

Paper 07/12/06 – Item 14**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY****BOARD MEETING 7 DECEMBER 2006****ITEM 14****AGENCY REPORT****Recommendation**

The Board is invited to **NOTE** the agency activity report for November, which represents a cross section of reports from within SEEDA organised according to the themes of SEEDA's Corporate Plan.

A. STRATEGIC INFLUENCING**Thames Gateway Economic Strategy**

1. The Thames Gateway Economic Statement was launched by the three Greater South East RDAs at the Thames Gateway Forum on 22nd-23rd November alongside the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Thames Gateway Interim Plan (formerly known as the Thames Gateway Strategic Framework) Policy Statement and Spatial Prospectus. The RDAs Economic Statement formed the basis of chapter 3 in the Interim Plan.
2. Over the next six months implementation plans will be developed by both DCLG and the RDAs to identify the specific actions required to deliver regeneration in the Thames Gateway and the resource implications which will feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The new tri-RDA Thames Gateway Programme Director, Margaret Caust, is now in post and will lead on taking forward the implementation plan for the RDAs Economic Statement.

City Development Companies

3. SEEDA has responded to the DCLG draft guidance on proposed new City Development Companies. A range of issues and opportunities relevant to the South East region were fed back (via OneNorthEast) to help shape this guidance and the RDA's role at an early stage

Visit to Kent by Margaret Hodge, Minister for Trade and Industry

4. The Minister visited East and North Kent on 8th November. The purpose of the visit was to highlight the transformational impact facing East Kent arising from the potential investment of wind farm technologies at Ramsgate Harbour. She also had an aerial tour taking her from East Kent to North Kent to highlight the scale of challenge and opportunity in delivering the full economic potential of North Kent Thames Gateway, it was a very successful day which inspired the Minister and brought the Regional Economic Strategy to life.

5. Press coverage of the visit was very positive with articles in the Kent on Sunday and Isle of Thanet Gazette.

Kent & Medway Local Skills Productivity Alliance (LSPA)

6. SEEDA has been reviewing the Kent & Medway LSPA over the last few months. New arrangements have now been made with the LSC handing over the executive function of the LSPA to the Kent Economic Board's Skills and Economy Task Group. SEEDA's Kent Area Team are represented on the LSPA and are taking an active role in appointing an LSPA manager and in helping to ensure that a delivery plan is developed by April.

Employer needs and the FE Sector's response

7. SEEDA was involved in an event at Guildford College on 30th October involving a number of Russian College principals who were interested to find out how colleges and the FE Sector is addressing the needs of businesses in the South East.
8. A SEEDA presentation provided the regional overview, including the role of SEEDA in supporting and promoting economic development in the region. The presentation also reflected on how the new RES is providing (through transformational and individual RES actions) further impetus for partners to work on transforming provision to meet the needs of businesses in the region. In particular, building on the work of the Action for Business College programme in the future to make FE colleges more responsive to the needs of businesses, with the significance of Train to Gain also highlighted.
9. The presentation also touched on sub-regional variations e.g. the Coastal Strip as an area of untapped potential and how skills can release this potential. The key message from the presentation was that whether working through LSPAs, Sector Skills Councils, the LSC and other key partners, there is a clear need to ensure that the supply of skills is aligned to the needs of businesses and employers in the region.
10. The delegation expressed a keen interest to find out how employers are being engaged by providers and other partners and the lessons and experiences from colleges in the region. Other presentations were given by the LSC and Business Link.

Oxford Learning Communities update

11. Learning Communities aims to increase partnership working and improve the way organisations operate and deliver on disadvantaged estates. The project sets out to change attitudes to learning with those traditionally antipathetic, increase employability and make connections with local employers.
12. The project has been running for 11 months and significant progress has been made. Each estate is responding to local need by navigating and supporting learners in accessing Skills for Life programmes. In particular, literacy and numeracy classes are rapidly being filled and the project is supporting learners with childcare arrangements and costs. Thus, the project is more about using provision that is already out there, and therefore, there is a strong focus on Strategic Added Value.
13. One of the key ingredients to the longer term success of this project is to bring about sustainability and embedding within the communities by setting up Learning Champions from each estate, who have just attended a cross-estate level short two-day customised introductory course.
14. As an illustration of the project's success to date, a local volunteer working in a Breastfeeding café has been supported by the project to pursue her goal towards becoming a breastfeeding counsellor through embarking on a Level 2 health

qualification and through additional training identified through links with the Primary Care Trust.

South East Skill for Life Strategy Group

15. At the end of October the SE Skills for Life Strategy Group re-formed after a year hiatus. This group is made up of representatives of SEEDA, LSC, JC+, UFI, GOSE and is chaired by John Parsonage, SEEDA's Executive Director, Learning and Skills.
16. This group has been endorsed by the Regional Skills Productivity Alliance to act as a task group of experts to come together to revisit the progress and issues currently facing Skills for Life in the region and SEEDA, with the help of the Essential Skills Unit, are getting the views of providers and interested parties surrounding Skills for Life.

