



England's
Regional Development
Agencies

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Transforming England's Regions Through
Sustainable Economic Development

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News in brief ↓

New Director of Implementation for Northern Way

The Northern Way has appointed a Director of Implementation to help steer the ambitious project towards its goal of bridging the £29 billion productivity gap between the North and the South. Vince Taylor, previously director of the Sheffield First Partnership, has taken up the role and will be based at One NorthEast. This announcement came as the next stage of the Northern Way project - an action plan that sets out early priorities for the north - was unveiled at the Sustainable Communities Summit. Read more about the action plan on page 2.

New Director for RDA Secretariat

Sue Baxter is the new Director of the RDA National Secretariat, following the move of Patrick White to the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA). Sue has worked in central and local government and the voluntary sector, most recently at the DTI. The National Secretariat helps the RDAs co-ordinate their work at a national level, and acts as a gateway to the RDAs for national organisations. The team can be contacted at natsec@rda-secretariat.com.

Commendation for SEEDA regeneration project

Chatham Historic Dockyard and Chatham Maritime have celebrated reaching the last four of 250 entries to the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Award. Just 20 years ago, the closure of Royal Dockyard at Chatham, Kent, threatened to plunge the area into an economic crisis from which it might never have recovered.



'Regional solutions to regional problems' - a familiar mantra since 1999 when the RDAs were born. This principle is based on the reality that each region has a unique mix of resources, opportunities and barriers to progress. Only by tackling such issues at a regional level is regional economic development possible, and growth in the regions is the essential driver of growth for UK plc.

The link between regional and national achievement has been formalised in a new framework of objectives agreed between the RDAs and central Government. They firmly entrench the work of the RDAs in national policy by ensuring that RDA outputs contribute directly to the Government's Public Service Agreement targets. Each RDA will set out its particular and specific targets in its Corporate Plan in May.

Over the next three years, each RDA will assume additional responsibilities as set out in the Chancellor's spending review. RDAs will take on regional management of the Business Link network, new responsibilities for socio-economic development in rural areas, an increased role in developing links between businesses and universities, and greater involvement in international trade development.

A sound evidence base is essential for determining how these responsibilities and others can best be tackled in each region, and how our resources can be best targeted and harnessed. Together with the DTI, RDAs are developing a national framework for evaluation that will help them measure the impact of their interventions more effectively. This framework will help to enhance the evidence base in each region and ensure that RDA strategies and Corporate Plans are properly focused where they can have the greatest impact on regional need.

April will see the end of my period as Chair of Chairs and I wish Nick Paul of Advantage West Midlands every success as he assumes the role. I should like to thank you for your support over the last six months, and reiterate my contention that both close partnership at national and regional levels and an overt collegiate approach to Government are the foundation up on which the continuing success of the RDAs depends.

Julie Williams, Chair of Chairs, England's RDAs
Email: natsec@rda-secretariat.com

Transforming England's Regions

Furthering economic development and regeneration

Growth boost for the Midlands

Cross regional co-operation was celebrated across the Midlands as Advantage West Midlands (AWM) and the East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) launched their growth plan at the Sustainable Communities Summit. Working closely with the two Regional Assemblies and Government Offices, the two RDAs have put a draft of 'Smart Growth, the Midlands Way' out to consultation.

Improved economic competitiveness, enhanced productivity, and more sustainable, successful communities can be achieved by closer working between the regions. By joint working on their motorsport and aerospace sectors, and combined efforts to attract overseas investors from Asia Pacific and North America, EMDA and AWM have already proved their close partnership can produce results.

Smart Growth proposes ways in which the Midlands can exploit joint R&D potential, develop and hold onto the expertise and skills in the regions, and build an open and flexible economic environment. Better east/west links to east coast ports for the benefit of both regions and steps to get the most out of the regions' airports are part of the plan. The Consultation Report is available via both RDA websites.

New development plan for the South West

Proposals for lasting growth in cities and towns across the South West were also on show at the Sustainable Communities Summit, in the form of 'The Way Ahead: Delivering Sustainable Communities in the South West'. The South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), the Regional Assembly, Government Office for the South West and local authorities in the region have worked closely together on far-reaching proposals which would see new jobs, business opportunities, transport connections and affordable housing come on stream over the next ten years.

'The Way Ahead' shows how measures to build more homes across the South West region will go hand-in-hand with initiatives to strengthen the economy by improving business productivity. Environmental and social performance will be enhanced by improving infrastructure, and the benefits of sustainable economic growth will be spread more evenly across the region.

