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RDA round-up

News in brief ↓

Good RDA output performance

As Round-up went to press, there were positive signs that England's RDAs would meet or exceed the majority of their targets for the year 2003/2004. Details of the number of jobs and businesses created by RDAs, the number of opportunities for people to learn new skills and the area of brownfield land brought back into productive use will be announced before the end of this Parliamentary session.

English Regions out perform EU average

The latest GDP data across EU regions shows that English regions are doing well. Compared to regions in Germany the majority of English regions have improved their position against European counterparts. Against a backdrop of a successful macro economic policy, there is real dynamism within the specific economies of each region.

New Business, New Life

The East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) has set the objective of increasing the number of business start-ups by 4,000 a year.

The campaign **New Business New Life**, sees *emda* and the region's Business Links harnessing the collective knowledge and services of all agencies and companies that assist with new business start ups, to encourage support and motivate all entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs across the region.



Check on delivery

This is the first in a series of regular summaries of how England's Regional Development Agencies are delivering sustainable economic development. RDAs work to provide the cities, towns and people of their regions with sound economies to underpin the Government's wider social and economic policy objectives. This requires RDAs to work across a large number of different Departmental areas of responsibility. It is vital that Ministers, senior officials and partner organisations can easily see what it is RDAs are actually doing on the ground to unite physical regeneration, employment creation, skills development and business competitiveness in a genuinely sustainable way.

More than ever we need to work in partnership with you to deliver the Governments objectives for UK plc.

Regular reporting against targets is of course crucial. But we need to do more to build a shared understanding of how we are actually working together. We hope this newsletter, closer working with your press and policy teams, a new secretariat, regular updates and a re-launched website, will help this happen. We welcome any feedback or suggestions.

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Regeneration

Furthering economic development and regeneration

Keeping coastal communities afloat

England is rich in maritime history. But as maritime industry and travel have changed in the 20th century this legacy has meant challenges for the vitality and health of a large number of towns and communities.

In many coastal communities, physical buildings and infrastructure remain that whilst not used for their original purpose are still an important part of the fabric of local communities.

RDAs continue to lead innovative ways to bring land back into productive use and regenerate the economies of these areas.

This year SEEDA launched a major master plan for the former Vosper Thornycroft shipyard at Woolston Riverside in Southampton. On the Isle of Wight a mixed use plan is also under way at the former GKN site in East Cowes. On both sites major transport infrastructure has been developed to improve access for businesses and residents.

The principles of the Sustainable Communities Plan underpin the RDAs' work. Lasting



regeneration is only possible if economic vitality, a high quality environment and housing combine to produce areas that people want to live and work in. On Canvey Island EEDA is implementing plans that generate crucial extra employment as well as protecting sites of environmental and community importance with local partners.

In Great Yarmouth EEDA has led a £16.3 million scheme, working with local councils, English Partnerships and others to transform the town through heritage and infrastructure regeneration. By radically changing perceptions of the town, EEDA expects new inward investment and economic activity to safeguard 600 jobs and increase visitor numbers by some 50,000.

Chatham Maritime - the future ↓

The development of Chatham Maritime is roughly two-thirds complete. Highlights of what is happening now include:

St Mary's Island primary school is being expanded to cope with 400 pupils per year. Local church groups are also talking with Countryside Maritime about the provision of a church on the island, as they currently go to worship in the primary school hall.

There are currently 850 homes completed on St Mary's Island. Development and construction will continue until there are approximately 2,000 homes for 5,000 residents, in line with the business plan for the regeneration of the area.

A proposed Four Star 300-bed hotel with conference facilities for up to 1000 delegates would create a further 300 jobs. SEEDA is working with local colleges to develop courses to train people for these jobs.

The Universities at Medway collaboration has continued with the opening of the School of Pharmacy and the creation of courses targeted to the requirements of local employers such as Pfizer and BAe Systems.

Sailing into business at Osprey Quay

Osprey Quay is a former 50 acre MOD site now re-developed as a mixed use facility.

It has a business park, housing, leisure facilities, and a world class sailing academy. The first phase of development has involved improving the fundamental

infrastructure, including roads, flood defences and a harbour front walkway. All the existing buildings are being re-used and two new buildings will be built this year. In the second phase of the project (which will be completed in the Summer of 2004) the remaining 20-30 acres will be reclaimed and re-developed. SWRDA has contributed £6 million to the

project so far. Luhrs Marine, an internationally renowned boat manufacturer, has located to the site and invested £4-5 million. The company has announced over £2.5 million of new orders since locating to the site. 150 people are working in the new offices, and the target is to employ at least 750 on site.





Successful businesses are consistently reinventing themselves, changing their products and improving their services. Such constant revolution depends on a workforce able to learn new skills and apply them productively in the workplace.

Skills fit for business

According to the most recent Recruitment Confidence Index survey from the Cranfield School of Management, one in three employers are predicting major changes in their skill needs over the next two years. A further 59% of employers expect minor changes in their skill needs, and only 8% say skills will remain the same. With such dramatic change on the horizon, each RDA, in partnership with its Regional Employment Forum, has established a Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action (FRESA) to examine the key labour market issues in its region and set out plans to tackle them.

