

sustainable working partnership between employers, local authorities, regeneration agencies and training providers.

LDA - T: 020 7680 2000 E: [info@lda.gov.uk](mailto:info@lda.gov.uk) W: [www.lda.gov.uk](http://www.lda.gov.uk)

## SOUTH WEST RDA – Constructive Series

The South West RDA has engaged in a region-wide initiative, called the Constructive Series, to tackle the construction skills shortage. The project brings together LSCs, JobCentre Plus and local colleges in each of the sub-regions, who work to provide local people with job opportunities and training in the construction industry. It also focuses on attracting more women and people from ethnic minorities into the profession. Few initiatives of this kind in the UK can match it for the diversity of its partnerships and its all-encompassing approach. Complementing this is the South West RDA's Contractors Framework Agreement, a charter drawn up between the Agency and two of the region's main construction companies, Kier Western and Midas.



**POINTS OF INTEREST:** This four year relationship means contractors have more scope to think big across Devon and Cornwall, and the long-term nature of the project will give them the confidence to

take on new staff and train them, resulting in a fully qualified workforce. It's also an opportunity to develop sustainability, which is one of the key targets for RDA construction projects.

South West RDA - T: 01392 214747 E: [enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@southwestrda.org.uk) W: [www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk)

## ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS – Super-College



A new £18 million super-college – the Centre for the Built Environment - is playing a key role in tackling a desperate shortage of skilled workers in construction. Led by South Birmingham College and funded by Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council, the European Union and Advantage West Midlands, about 2,500 students a year will be taught to become bricklayers, electricians, plumbers, plasterers, roofers and other skilled workers, up to NVQ3 standard. Professional qualifications will also be available in such disciplines as site management and quantity surveying, up to degree level. Bringing together on one site, courses offered by three existing colleges, the Centre will tackle the skills shortages while enabling local people to take advantage

of the opportunities created by massive building projects.

This huge facility will herald a new era for construction education and training.

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** An effective partnership between employers, teaching staff and other stakeholders is being built which will help to produce a world class labour force for the construction industry. The new centre, which will bring state-of-the-art training facilities to the region, will offer all construction trade and construction management programmes to provide many more training opportunities for local people than are available at present. It will also be of enormous benefit to the surrounding area in terms of job creation and the regeneration of East Birmingham and Solihull which is vitally needed. This project is a great example of linking need with opportunity, a key component of the Regional Economic Strategy delivered by Advantage West Midlands.

ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS - T: 0121 380 3500 E: [info@advantagewm.co.uk](mailto:info@advantagewm.co.uk) W: [www.advantagewm.co.uk](http://www.advantagewm.co.uk)

## Yorkshire Forward – HMP Lindholme

HMP Lindholme in South Yorkshire is the first in the prison service with an on-site construction industry training centre. Yorkshire Forward has worked with the Home Office to convert a disused aircraft hangar in the grounds of HMP Lindholme into a purpose built construction industry training facility which opened in October 2004.

The construction skills centre will provide bespoke learning and skills programmes in five disciplines: bricklaying, painting and decorating, plastering, plumbing and joinery.

Trainees will work towards the Construction Industry Training Board and City and Guilds joint awarding body Intermediary Construction Award.

The £2.3 million refurbishment includes five specifically designed workshops and an on-site classroom. The project is unique because there is space to build three houses,

offering a ‘real’ construction site working environment which is run by staff employed from industry.

On release, the Lindholme prisoners will receive hands-on support and advice on employment and progressing their learning. Research suggests that employment reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half, but 90% of prisoners faced unemployment, and 60% of those re-convicted are unemployed.

**POINTS OF INTEREST.** This project ticks a lot of boxes. There is a severe shortage of skilled workers in the construction industry and Lindholme has prisoners who are often socially excluded and could be at risk of re-offending without the prospect of employment.

It’s early days, but we are looking to bridge a skills gap by using an untapped labour market to reduce crime by bringing people back into the community.



Yorkshire Forward – T: 0113 3949600 E: [janice.crich@yorkshire-forward.com](mailto:janice.crich@yorkshire-forward.com) W: [www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)



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SEEDA Headquarters  
Cross Lanes, Guildford, Surrey GU1 1YA  
T: 01483 484200  
W: [www.seeda.co.uk](http://www.seeda.co.uk)  
E: [seeda@seeda.co.uk](mailto:seeda@seeda.co.uk)