Skills for Life in Local Authorities

17. SEEDA, in partnership with the Local Government Improvement & Development Agency is working on a project designed to increase the basic skills of the local government workforce in the South East. The SEEDA Skills Improvement Fund for Local Government will help finance projects in local authorities that seek to address skills needs and aim to create a sustainable learning culture within the authority.
18. Research has indicated that nationally 476,000 local government employees may have problems with literacy and 498,000 local government employees are held back by difficulties with numeracy. Within the South East just under 300,000 people are employed in local authorities
19. Addressing these areas can reap massive organisational benefits such as improved corporate services, improved staff retention and absenteeism, confident and adaptable employees, easier introduction of new systems and technology and employees feeling valued. Skills for Life support can be a first and crucial step for employees to engage in workforce development, an effective way to help achieve targets, the provision of best value services and ultimately contribute to the success of local authorities and the communities they serve.
20. The regional agencies recognise that an effective, highly skilled local government sector is critical to the economic and social viability of the South East Region and have formed a partnership to help authorities build the skills base they need. Successful authorities will be announced in January 2007.

Learning at Work Day fund

21. For Learning at Work Day during Adult Learners' Week 2006, SEEDA and the Union learn team in the Southern and Eastern region worked in partnership to encourage additional workplace activity by unions. SEEDA provided funding which supported 48 union projects to run activities through which 3,500 people were engaged.
22. Unions developed a wide range of learning programmes including Skills for Life and IT and fun based first steps learning activities including massage therapy sessions, quizzes and sports. A range of additional resources were levered in from employers, unions and providers. The fact that the projects had secured external funding from SEEDA (usually £400.00 per project) helped generate this leverage
23. The union-led activities generated a wide range of outcomes including sign up for courses (172 reported to date) learning surveys (over 450), the recruitment of new Union Learning Reps and the engagement of employers in ongoing dialogue on workplace learning

24. It is proposed to repeat this fund in 2007 to embed Learning at Work Day in workplaces across the region

Redundancy Support Service

25. The Redundancy Support Service was created back in 2003 in the South East in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. It offers advice and guidance to SMEs experiencing redundancy or who are having to make employees redundant. This project continues to be successful, exceeding its targets of the number of people assisted to get a job - 3,378 people were helped over first six months of 2006/07. Two new brokers were taken on at the beginning of the year to support the volume of work in Hampshire and Kent. The Kent broker, Graeme Carey, was notified on 18th October that 350 redundancies will take place at M-real in Sittingbourne in April 2007. He is working closely with Derek Wyatt MP, Ian Muatt from SEEDA, the union and M-real's management, and has received excellent feedback regarding the support package he has put together.

Business Resource Efficiency and Waste (BREW)

Programme Manager

26. The BREW Programme Manager has been appointed and started work on 6th November.

Pilot Projects

27. A 15 month SME recycling project has been developed and is currently being processed. The contracts will be awarded by 2nd February 2007.
28. In September 2006, SEEDA went out to tender for projects focussing on water efficiency and sustainable procurement. The tenders received have been evaluated and four projects have been awarded grants in the area of water efficiency; two covering the Hotel and Tourism sectors, one in the rural sector and one in the horticultural sector. On sustainable procurement, two grants have been awarded to projects focussing on environmental improvements in supply chain management.

SEEDA Energy Management Action Plan

29. The Energy Management Action Plan forms part of the Energy Management Policy which will be submitted to SEEDA's Executive Board for consideration in December. SEEDA commissioned an energy efficiency site survey in mid 2005, funded by The Carbon Trust. In parallel with this, consultants were appointed to carry out an occupancy satisfaction survey. These studies are now complete and the most practicable means for SEEDA to reduce its carbon footprint at the Guildford HQ site have been identified. The anticipated actions from the Policy are:

- Use of monitoring of fossil fuel energy consumption
- Feasibility and, if appropriate, installation of a natural ventilation system for occupancy comfort and control
- Improved reactive lighting
- Building Management System (BMS) integration for increased management and performance monitoring
- Further initiatives for improved water and waste management within the Agency
- Other related initiatives e.g. consideration for registration to the Energy Efficiency Award Scheme (Energy Institute)

Social Enterprise

30. SEEDA attended the launch of the National Social Enterprise Strategy on 16th November at 11 Downing Street. The launch saw the publication of the SEEDA led RDA action plan for social enterprise development for all 9 English regions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer also announced that SEEDAs lobbying of the Cabinet Office for more central support for Business Support for Social Enterprise on behalf of the wider RDA network had been successful. The Chancellor committed a further £1.8 million to RDAs in 2008/09 to provide business support to social enterprise through Business Link. SEEDA will now be leading the development of a detailed national action plan for all RDAs which will provide a monitoring framework for the Office of the Third sector to measure progress against the national strategic objectives.

Economic Partnership's

31. The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership held its Annual Dinner on 9th November at Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The event was well attended and attracted a good breadth of senior politicians, government officials and business people from the county. Sir William Stubbs, Chairman of Oxford Radcliff NHS Hospitals Trust was the keynote speaker for the evening.
32. The process of nominating and appointing a new Chair for the Partnership is progressing well, with an expected outcome by the end of the year.
33. This East Sussex Economic Partnership Annual Conference was held on 22nd November and attended by 100 delegates including many representatives from the private sector. The Partnership's achievements were augmented by two excellent presentations from small technology business in receipt of AIF funding that had helped them through some barriers to growth. The meeting also came up with a range of ideas that will be used in the refresh of East Sussex Economic Development Strategy. An excellent event closed with refreshments from a range of local producers.

LEGI (Local Enterprise Growth Initiative)

34. Portsmouth's and Southampton's joint-LEGI Bid narrowly missed selection for the next National Panel round. However, SEEDA are keen to ensure that the valuable work achieved by the two Cities is not wasted. Indeed, enterprise will be a key ingredient in developing the Urban South Hampshire economy, particularly in bringing the disadvantaged communities of the Cities up to national, and then, regional economic growth rates. SEEDA is actively working with partners to take forward some of the opportunities for enterprise development identified in the LEGI proposal. SEEDA, as the lead on this area for RDAs, is raising the future allocation of LEGI funds with DCLG as no proposals were approved from London, the South East nor the South West.