RDAs understand that skills, employment and productivity are intrinsically linked, and that each region has different needs that require regionally specific solutions. Working in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Councils, RDAs are engaged in a range of projects to link learning opportunities with business needs.

In the South West, for example, where tourism leverages around £4.6 billion a year for the regional economy and directly supports more than 225,000 full or part-time jobs, the Tourism Skills Network has been set up to

help local tourism organisations with the recruitment and retention of their employees. It also provides careers advice and support to individuals considering a career in tourism. Elsewhere, the East of England has a small number of large employers, so if one announces large redundancies, it has a major impact on local communities. EEDA, as chair of the Luton Vauxhall Partnership, helped retrain more than 1500 Vauxhall employees set to lose their jobs with the loss of the Luton Vauxhall plant.

One year into the Government's National Skills Strategy, the regions are well on the way

to setting up Regional Skills Partnerships.

These will bring employers together with those who plan and run courses to make sure training and workforce development contributes most effectively to the sustainable economic development of the region. With partners including the Skills for Business Network, the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service and Jobcentre Plus, the NorthWest RDA has already established the first of these Partnerships, which will help make employability a key part of education and learning.

Sporting enterprise

The MFC Enterprise Academy is celebrating its first year in operation with the launch of a £150,000 mobile unit to go around Tees Valley schools. Funded entirely by ONE via the Tees Valley Partnership, the new unit transforms from a truck into a mobile classroom based on the players' dressing rooms at the Riverside Stadium.

Its features include computer stations and a plasma screen television. A joint initiative between the football club, Middlesbrough and Stockton councils and ONE, the Enterprise Academy is designed to introduce 11 to 19 year-olds in the Tees Valley to business and self-employment.

Turning young people on to science



A unique skills centre for young people interested in developing skills in electrical engineering has been opened by the NorthWest Development Agency. The centre, part of the Agency's £1.9 million Grow Your Future Workforce project, will encourage young people in the area to develop an interest in maths, science, engineering and technology.

Smart growth

For the RDAs, sustainability is not simply a process of supporting particular projects with environmental benefits. It is an ethos that underpins everything they do.



Careful development that brings opportunities to deprived communities and respects the environment brings economic growth that will last, without the costly side effects that quick fixes can mean for the future.

This 'Smart Growth,' is the subject of an RDA publication this summer so RDAs can share best practice with partners. Many of the examples in 'Smart Growth' have already delivered, or will deliver, significant benefits for people across the English regions. Others enable RDAs to test projects for sustainability, from

building schemes to business support and skills development packages, to help ensure long-term impacts are being taken into account across the wide range of RDA activity.

These case studies highlight the creative thinking, long-term planning and sheer hard work that RDAs and their partner organisations are engaged in to make a difference to our quality of life today and tomorrow. For a copy of 'Smart Growth: Sustainable Development in the English Regions,' contact EEDA on 0845 456 9200.

Social enterprise breathes life into redundant depot

The East Midlands Development Agency has helped transform a redundant bus depot in Alfreton, Derbyshire, into a thriving hub of entrepreneurial and community activity.

The Genesis Social Enterprise Centre offers modern managed office space, on-site business counselling and mentoring, and support for groups seeking to establish social enterprises. The centre also hosts a range of services for the local community including a crèche facility, an on site café, a sports centre, ten pin bowling alley, non-alcoholic youth bar and community and conference facilities.

In just 18 months, turnover has gone from just under £200,000 to £1million, and an initial staff of 16 has increased to 46 – including trainees from the New Deal. By the end of 2005 the centre will have created 35 new jobs, safeguarded 46 and allowed for the development of 41 new social enterprises.

Plans for the future range from building a further 10,000 sq ft of office space and developing more workshop space to opening an indoor cricket centre.

Wildlife pays its way

The conversion of semi-derelict farmland buildings and an old nature reserve into a thriving business and visitor attraction in South Yorkshire's Dearne Valley has shown how conservation and business sense can go hand in hand.

Three years ago, Yorkshire Forward and the region's RSPB office worked together to establish an environmental investment programme to underpin the Regional Economic Strategy.

The proposal included the acquisition, restoration and management of around 400 hectares of washland for wildlife conservation. Wildlife habitats on

former coal workings were also earmarked for regeneration.

"Our point of view was that wildlife has an economic value through visitor income as well as providing environmental regeneration. Fortunately, Yorkshire Forward wanted to invest in such a project," said RSPB Regional Director Laurence Rose.

This is a five-year, £4.3 million investment programme which, to date, has seen the refurbishment of the existing visitor and education centres; sustainable job creation and the provision of business facilities and residential volunteers' accommodation.

Climate change priorities



As the Defra consultation, 'Taking it on: developing UK sustainable development strategy together,' has shown, climate change is high on the Government's agenda.

