

The Fishing Village on St Mary's Island, Chatham Maritime, SEEDA's flagship regeneration project, is one of only a handful of schemes in the UK comprising of over 100 houses with BREEAM EcoHomes rating.



Introduction

Economic development in the South East has to be sustainable – it should generate not only economic wealth but should also contribute to social well-being and environmental quality. It has to incorporate a longer-term view, and not sacrifice the region's assets – particularly its natural assets – for the sake of short-term gains.

SEEDA is committed to this approach and, from the outset, has taken very seriously its statutory responsibility 'to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development in the UK'.

SEEDA has also recognised that Sustainable Development requires us to challenge some of our long-held assumptions. For example, how we use and manage natural resources and how we relate to the environment and its ability to cope with the wastes and pollution we generate.

Sustainable Development was at the heart of the original Regional Economic Strategy (RES), prepared by SEEDA on behalf of the region and this has been developed yet further for the 2002 revision. SEEDA is also integrating the principles of Sustainable Development across the full range of its own activities.

SEEDA Chairman, Allan Willett CMG (right), with the winner of SEEDA's Sustainable Business Award 2001, Mark Fairbrass, Chairman of The Beacon Press (second right). TV personality Juliet Morris (left) hosted the evening.



Oxford Science Park - an example of best practice integrating biodiversity into new developments - at the heart of SEEDA's Building for Nature project.



Some of SEEDA's specific initiatives to support Sustainable Development are:

◆ **SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards**

SEEDA recognises the central role that the region's businesses have to play in Sustainable Development. The annual SEEDA Sustainable Business Awards, initiated in 2001, aim to recognise and celebrate those companies who are mainstreaming Sustainable Development in both their operations and planning. The Awards are divided into two company size categories, judged against a range of criteria, including environmental management, energy efficiency, waste minimisation, innovation and corporate social responsibility.

◆ **Building for Nature**

SEEDA is leading the Building for Nature Project, which aims to incorporate biodiversity into development proposals. With a Steering Group drawn from the private, public and voluntary sectors, the Project has a full-time Project Officer. In its first full year of operation, Building for Nature has sought to raise awareness and

understanding of the importance and benefits of biodiversity in building developments, and has provided direct advice to many individual schemes. Plans include publishing case studies of new and successful techniques, establishing standards and guidance for the development and construction sectors in the region, and setting up an award scheme to celebrate and promote best practice.

◆ **South East Sustainable Business Partnership**

SEEDA has had a key role in forming the South East Sustainable Business Partnership, which it now chairs. The Partnership brings together the region's six sub-regional Sustainable Business Partnerships (SBPs) along with other key regional organisations. SEEDA views these SBPs as a key conduit through which to engage the region's businesses in improving their sustainability performance. The Partnership's work programme includes 'e-generation', a web-based Centre of Excellence for the dissemination of sustainability best practice for business.

The inaugural meeting of the South East Sustainable Business Partnership (SESBP), at Guildford Borough Council. The SESBP is chaired by SEEDA Board Member, Kit Oliver OBE DL (right front).



Speakers at a conference on Renewable Energy, co-funded by SEEDA, experienced first hand a sustainable community energy system in Woking.



◆ Renewable Energy

SEEDA has played an active role in the South East Renewable Energy Partnership, which seeks to identify and promote opportunities for renewable energy in the region. The partnership has secured funding from the DTI to support projects to promote the take-up of renewable energy. SEEDA is engaged in a number of renewable energy initiatives, including:

- Working with the Regional Assembly to develop the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Strategy for the region;
- Assisting with market development for energy crops;
- Encouraging the region's businesses to adopt low carbon technologies (with support from the Carbon Trust);
- Developing local models to assist the expansion of renewable energy capacity in the region;

- Promoting the development of the renewable energy technology sector in the region through the Renewable Energy Task Group (part of SEEDA's Environmental Technology Sector Group).

◆ South East Climate Change Partnership

SEEDA has played a leading role in the South East Climate Change Partnership, which brings together key organisations to address the impacts of climate change in the region and to identify and promote ways in which the region can adapt.