Growth Point Funding Announcement

35. Urban South Hampshire was announced in late October as one of the areas to receive Government designation as a New Growth Point. This is part of a national initiative to deliver sustainable economic and housing growth.
36. The allocation of £3.7million, around one third of the South East allocation and one of five high level amounts for this country, indicates that the Government is entering into a long-term partnership with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) recognising its ambitions for growth; this reinforces the RES which promotes Urban South Hampshire as a Diamond for Growth and Investment.

Wind Farm Application – Isle of Wight

37. The Isle of Wight Planning Committee turned down the planning application for a small wind farm in Welland on the basis of environmental factors and harm to wildlife. SEEDA wrote in support of the application. The applicant is likely to appeal.

Portsmouth Naval Base

38. The three Naval Bases, Portsmouth, Devonport and Faslane, have submitted their final business cases identifying where savings of running their respective base can be made. These are being considered by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) as part of their review of Naval Bases. SEEDA are meeting with the MoD in early December along with representatives from SWERDA and Scottish Enterprise, the Government Offices and local councils.
39. Devonport have instigated a campaign – ‘the Case for Devonport – and are claiming that the MoD can achieve greater savings by locating activity currently done at Portsmouth to the Base at Devonport. Portsmouth MPs are concentrating on highlighting the assets of the base.
40. FSL and VT Group are developing a communications package and SEEDA are assisting in the drawing up of this document. The Government are likely to announce their final position in March 2007.

B. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

WORLD CLASS INNOVATION

Enterprise Hubs

41. Six ‘Enterprise Hubs Showcase Event Regional Finalists’ have been selected for the February 2007 event. They will be competing to become the Enterprise Hub company of the Year and the winner will receive a £25,000 cash investment for their idea or business. The shortlisted companies are:
 - Intelligent Retail Ltd – software
 - Synapse – medical device
 - Alinea Interaction – software
 - Path Intelligence – mobile/software
 - BAC2 – environmental technology
 - Sports Analysis Ltd – global positioning
42. The key note speaker at the Enterprise Hubs Showcase Event will be Luke Johnson, Chairman of Channel Four TV and Signature Restaurants. The MC will be Peter Day, Business Presenter on BBC Radio 4.

Farnborough Enterprise Hub

43. A new Director, Malcolm Loucks, has been appointed at the Farnborough Enterprise Hub.

Sector Consortia

South East Health Technologies Alliance (SEHTA)

44. SEHTA have secured £240,000 match funding as part of an LSC Berkshire Equal funded project to look at a new role of carers in the community for older people. Telecare will be an integral part of monitoring chronic conditions outside a hospital and SEHTA are leading the test bedding of three products from member companies. A report on their findings is due in Summer 2007. SEEDA is also contributing £50,000 to help commence development of a Knowledge Network in this priority area of healthcare.

Security Cluster

45. SEEDA has instigated early work to establish the potential benefits of a security cluster to the economy of the South East, with a view to providing support and co-ordination and building strong links with the six Sector Consortia.

SE Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS)

46. As part of the SEEDA contract for the delivery of the SE MAS service, EEF South have started to deliver a new service to SE manufacturing businesses which is proving very successful. The project involves larger, successful manufacturing businesses hosting events for SMEs on their premises. So far, Bacardi martini, Oxoide, Webmart, Oxford Instruments, Alitex, Plastipak and others have acted as hosts for 40 smaller companies interested in hearing about best practice. Insight Onsite, who were involved with the DTI on the Inside UK Enterprise project, is delivering the project.

International

47. SEEDA has secured 6 foreign direct investments creating 66 jobs and safeguarding 460 jobs over the next 3 years. Other activities included:

Launch of SEEDA's Representation in France

48. SEEDA hosted a reception at the British Ambassador's Residence in Paris to launch SEEDA's representation in France. The event presented the benefits and advantages of establishing a business presence in the South East and provided an excellent networking opportunity for companies with operations in the region, potential French inward investors and strategic partners. The SEEDA Chairman and the British Ambassador Sir John Holmes spoke at the event.

India Visit

49. The SEEDA Chairman and Chief Executive visited India to identify opportunities for the South East to increase its interaction with India in the fields of two-way trade, investment, knowledge transfer and academic exchange. India was the third largest investor in the UK last year. During the programme, the delegation visited Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai and met with companies, trade bodies, academic institutions and key contacts to further develop links between the South East and India.

Nordics Visits

50. SEEDA visited Denmark and Sweden to meet with key organisations including the Medican Valley Academy, ICT associations, existing and potential investors, and UKTI. Subsequent to the visit, Prolead, a Swedish business consultancy set up an office in Brighton.

SEEDA Venture Capital Seminar, Boston

51. Following the success of a similar event in June, a further venture capital seminar was held in Boston. The event promoted the strengths of the South East region to 50 high technology companies based in New England who are in receipt of recent funding from

the venture capital community and are in the process of considering international expansion. The seminar was supported by a number of key professional partners including Tenon (accountants), Osborne Clark (lawyers), FirstPartner (marketing consultants) and Silicon Valley Bank, all of whom have extensive experience in assisting companies to establish a business presence in Europe and specifically the UK. Following the first seminar in June, SEEDA are beginning to host visits from companies that attended the event.