The East of England is likely to be one of the regions most affected by climate change, which could mean hotter, drier summers; milder, wetter winters; a rise in sea level and an increase in the number of extreme weather events. Through the Sustainable Development Round Table for the East of England, EEDA has supported the Living with Climate Change in the East of England study, which calls for businesses to understand and respond to the challenges of climate change whilst there is still time to do so effectively. The report gives practical guidance to both public and private sector service providers on how to build adaptation to climate change into their strategies and action plans.



Turning ideas into Industry

RDAs continue to lead exciting and innovative projects to create jobs and stimulate enterprise, providing the right conditions and support that new and growing companies need to succeed.

Biocity Nottingham

BioCity Nottingham is a groundbreaking new healthcare and bioscience innovation and incubation centre. With 12,000 square metres of world-class laboratories, state-of-the-art equipment, and extensive office space, the facilities at BioCity Nottingham are unsurpassed. In March BioCity unveiled its new bioscience business support network. A network of some of the leading specialist business advisers in the industry have pledged their support for BioCity and the bioscience businesses in the region.

The group, which includes Brand New Ventures; Eric Potter Clarkson; Eversheds; Grant Thornton; HSBC; Nat West; PriceWaterhouseCoopers and Shoosmiths will provide a range of services for bioscience businesses based in the East Midlands. These services include one-to-one, free of charge advice clinics for business managers and also a symposia programme covering topics such as patents, legal issues, investment and business strategies.

BioCity is a consortium involving *emda*, Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham.

First phase of Royals Business Park completed

Building 1000, the £70m landmark first phase of the Royals Business Park, being jointly developed by Development Securities PLC, Standard Life Investments and the London Development Agency, has been completed.

Designed by Aukett, the speculative development consists of two high-specification glass and steel buildings, totalling 237,000 sq ft. These are linked by a spectacular Winter Garden and overlook the Royal Albert Dock and London City Airport. When completed, the 50-acre site will be London's largest business park with 1.6m sq ft of offices, 100,000 sq ft of retail and leisure, extensive landscaping and public spaces.



£33m of New Venture Capital in North East

NStar, the new technology finance company recently set up by One NorthEast, has established two new venture capital funds, the North East Proof of Concept Fund and the North East Co-investment Fund. Together, the funds will bring £27.5m of new European money into the region.



Virtual Enterprise Network

Yorkshire Forward is establishing a revolutionary new way of doing business that is already producing multi-million pound results. Virtual Enterprise Networks (VENs) are new legally-binding frameworks allowing companies within specific sectors to work together to win major global contracts. The first VEN in Europe has finalised the first of what could be several multi-million pound contracts with Norway-based Rolls Royce Marine.

Media in the Round

A new centre in Leeds is fostering collaboration between the region's dynamic digital, media and creative sector. The Round Foundry Media Centre is now open for business, offering serviced office accommodation and infrastructure for up to 50 businesses in the digital, media and creative industries.

Jobs

Promoting employment



The LDA worked closely with United Biscuits and London West Learning and Skills Council to create up to 200 new jobs at the McVities site in Harlesden, north-west London.

Innovative partnerships

Partnership is a much used word. For RDAs it boils down to the fact that to make a real difference to regional economies it is vital that different organisations and funding streams join together and align their efforts towards shared objectives.

Partnership means working with local authorities, voluntary groups, private sector companies, Government Departments, foreign Governments and anyone who has an interest in strengthening each region's economy and society. By seeking pragmatic and practical solutions that are right for specific challenges and opportunities, RDAs continue to develop new solutions to long standing problems and stimulate an environment where a range of bodies want to get involved and don't feel hampered by existing barriers.

For example, ONE has announced one of the largest property transactions ever to take place in the North East of England, with the establishment of a Public Private Partnership (PPP) with UK Land Estates. This is the culmination of over two years work, and

will enable ONE to provide the first-class accommodation required by 21st century companies. It will also retain the ownership and management of this substantial portfolio of commercial property in the region.

The portfolio stretches from the Scottish Borders down to the Tees Valley, covering approximately 1,700 properties on approximately 50 estates. The joint venture partnership holds and manages the investment property portfolio valued at £120m.

UK Land Estates will invest considerable funds to become an equal shareholder in the PPP and also contribute its expertise in property management. The PPP will inject substantial resources over the life of the partnership to regenerate the properties and the estates, providing high quality business accommodation throughout the region.

A shot in the arm for Liverpool

Chiron Vaccines are building a state of the art £65 million biologicals plant at their Liverpool site thanks to £20 million of investment by the NWDA. This will further encourage the development of the biomanufacturing sector on Merseyside, the largest biomanufacturing cluster in the UK.

Major West Midlands reclamation partnership

The 96 hectare (237 acre) site between Wobaston Road and the M54 on the South Staffordshire-Wolverhampton border is currently undergoing reclamation work.

Advantage West Midlands is investing £64m in the project in a partnership which also includes Wolverhampton City Council and South Staffordshire. The scheme is a major site in both the Future Foundations Regeneration Zone and the Wolverhampton Telford Technology Corridor and will create 6000 jobs.