◆ South East Water Forum

In response to the need for better understanding and management of water resources in the region, SEEDA has worked in partnership with the Environment Agency to establish a Water Resources Forum for the South East. Launched in September 2001, the Forum brings together water companies, developers, regulators, planning officers, conservation policy makers, local authorities, environmental management

One of SEEDA's sustainable development programmes - the wood pellet renewable energy boiler supplies the Betteshanger Colliery administration building with heat and hot water.



Jonathon Porritt CBE, Chair of the Sustainable Development Commission, speaking at the SEEDA Sustainable Development Conference, Gatwick.



groups, and the business sector more widely. The Forum held its first Annual Conference in May 2002 and the Executive is establishing an action programme to address the regional priorities identified by the Forum.

◆ Environmental Technology Sector Group

SEEDA has launched an Environmental Technology Sector Group, which brings together key companies in the sector, to identify and respond to opportunities and challenges they face in developing the sector and improving its international competitiveness.

◆ Sustainable Construction

SEEDA's own site development briefs identify and promote opportunities for sustainable development, including the highest standards of sustainable construction. SEEDA has agreed that its own developments will meet BREEAM EcoHomes rating standards, and that in supporting any housing schemes it will insist on the homes meeting the BREEAM EcoHomes standard. SEEDA has supported partners at events across the region in promoting best

practice, and is working with industry bodies to establish regional standards and guidance for sustainable construction.

◆ Role of Environmental Activities in the Region's Economy

SEEDA commissioned a study to assess the importance of the environmental economy of the region, including environmental industries, the natural and historic environment, farming and forestry, tourism, film and media. The study has shown that environmental activities already compare favourably with many established economic sectors in terms of employment and wealth creation, and that there is significant scope for further development. It highlights the priorities for SEEDA and its partners in maximising the contribution of environmental activities to the region's economy, and has been used to inform the 2002 review of the RES.

Ancient Woodlands in the Chilterns – More of the South East is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty than in any other region of the UK. (Photograph courtesy of Buckinghamshire County Council).



◆ South East River Catchment Research Study

SEEDA is working with Royal Holloway Institute for Environmental Research and other partners to identify the scope for managing river catchments to generate economic, social and environmental benefits for the region. A scoping study is currently being carried out on three river catchments in the South East, and the results of the study will be used to set up projects and programmes that promote and implement sustainable management practices.

◆ South East Mass Balance Study – ‘Taking Stock’

SEEDA has contributed funding for ‘Taking Stock,’ a two year Mass Balance Study of the South East region. Reporting in 2003, the study will identify resource and material flows through the region and highlight opportunities for greater resource efficiency. It will also produce an ‘ecological footprint’ of the South East as the basis for a sustainability assesment.

◆ Remanufacturing Project

SEEDA is supporting a study of ‘remanufacturing’ (essentially, refurbishing outdated plant and equipment, usually to a higher specification than the original) which will assess its current extent in the UK and identify opportunities for its development, with a specific focus on the South East region.

◆ Wales and Regional Economies Resource Productivity Project

SEEDA is supporting this national project, coordinated by the Environment Agency, which will develop a policy modelling tool to enable each region to assess the environmental and sustainability implications of different economic development scenarios.

One of SEEDA's sustainable development projects, the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve near Canterbury, is a Special Protection Area, covering 241 hectares of wetland characterised by extensive reedbeds, lakes, the associated bird populations and the wild Connec ponies.

SEEDA's Building for Nature Project Manager, Martin Bolton, at the site of the restoration of the River Dour to its former course at Buckland Paper Mill, Dover, one of SEEDA's Building for Nature projects.



Priorities for the Future

SEEDA will attach particular priority to:

- Achieving and promoting high standards of sustainable construction across the region;
- Demonstrating to businesses that best practice driven by sustainable development brings real commercial benefits;
- Raising levels of re-use and recycling through waste market development, especially identifying new business opportunities.

SEEDA views Sustainable Development as a major opportunity. Our aim is to engage with all our partners and make use of their considerable expertise so that we can jointly understand how we can achieve sustainable economic growth which enhances the quality of life for people who live and work in the region.

The region's Sustainable Development Framework, prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly, working closely with SEEDA and other regional partners, will continue to provide the context within which we pursue this aim. In addition we will continue to develop links with other Regional Development Agencies, in this country and abroad, recognising that sustainable development needs close co-operation across boundaries.



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