Fairfax County

52. SEEDA co-sponsored a transatlantic business networking reception hosted by the British American Business Council and SEEDA global regions partner, Fairfax County Economic Development Agency. The Honourable Timothy M. Kaine, Governor of Virginia was guest of honour at the event.

North American Representation

53. SEEDA has now completed recruiting its expanded North American representation. Four Vice Presidents (VPs) are in place, in Palo Alto, Orange County, Chicago and Boston. In due course, the Chicago VP will move to Washington DC but will retain a mid-west focus.

Sussex Mushrooms

54. SEEDA assisted the Sussex Mushrooms to structure a management buyout after going into administration, safeguarding 301 jobs. The company was introduced to business support services from the Carbon Trust, the Manufacturing Advisory Service and the Innovation Advisory Service.

Emerging Technologies Calls

Sustainable Technologies

55. Three projects have been selected for funding in the areas of biodiesel, biomass pellet production and wind turbines.

Sustainable Technologies

56. Further to SEEDA's sustainable technologies call under the Emerging Technologies programme, SEEDA are discussing with HEFCE the establishment of a £500,000 research fund in the area of water research. The aim of the fund would be to encourage bids from multi-partner consortia of HEIs and businesses.

Intelligent Transport Systems

57. The four short listed consortia have submitted full proposals for funding which are currently under evaluation.
58. SEEDA and the Royal Academy of Engineering are co-sponsoring a regional seminar at the University of Southampton on 27th November. Whilst focusing on transport, the organisers are also hoping to explore the reasons for and barriers against SME / HEI engagement. SEEDA will be presenting an overview of and update from the Intelligent Transport Systems and Services Innovation Platform.

Knowledge Transfer Through People - Mini "KTPs"

59. Following a call for expressions of interest and then full proposals, a consortium of 9 regional HEIs has been selected and has worked up a full proposal for running this scheme across the region. SEEDA are evaluating the proposal with a view to commencing the project early in 2007.
60. The objective of this project is to address the gap in provision between the short term STEP scheme and longer term KTP scheme (run by the DTI) to increase interaction between business and the knowledge base for commercial gain.

Research Excellence Directory

61. SEEDA, as the lead RDA on Innovation is currently holding discussions with other RDAs to offer the South East Research Excellence Directory as a model to map and showcase knowledge base research excellence across the UK. A web enabled database tool providing contact details and information on research excellence at university and Public Sector Research establishments (PSREs), the Directory showcases leading edge research and is intended to stimulate contact between businesses and universities to encourage knowledge transfer, and support inward investment activity. SEEDA have already said they would like to use the template for East England and it is hoped that the Directory will eventually link all regions through a national portal.

Launch of e-Kent

62. E-Kent (The Kent Broadband Partnership) was launched by Derek Wyatt MP, who shared a speaking platform with SEEDA's Peter Sinclair. This is the last of the nine Broadband Partnerships in the region to conduct an official launch. The priority for e-Kent is to secure potential commercial organisations to act as 'hosts' for the deployment of wireless hotspots.

SEEDA and DTI highlight entrepreneurial spirit at the University of Surrey

63. A recent visit to the University of Surrey by Mark Gibson, Director General of Enterprise and Business Group at the Department of Trade and Industry, and Jim Brathwaite, SEEDA's Chairman addressed the issues of how academic innovation can be exploited to generate jobs and wealth how business and academia can work together to deliver the Regional Economic Strategy. The University of Surrey and SEEDA are partners in several joint ventures which support knowledge-based partnerships and regional business start-ups, such as the Surrey Enterprise Hub and the "Great Ideas in Science and Technology" scheme.
64. The guests were also invited to see a practical example of academic-business partnership at the Advanced Technology Institute (ATI). Here scientists from the University are working closely with CEVP Ltd. Together they are developing a "NanoGrowth" Machine, which is the world's first commercial tool for low-temperature growth of nano-materials such as carbon nanotubes, permitting the use of substrate materials which cannot withstand the high growth temperatures normally required.

COMPETITIVE ENTERPRISE

Womens Enterprise

65. SEEDA has commissioned a mapping exercise to determine what organisations and networks offer business support and advice to women in the South East. This work is crucial for establishing a baseline regarding what support is currently available and the geographical spread. The findings will be presented to the South East Women's Enterprise Steering Group on 18th December 2006 and will provide a platform for further 'gap analysis' work in 2007.
66. 'Enterprise Week' included a National Women's Day on 15th November, with various activities focused on encouraging women, particularly young women, into business. SEEDA's Business Link Providers and Enterprise Gateways used the opportunity to host and promote their Capacity Building project workshops and training days that are

currently underway. Further information regarding enterprise week can be found on the website www.enterpriseweek.org

National Women's Enterprise Task Force

67. Margaret Hodge, Minister for industry and the regions, launched the National Women's Enterprise Task Force on 15th November. SEEDA's Chief Executive, Pam Alexander, has been appointed to co-chair the Task Force with Glenda Stone, founder and CEO of the Aurora Women's Network. SEEDA, as lead RDA for women's enterprise will support the Task Force, ensuring that it works closely with the all the RDAs, as well as key partners such as Prowess, HM Treasury, DCLG and DTI.