Action plan for the north

The Northern Way project, led by One NorthEast, the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and Yorkshire Forward (YF) is set to invest up to £10 million into pilot schemes to help thousands of long-term unemployed people back into work. The funding will be used to bolster the

Government's additional nine Pathways to Work pilot programmes across the North, announced by the Chancellor in the pre-budget report in December. The Northern Way's goal is to bring 100,000 people back into work by 2014.

The Northern Way will draw on the economic clout of eight city regions – Liverpool/Merseyside,

Central Lancashire, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Hull and Humber Ports, Tees Valley and Tyne and Wear. Each city region will table a development programme to The Northern Way steering group in May, detailing future activity in their area based on the ten key themes of The Northern Way.



Summit vox pops

An East of England Development Agency (EEDA) survey of professionals at the Delivering Sustainable Communities Summit revealed that over one-third (34%) of Summit delegates thought infrastructure should be the first priority when building successful sustainable communities.

Building regional identity

The Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), Liverpool Vision and Liverpool City Council have thrown the switch on the £1.2 million City of Light project – an architectural lighting scheme to permanently illuminate many of the city's most famous and striking buildings. The project aims to boost the city as a tourist and business destination, and will illuminate 30 buildings in the city centre, which last year was designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

To help inspire a stronger identity for the east of England, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) has developed the 'Landmark East' competition. Twelve creative ideas for an iconic landmark for the region were shortlisted by an independent judging panel, and four have now received funding for feasibility studies, to look at issues such as infrastructure, access and environmental impact. Latest updates on the project are available at www.landmarkeast.org.uk. Through the EEDA Ambassadors club, businesses in the region are invited to actively support and promote the benefits of locating in the East of England to their own communities.



The striking effect of the city of light.

Transforming England's Regions

Developing skills relevant to employment

New Midland for Morecambe

Morecambe's Midland Hotel is to be brought back to life, thanks to £4 million from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA).

The redevelopment of the Grade II listed Midland Hotel, to create a 46-bedroom hotel with a public café/bar, restaurant and bathhouse, is a crucial part of the masterplan to regenerate the central seafront area of Morecambe. This significant investment will be a major catalyst for bringing wider regeneration activity and private sector investment into the hotel's surrounding area, and to Morecambe as a whole.



Simon Webb



Smoothe

The historic Midland Hotel now and a glimpse of the future. Photos courtesy of Urban Splash.

Delivering today, preparing for tomorrow

The Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) are playing an increasingly important role in making sure skills development programmes meet the needs of business. These partnerships help regional bodies working on the skills agenda to deliver shared objectives by setting out clear roles and responsibilities.

Every English region will have established an RSP by April this year, and all have produced a 'Joint statement of Regional Skills Priorities' that sets out what part should be played by the RDA, LSC and training providers respectively.

In the capital, the London Skills Commission has already delivered a city-wide teacher training unit for basic skills and skills for life. And since December, a new training centre for classroom assistants has been up and running in Rainham.

RDAs are also thinking about tomorrow. As part of a drive to help grow our future workforce the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) has led the RDAs in calling for reform of the 14-19 curriculum. RDAs support the increased engagement of local companies in the design and delivery of work in Britain's schools, and want teenagers to have as much opportunity as possible to improve their employability. Any 14-19 reform should ensure a 'seamless transition' from teenage to adult skills training, which will be focused through the RSP.

Help for small businesses

Yorkshire Forward is investing £9m in a scheme to allow businesses in North Yorkshire and the Humber to provide free training for their staff and cash to cover their time off.

The scheme - branded 'train2gain' - is part of the Employer Training Programme (ETP) managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and demonstrates close working between the LSC and RDA.

The ETP was not due to be implemented until 2006 but Yorkshire Forward is so impressed that they have financed the roll-out of train2gain a year early.

The scheme enables firms with fewer than 250 staff to give their employees

work-based training. It targets one of the problems often cited by business groups - that small businesses suffer because they have insufficient funds to adequately train their employees.

Train2gain has already been piloted in South and West Yorkshire. It has enabled Sheffield-based tool hire specialist 'Hire and Sales Co Ltd' to put eight of its 22 staff through customer care and retail sales training.

Transforming England's Regions

Contributing to sustainable development

Work underway at Ludlow Eco Business Park

Work has started on a groundbreaking environmentally-friendly business park on the outskirts of Ludlow which will eventually create 200 jobs. The £2 million Eco Business Park is a partnership scheme involving South Shropshire District Council, regional development agency Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands.



Opening of Ludlow Eco Business Park (left to right): Heather Kidd (Leader South Shropshire District Council), Major Adrian Coles (Chairman Shropshire County Council), Michael Olson-Duppa (Government Office West Midlands), Graham Biggs (Chief Executive, South Shropshire District Council), Mark Pearce (Director for Shropshire, Advantage West Midlands).

