

### **SEEDA Social Dialogue Forum 17 October 2005**

1. The membership of the Social Dialogue Forum (SDF) includes representatives from employer and employee organisations. Its activities cover a range of work-based issues, built around delivering a high value added economy through partnership in the workplace.
2. Members debated the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) review, highlighting the need to encourage flexible job design through work organisation and promote a diverse workforce. A key measure of success would be an increase in the percentage of economically active working-age residents from 82% to 85% by 2016. This approach would suggest a key role for good industrial relations practice and skills development. The need to align the RES with the South East Plan and other regional strategies was reiterated.
3. The other substantive agenda item related to the implications of the London Olympics for the region. A presentation from Sports England identified the need to reap the wider benefits from the Olympics. Indeed the inclusion of broader economic and social issues was at the heart of the successful bid. The Olympics provides an unprecedented opportunity to showcase London but also the rest of the UK. Business in the South East will play a central role in the construction of facilities and the provision of other services. A wide range of procurement opportunities will be made available once the enabling Bill has been passed in Parliament (expected early 2006). A key issue raised by the Committee was the need to improve language skills across the region.
4. Finally, the SDF received an update on the workplace-pooling pilot. This project encourages companies to pool their resources and skills to manage peaks and troughs in their order books. The Employment Relations Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe, visited the project in September and visited two firms benefiting through collaboration on major contracts. The initiative has already generated interest in other regions.

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