Sustainable Business

68. The Sustainable Business Steering Group has agreed to support a new project to make sustainability central to the advice and support provided by Business Link to SMEs in the South East so as to increase the number of businesses integrating sustainability practices into their everyday business management. The project will provide a team of six specialist Sustainable Business Advisers located across the South East to act as champions integrating sustainability into the Business Link information, diagnostic and brokerage model.
69. Ceres Power Ltd, winner of SEEDA's Sustainable Business Small Business Category Award 2006, hosted SEEDA's Chief Executive and Chairman at a highly informative seminar to explore their sustainable business practices and the innovative technology they are developing in the renewable energy field. Based in Crawley, West Sussex, Ceres Power develops alternative energy products using its unique fuel cells, which are a clean and highly efficient source of power. They were also awarded a thematic award for Leadership by SEEDA at the Sustainable Business Awards in March 2006 and received a Grant for Research and Development from SEEDA.

Assisted Area Map Review and Selective Finance for Investment Scheme (SFIE)

70. The Government have been reviewing the map of the UK Assisted Areas and the proposed new map for the period 2007-2013 has been sent to the European Commission for approval. When approved by the Commission, the new map will be implemented into UK legislation and take effect from January 2007, replacing the current map which expires on 31st December 2006.
71. There has always been limited Assisted Area (Tier 2) coverage within the South East region. The current map includes all of Thanet and Dover and certain wards in Brighton and Hove, Lewes and Adur. The proposed new map retains all of Thanet District (which includes Kent International Airport) and three wards in Dover, including Sandwich (where Pfizers, previous recipients of significant awards under SFIE, are located).
72. SEEDA has informed DTI that it intends to apply Tier 3 status to all areas previously designated as Assisted Areas. This means that SMEs will still be eligible to apply for the Selective Finance for Investment scheme for grants up to £100,000.
73. Larger businesses (i.e. over 250 employees) will still be able to apply for significant awards if they are investing in a Tier 2 Assisted Area.

Eurostar Services

74. Further to Eurostar's proposed cut-back of international rail services to Ashford, when the Ebbsfleet international station opens in 2007, SEEDA has continued as part of a coalition of partners to lobby government and Eurostar for re-instatement of a minimum one Brussels stopping service to Ashford. The Kent Area Team is also working alongside partners to shape a strategic marketing framework and has been involved in the development and launch of the new 'best paced in Britain' developed to enhance Ashford's profile as an investment location

Regional Resource Centres

75. The Regional Resource Centres (RRC) initiative has been developed by SEEDA and industry partners to address the skills supply issues of priority sectors that require STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) skills.
76. The establishment of a South East network of 5 regional resource centres responding to employers current and future STEM skills needs addresses key regional objectives in the regional science strategy and the Regional Economic Strategy that highlight the need to improve access and supply of STEM skills to support the competitiveness of industry.
77. Each RRC will have a particular sector focus, provide a regional access point for industry to obtain information, and facilitate access to training solutions relating to their specialisms, and will be located near to relevant industry clusters and Higher Education establishments.
78. The centres will work with education and training providers across the South East to offer coherent programmes of industry training modules, specialist short upskilling programmes and accredited courses for employers and individuals. In particular, RRCs will focus on the provision of high level technician/technologist training programmes that provide the skills required to support adoption of new technologies and the utilisation of modern and efficient processes and equipment to drive up productivity. Training courses and skills provision will be at NVQ skills levels 3-5 or equivalent. RRC partners will achieve this collaborative offer for employers by providing access to their pooled resources, expertise and equipment.
79. RRCs will also be addressing a wider range of STEM skills related issues, including wider dissemination and promotion of the potential career opportunities afforded by STEM subject qualifications, co-ordination of schools and industry links, STEM skills at all levels, and continued professional development for the workforce. Key objectives for the success of the RRCs will be:
- to ensure clarity of existing STEM and sector skills initiatives and reduce duplication
 - to provide the skills and knowledge to employers and individuals on optimising scientific and technological developments
 - to provide access to demand-led training and support to employers and individuals
 - to provide a regional network of the 5 RRCs sharing good practice and co-ordinating activities
80. Three RRCs currently exist with a further two anticipated for aerospace/space and marine technologies by December 2006.

Hampshire Teleworking Pilot Reports its Findings

81. The *MATISSE* (Mobile and Teleworking Initiative for a Smarter South East) pilot project, funded by SEEDA's Wired Region and managed by Hampshire County Council, reported its findings at the E-Hampshire Conference in Winchester on 7th November 2006. *MATISSE* is believed to be the first intensive teleworking study tracking employee experiences in large and small organisations in both public and private sectors.
82. Managers reported that 87% of their staff who participated in the pilot increased their productivity. Staff who were "very satisfied" in their job rose from 12% (pre-pilot) to 47% (post pilot). Crucially, projecting the pilot findings across the South East as a whole, 21 million commuting miles per month could be saved if the proportion of staff working from home just 1–2 days per week (currently about 11%) were to double by 2016.

Faringdon Business Centre (Faringdon Gateway)

83. A successful public exhibition was held on 25th October with local businesses and residents invited to inspect SEEDA plans and raise any issues. Very positive comments (e.g. "impressive and promising" and "sounds a good idea and something that's needed in Faringdon for many years") were recorded on the day.

Newhaven Enterprise Gateway

84. Work has started on site for the Newhaven Enterprise Gateway building. It is hoped that work will be complete and the Gateway open in September 2007. A proposal for additional AIF funding of £250,000 is currently being pursued, and would allow a BREEAM "excellent" rating for sustainability to be achieved for the building.

C. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

QUALITY PLACES

Chatham Maritime

Chatham Quays, Two Towers Scheme

85. Ground works have started on the Chatham Quays Two Towers scheme. A Development Agreement was started at the beginning of October with Byrne Estates, the development arm of Ardmore Construction Ltd, to bring forward a high quality, mixed-use scheme on the south side of Basin One, overlooking the marina. It will comprise two striking glass towers of 19 and 16 storeys high and will provide 300 apartments from studios to three bed penthouses. Designed by renowned architects Wilkinson Eyre, it will also contain bars and restaurants. Construction on the two towers is expected to start in January 2007, with the first apartments going on sale in the Spring.