Refreshing BREW for the environment

The chance to make Britain a low carbon economy is a step closer thanks to the introduction of the Business Resource Efficiency and Waste programme (BREW), a government initiative to help businesses become more resource efficient and make the most out of their waste.

Regional Development Agencies, spearheaded by EEDA, which leads for the RDAs on sustainability issues, will receive funding from BREW to coordinate resource efficiency and waste initiatives to meet the needs of business.

BREW will return landfill tax to businesses in the form of coordinated programmes that provide access to a wide range of support on resource efficiency and waste issues. This means £284 million over the next three years is available through groups such as the Waste Recycling Action Programme, Envirowise and the Carbon Trust. Regional Development Agencies will work with these groups and use their own funding to ensure the projects are completed.

Flood Package for Cumbria

Steven Broomhead, Chief Executive of the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), said he was 'stunned' by the economic implications of this year's floods in Carlisle – the worst in the UK for over fifty years. The NWDA announced an emergency package totalling £275,000 to fund short-term relief measures targeted at ensuring that businesses and communities can rebuild as rapidly as possible.

The Agency is helping the city to plan for the future and is in discussions with the Environment Agency to move forward plans for additional flood defences.

Coal Pit into Country park

The new year brought a new lease of life to Weetslade Colliery in North Tyneside where work has started on a process to transform the site into a nature area.

When work is complete the disused mine will become a Park boasting over three kilometres of new footpaths, cycle ways and landscaped countryside.

The conversion will cost around £5m and is being managed by One NorthEast with partner funding from English Partnerships through the National Coalfields Programme.

One NorthEast drafted in ecological agencies to help design the scheme and has incorporated a wildlife corridor and areas of wetland to create valuable green space from what is currently redundant pit heaps. Weetslade Colliery ceased coal production in 1966 and operated as a coal-washing site until 1985.

Plans for Cowes unveiled

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and English Partnerships, on behalf of Cowes Waterfront partners - the Isle of Wight Council and the Isle of Wight Economic Partnership (IOWEP) - have hosted a public exhibition to unveil the emerging masterplan for the East Cowes Project on the Isle of Wight. Local people viewed plans set to transform the town centre and waterfront.

Transforming England's Regions

Promoting business efficiency, investment and competitiveness

Regions backing the bid

Regional Development Agencies have been crucial to the viability of London's Olympic bid. Fifteen per cent of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) judgement will be based on the amount of support each bid can demonstrate at a national level. A recent opinion poll showed that three quarters of the UK population are now behind the bid, and RDAs across the country have been working to further bolster that support.



The South West shows its support for the London 2012 bid.

The London Development Agency (LDA) has been heavily involved by co-funding the bid with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The LDA has also been responsible for assembling land and securing planning permission to enable the Olympic Park to be developed in the Lower Lea Valley in east London. The Games would dramatically speed up plans to transform this priority regeneration area, as well as delivering other economic benefits for the capital and the rest of the UK.

Yorkshire Forward, through the region's Olympic Steering Group (OSG), released figures based on the Sydney 2000 Olympics that showed Yorkshire and the Humber could receive a £600m boost if the London bid is successful. The research predicted Yorkshire could attract at least 2,500 athletes and officials prior to the games. Hoteliers, caterers, construction and transport companies could all reap the benefits of a London win. Meanwhile world-class gymnasts performed at Durham Cathedral as part of One NorthEast's drive to raise the profile of 2012 in its region. While in the South East, 13 Olympian medallists joined SEEDA at an event held with Sport England and the South East Regional Assembly.

In the South West, an icon of the region's rich cultural heritage helped show the region's support for the games and the legacy of regeneration they would bring. Flying the flag for 2012 at Stonehenge, the South West of England RDA highlighted the role to be played by the National Sailing Academy at Osprey Quay, Weymouth and Portland in 2012. Osprey Quay, which would host Olympic sailing events, is one of the few sites outside of London to be chosen as a venue. It has served as the base for the Great Britain Olympic Sailing Squad since April 2000.

The East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA) supported London 2012 by backing a successful bid by two staff members and two students from West Notts College in Mansfield to reach the North Pole. The team unveiled the 2012 flag at the Pole just before Christmas, and presented a photograph of their achievement to London 2012 Chairman Sebastian Coe.

Strategies for the future

The London and East of England Development Agencies have each launched new frameworks for the long-term economic development of their regions, following consultation with several hundred local, regional and national organisations.