Dickens World

86. The Odeon cinema is now open to the public and the Dickens World visitor attraction is on schedule to open in April 2007.

mhs homes

87. 190 members of staff have now moved into the headquarters building next to Pumphouse number 5.

Site F5, Ramada Encore Hotel

88. Building work has commenced and is expected to be completed by next Summer.

Rochester Riverside

Site Works

89. The contractor continues to make good progress on the river wall, land raising and contamination remediation. The river wall construction is now more than 70% complete and the majority of the land raise material has now been imported from the Thames Estuary. Remediation of the gas works site, including the construction of 3 biopiles to recycle the contaminated waste material, is in progress and material from the first biopile has now been reused on the site following completion of the remediation process for that biopile.

Developer

90. There have been more than 50 registered expressions of interest for the first phase of the development. They have been asked to make submissions by the 16th December, after which a shortlist will be made.

91. For the hotel site at Rochester Riverside there have been 15 registered expressions of interest. This will be reduced to a shortlist of three over the next couple of months.

Strood Riverside

92. Medway Council has appointed consultants Mott McDonald to carry out the preparation of design and tender documentation. The demolition of existing buildings will be carried out early next year in preparation for the site development.

Queenborough and Rushenden

Masterplan

93. The masterplan has now been formally submitted as draft to Swale Borough Council for planning consent. Adoption of the masterplan is expected at the beginning of 2007. The Masterplan includes a Green charter, Arts Strategy, S106/Phasing and Management Strategy and Water Space Strategy. Key themes are 2,000 new homes, 180,000m² employment space, a new school, community facilities, open space and infrastructure (Rushenden Link Road).

Rushenden Relief Road

94. It is hoped work on the road can begin next year, after the scheme has been presented to CPRG early in 2007.

Employment

95. Heads of terms have now been agreed with two major employers for the Neats Court employment area. The likely output of jobs for the area is 300 – 500.

Northfleet Embankment

Funding

96. DCLG has granted additional funding of £300,000 to move forward the initial stages of the Swanscombe Peninsula scheme, adjacent to Northfleet Embankment. The project will provide a detailed analysis of the potential of the area to accommodate significant expansion in employment provision. The objective is to protect and enhance existing industrial occupiers and create opportunities for new jobs in an area with the potential for excellent road, rail and river connections, to include potential for a new river/rail freight facility.

Planning

97. It is estimated that an outline planning application will be submitted in Spring 2007. The scheme is a high quality, mixed use Development on this key Waterfront site within Kent Thameside. The development will comprise up to 1,800 homes, 25,000m² of commercial space, a 'school for the future', open space, river promenade and

community facilities. Upon receipt of outline consent planning briefs will be produced and a design competition held to ensure the selection of the appropriate developer(s) for this key site.

Dartford Town Centre/Northern Gateway

98. Stage 2 of the Masterplan, which focused on transport issues, building design guides and the progression of development strategies for five key areas of the town, is now complete. SEEDA is now in discussions with other local landowners to bring forward the comprehensive redevelopment of the area and has commissioned studies to assess improvements to Dartford Creek.

Buckland Mill

99. Technical complications have meant the submission of the planning application has been delayed. Preferred developer Gillcrest Homes is aiming to submit it to Dover District Council imminently.

Ashford

Elwick Road

100. Progress continues to be made towards bringing this site to the market in 2007. The target date for commencing the procurement process is March 2007, with a possible announcement at MIPIM. Scott Brownrigg have recently been appointed as urban designers. Discussions on the acquisition of the former Cattle Market site from LCR continue, with a target date for exchange of contracts being March or April 2007.

Snowdown Colliery

101. An outline planning application has been submitted to Dover District Council to redevelop the former colliery site as a 30 hectare country park featuring footpaths, a picnic area and information points relating to the mining history of the colliery and the area's unique mix of rare animals and plants. The site will also provide 250,000ft² of business space. SEEDA will speculatively build the first 50,000 ft² of units to kickstart the development. It is anticipated the scheme will lead to the creation of approximately 400 new jobs.

Woolston Riverside

102. Further to the resolution to grant outline planning consent in August 2006, the 12 month exclusivity agreements with preferred development partners Crest Nicholson and Dean and Dyball have now been signed. The two developers continue to work closely to draw up proposals, with a view to submitting a detailed planning application in spring 2007. In advance of this, they will carry out a series of public consultations, with SEEDA continuing to be actively involved. A SEEDA newsletter will be produced to update the local community and to introduce them to the preferred developers.

Daedalus, Lee-on-the-Solent

103. Tenders for the post of masterplanners, community consultants and transportation consultants to assist with the Daedalus project, are due to be returned in early December. Planning consultants have been appointed and the project team will be assembled over the next two to three months. A communication and consultation strategy is currently being worked up and website designers will be appointed shortly.

104. The operation to remove the pipe bombs was successfully completed in late September. SEEDA has worked closely with its tenants to ensure that the disruption to their businesses has been kept to a minimum.