'A shared vision: the regional economic strategy for the East of England' unites business organisations, the community and voluntary sector, local authorities and regional agencies around eight common goals which will enhance economic performance in the region and improve quality of life for the 5.4 million people who live and work there. The strategy aims

to develop regional strengths such as an international reputation for science and innovation and environmental assets such as the Norfolk broads.

In London, the Mayor launched his Economic Development Strategy to maintain London's position as an international business location. The strategy, which was written by the London Development Agency (LDA), highlights the strength of the capital's creative industries and the efficiency of London's firms. It also sets out the challenges facing the capital, such as the lack of affordable housing and business premises. The strategy aims to tackle skills shortages in the public and private sectors by reducing the cost of childcare and removing other barriers preventing many disadvantaged groups entering the workplace.

Go ahead for Multi Use Centre

Building work on a key project in the £60m revamp of a Telford housing estate began this year after funding was approved by regional development agency Advantage West Midlands. The £4.4m Woodside Multi Use Centre will house training and education rooms, community and youth areas, a crèche, a community café, a chemist and NHS dental surgery. It will be the centrepiece of the ten-year Woodside Regeneration Project, which is being driven by Borough of Telford & Wrekin, English Partnerships and Advantage West Midlands.

Transforming England's Regions

Promoting employment

Incubator hatches jobs

A new development on the Aycliffe Industrial Park in County Durham is set to create 72 new permanent jobs and an estimated 45 temporary construction jobs.

The Heart of the Park development includes a 'digital factory' providing IT training, accommodation and lettable floorspace and is at the centre of the regeneration of the area.

The site formerly housed redundant industrial accommodation.

The project is being co-ordinated by One NorthEast and its local partners, including Sedgefield Borough Business Service. This latest rejuvenation will help push the total number of jobs created and safeguarded by the Agency since its creation in 1999 to over 70,000.



(Left to right): Dave Dixon, Interserve (Contractors) and Kester Noble, Sedgefield Borough Council. Christine Smith, One NorthEast

Making EU funding work

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has celebrated securing £5 million in European funding from EQUAL, a European initiative which tests and promotes new measures for combating all forms of discrimination and inequality in the labour market. The money will help fund two social inclusion projects. The first, 'Cultural Shift South East,' will create social enterprises covering four key community and public service areas: housing, waste, economic development and public space management. £1.5 million will come from Europe, with a further £1.6 million from a range of public sector and community organisations.

The second project, EXODUS, is one of the largest EQUAL projects ever undertaken. A partnership of 122 stakeholders in the prison and probation service across the South East and London will use £3.5 million of European funding, matched by £3.5 million from other sources, to look for new ways to reintegrate offenders into work and community life.

In the South West, Objective One funding from Europe, matched by over £12 million invested by the South West Regional Development Agency, has made the Combined Universities in Cornwall (CUC) project possible. The CUC is bringing new buildings, new courses and high quality education and training to Cornwall. By keeping graduates in the local area, and working to spin out new businesses from higher education, 2000 jobs are set to be created in the next 10 years. Cornwall's GDP should be boosted by more than £600 million by 2025.

Toolkit for the future

The UK's future prosperity relies on a knowledge-based economy. With just one per cent of the world's population, the UK has over 11 per cent of the world's most cited scientific papers. Now, more than at any time since the first decades of the industrial revolution, Britain's scientific prowess is being turned into technology-led economic growth. Science-based innovations deliver a higher share of the UK's economic growth than they do in any other industrial nation, including the United States of America.

To help protect this position, RDAs – led by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) – are encouraging businesses and universities to adopt the Lambert Model Agreement Toolkit. The toolkit will help improve the flow of innovative, high-value products through the UK R&D process into the economy, by helping businesses and universities to collaborate more effectively. The toolkit helps universities navigate the Intellectual Property questions thrown up by the research they undertake on behalf of business in their region.

Sherwood Village takes UK prize

Chancellor Gordon Brown has announced Sherwood Energy Village as the winner of Britain's first Enterprising Britain competition. The 91-acre former colliery supported by East Midlands Development Agency has become a mixed-use development to enhance the existing economy of Ollerton.

Led by Managing Director Stan Crawford, Sherwood Village beat off other Enterprising Britain finalists including the cities of Leeds and Belfast and Hatton Garden in London.

The award is already paying dividends. In February, Imhotep Ltd., a leading technology company, announced it is to relocate to the eco-friendly development. Imhotep has developed thermoplastic composite profiles which look and feel like normal plastics but have the performance of fibreglass and carbon fibre composites. Their Imhotep process is already being used in the making of the world's lightest bicycle wheel.