Harts Farm Way - Teardrop Junction

105. Construction work is proceeding well on this £3.5million contract, which involves the construction of a new traffic light controlled junction adjacent to the A27 Trunk road at Havant. This will provide a much improved link from this large commercial area to both the A27 and the A3(M). The contractor is on schedule to re-open Harts Farm Way before Christmas, ahead of the planned date, and to complete the works by early April 2007.
106. It is hoped that the Phase II junction improvement works – signalization of the Rusty Cutter Roundabout on the north side of the A27 - will commence in February 2007. This work is being undertaken by Dwyer Plc as an obligation under their Development Agreement with SEEDA for the development of Site 4 on Harts Farm Way.

West Medina Mills, Isle of Wight

107. The Agency will be bringing forward plans for re-use of West Medina Mills - a 6 hectare former cement works with access to the River Medina waterside – to provide commercial/marine employment. Tenders have been issued for the appointment of Planning/masterplanning consultants, to enable the site to be adopted in the Local Development Framework as an employment site. This is in advance of a future planning application and the production of development proposals.

University Centre, Folkestone

108. The creation of a University Centre in the Kent Coastal Town of Folkestone has taken a step forward with SEEDA agreeing to contribute £2.6million towards construction and development costs. The project has been developed by a number of partners including the Creative Foundation (a charity established to foster the regeneration of Folkestone through a range of initiatives), Canterbury Christ Church University, the University of Greenwich, HEFCE and SEEDA.
109. The new Multiversity will provide university programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level in a range of disciplines related to the Arts and Creative Industries, Childhood Studies, Business and Information and Community Technology (ICT) and applied professional studies. The project is part of a wider plan for the regeneration of Folkestone seafront

Betteshanger-Oignies Interreg Project

110. Two successful technical workshops have been held on the sustainable development themes of Water, Biodiversity, Sustainable Design and Energy, the first of which was held at the 9/9 bis site in Oignies. The second workshop was hosted by SEEDA and English partners and included presentations from SEEDA on national and regional energy policies and the new biomass boiler district heating system built at the Betteshanger Business Park. The French delegates were extremely impressed with the biomass boiler and are keen to learn about the system further for their own regeneration works in Oignies and even further afield in the Nord-Pas de Calais area. Feedback suggested it might be beneficial to hold a third technical workshop to help bring the Betteshanger-Oignies Interreg project to a successful conclusion in June 2007. The workshops allowed for discussion on further events and opportunities for the Interreg project over the next seven months. These include a cross-border multi-sports event to

be held at the new Fowlmead Country Park when opened; musical collaboration between French and UK bands; a mining heritage link to be established between the former miners of both communities; cross-border visits by community members to share experience; and visits and electronic penfriend correspondence to strength educational links between schools in the Oignies and Betteshanger areas.

111. The project bilingual website is being produced and will add great value to the educational, cross-border and educational dimensions of the Betteshanger-Oignies Interreg IIIA project.

AREA-BASED REGENERATION

North Kent Direct Programme

112. SEEDA's Kent Area Team have developed three key strategic themes to be targeted by the programme across North Kent. These have been developed in line with the emerging RES and the Thames Gateway Interim Plan. The themes are:

Business Development/Economy

- To promote competitiveness and growth by improving new company formation and survival rates, supporting existing businesses with potential, development of entrepreneurship, the growth of key/emerging sectors, inward investment, improved financial and business support services, development of centres of excellence, innovation and technology transfer and meeting key sector employer skills needs.

Learning & Skills

- To invest in Thames Gateway Kent's education and skills base to support and sustain the economic development agenda and ensure that the population fully benefits from the changes that will ensue from the growth agenda. To support high quality education and skills provision to act as a magnet in creating and retaining a highly skilled population that will improve productivity levels, reduce unemployment and encourage increased levels of social and economic participation. To ensure a wide range of learning opportunities for all, improve the availability of specialist skills, HE/FE participation levels and improve graduate supply to local economy.

Community Engagement and Regeneration

- Enable the existing communities to benefit from the new developments in Thames Gateway Kent, integrating them with the new communities. To provide the necessary community infrastructure, community engagement support within new and existing communities, through neighbourhood renewal initiatives and promote the creation of social enterprises.
113. In conjunction with the three North Kent Local Regeneration Partnerships, SEEDA has worked with partners to develop and prioritise fifteen quality, strategic projects to meet the needs of the strategic priorities outlined above. Key projects include the provision of Labour Market Initiatives across North Kent, the continuation of the North Kent Construction Skills programme, community development schemes in the most deprived parts of North Kent and a Swale Enterprise Gateway
114. The North Kent Devolved Programme continues to run alongside the Direct programme and is focusing on completing its projects and ensuring adequate provision is made to implement exit strategies as the scheme is in its final year

Multi-faith Observatory

115. SEEDA have granted £250,000 to investigate the potential of developing a multi-faith observatory for North Kent in the Thames Gateway. This will be a pilot project for the region that will enable all faiths to play a role in the forthcoming regeneration process in this key growth area, and will encourage social cohesion. SEEDA are proactively helping the development of this project via membership of its steering group.

Margate Renewal Partnership

116. Members of SEEDA's Kent Area Team are now seconded to work with the Partnership Executive for 2-3 days a week. This support will include leading on the development of the business support/enterprise theme in the implementation plan, ensuring that linkages are made to SEEDA's key policy leads and provide the secretariat and support for SEEDA's Chief Executive in her role as Chair of the Partnership

Dover Pride

117. SEEDA's Kent Area Team has begun to provide informal officer support to the Executive Team of the Dover Pride Partnership to steer/advise on partnership organization, and implementation of the Action Plan. This includes membership of the officer steering group and active involvement in the Business Champion sub-group, working closely with Business Link Kent.
118. Dr John Reid, the Secretary of State for the Home Office, recently announced that plans to develop Connaught Barracks into a Category D Open Prison have been shelved. This is a successful outcome of SEEDA's work with partners to get the Home Secretary to reconsider the plan.

East Kent Area Investment Framework (AIF)

119. The East Kent AIF is looking to drive forward the East Kent Natural Park concept and develop its Marine sector strategy around the possibility of the London Array Wind Farm being placed off the coast of Ramsgate.
120. The partnership is currently awaiting the results of an independent strategic evaluation of its performance to date that was commissioned from Genecon. The results of this review will be used to inform the partnership of the next stages for its improvement

Rochester Interpretation Strategy

121. SEEDA is funding the development of an interpretation strategy for the historic town of Rochester and its surrounding areas, a key location for new mixed used development in the Thames Gateway Growth Area. The objectives of the strategy are to identify the unique selling point of Rochester and ensure integration between the old and newly developing communities in the context of ensuring sustainable economic development and social cohesiveness. ABL Consulting have been appointed for the steering group, which members of SEEDA's Kent Area Team sit on.

Kent Foresight - Seachange Conference

122. John Parsonage presented on the RES and the importance of sustainable futures industries including the transformational action of energy technologies at the Seachange Conference. The event was also used as a consultation mechanism for the SUSCON project that SEEDA is supporting via funding of over £100,000 through the North Kent Direct Investment Programme. This is to develop a feasibility study and

masterplanning work to establish the potential of creating a centre of excellence for sustainable construction and skills in the Kent Thameside part of the Thames Gateway.

Ashford Learning Laboratory

123. The Urban Renaissance Institute has completed an audit of generic practitioner's skills amongst those partners delivering the sustainable communities programme in Ashford. A partnership workshop was held on 20th November to discuss initial findings and a summary report and draft action plan will now be developed to address identified skill gaps.

Queen borough and Rushenden: 'Old School' Community Centre

124. The Kent Area Team has developed a consultancy brief for coordination of HLF and Big Lottery funding applications together with further work on heritage, design and business planning aspects of the scheme. This work is intended to develop this critical community infrastructure project from concept to delivery stage.

Local Area Agreements (LAA)

125. The Kent Area Team has continued actively work with the two local authorities – Kent County Council and Medway Council – on their Local Area Agreements. Medway is a 'Round 3' agreement which is currently being developed and is due to be submitted to GOSE in December. The Kent Agreement is at its 18 month monitoring review stage and SEEDA will be represented at the monitoring meeting with GOSE. After one year the LAA received amber status (progressing well) for Outcome 8 which is similar to Block 4, the economic development element of the more recent LAAs.
126. SEEDA have also been working with the LSC, Job Centre Plus, Surrey Economic Partnership and others on a new Surrey LAA enabling measure for the LAA refresh. The measure is to improve the supply of labour for employers with skills shortages in a tight labour market area by getting people currently on incapacity benefit into paid work through access to an extended period of supported work trials. In Surrey there is a very tight labour market and there are over 21,000 benefit claimants, potentially a local source of labour for local jobs. It is recognised that this client group needs substantial support to get back into the labour market, hence the extended work period. The flexibility to be negotiated with GOSE and Department of Work and Pensions by Surrey County Council is an extension of the 15 day work trial, where there is no benefit loss to 3 months.
127. SEEDA are acting as lead partner initially, but will hand over to the Surrey Local Skills for Productivity Alliance to manage and monitor should the flexibility be granted.

Gatwick Diamond

128. A successful meeting was held with the three Surrey district and three Sussex district Chief Executives to discuss the progress of the Gatwick Diamond. The Senior Area Manager from Surrey and Sussex is being seconded to work with the Gatwick Diamond on a part time basis to help develop the initiative.

East Sussex Strategic Sites Work

129. Locate East Sussex received AIF funding to commission a key site report for East Sussex, which was entitled the Donaldsons report. The purpose of this report was to conduct 9 development appraisals on key sites; produce a demand/supply forecast for commercial space and work up a development proposal for a strategic business park. The report has been able to prioritise a ranked list of sites; and in turn will give a clear

direction to partners to enable intervention to take place. The report has been completed and Locate East Sussex and ESEP are working on how best to prioritise the findings and work with partners to bring forward

Business Improvement District status

130. The West Sussex Coastal AIF and District Council have been working with the Southern Cross Business Park in Bognor Regis to pursue Business Improvement District status. As a consequence, Southern Cross Business Park tenants, landlords and owners will vote on 4th December 2006 whether to become a Business Improvement District. If a positive result is gained, this Bognor Regis Business Park will become the first Business Park in the South East to agree Business Improvement District status and one of only 7 Business Parks in the Country to have done this.

South East Programme for Innovative Actions

131. SEEDA have now received their final payment from the European Commission in respect of the South East Programme of Innovative Actions (SEPIA). The Commission has praised the quality of the audit and financial payment submitted by SEEDA, allowing processing to take place quickly and efficiently. SEEDA is now using the South East programme as an example of best practice in programme closure to other regions.

Leader Plus

132. The European Commission has selected the East Sussex Leader Play Sustainable Food and farming Centre project at Netherfield as a good practice example. The Centre is assisting farmers and growers to adjust to restructuring under the Common Agricultural Policy through a training and mentoring programme that is helping them to add value, engage with local markets and deliver environmental benefits. Between now and Christmas, project details will be fine tuned to input onto the EU Leader + Observatory network database. Projects will be set live on the database in January with some of the UK projects selected for a publication distributed across EU member states.