

SEEDA's new Chair outlines future focus at Annual Open Public Meeting

11 November 2009

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) introduced Rob Douglas CBE as its new Chair at its Annual Open Public Meeting on Thursday 5 November. Speaking at the meeting he set out SEEDA's priorities for the coming year and beyond, which are:

- driving innovation to ensure South East businesses can compete in a global economy
- helping business improve productivity and create employment
- translating commitment to sustainable prosperity into practical steps towards a low carbon economy.

Rob Douglas, SEEDA's Chair, said: "When the recession hit the immediate priority was to combat the recession, which SEEDA has been actively doing by supporting business. We are now learning and adapting within this changed economic environment to drive forward these three priorities to ensure we remain the powerhouse of the UK economy."

The meeting was attended by over 100 people, from local businesses, stakeholder groups and the public who had the opportunity to question the SEEDA Board. Guest speakers were the Vice President of External Affairs at Inmarsat, Chris McLaughlin and the Leader of Kent County Council and first Chairman of South East England Councils, Councillor Paul Carter.

Chris McLaughlin's commented: "So often in the business world you look at RDAs and you think 'What do they do?' And the answer is 'Provide the building blocks where market would not be in place'. Without SEEDA there would be no Alphasat in Britain; we were saved both as a country and as a business by timely intervention from Regional Development Agencies and indeed by SEEDA's leadership, which helped us to win the Alphasat programme."

Councillor Paul Carter said: "There is an enormous need for significant regional components in the plan of things for the future, even under a Conservative Government."

At the meeting, Pam Alexander, SEEDA's Chief Executive said: "We welcome Rob Douglas to SEEDA as our new Chair. As we move forward with Rob at the helm, we will build on the successes over the past year and tackle these economic priorities to support the South East out of recession and back into prosperity."

"I would also like to thank SEEDA's outgoing Chair, Jim Brathwaite, for all his hard work over the past seven years. He has taken SEEDA into new realms, particularly helping drive international trade and investment for the South East."

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Notes to Editors

Please contact Jessica Stewart to arrange interviews.

- **SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency**, is the Government-funded agency responsible for the sustainable economic development of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy. Through supporting businesses, encouraging innovation, developing skills and engaging with public and private partners, we aim to create a successful, sustainable future for the region.
- **SEEDA's support helped deliver the following** over the period 2005-2008:
 - o 17,500 jobs created or safeguarded
 - o 32,500 people helped to get work
 - o 10,000 businesses created or attracted to region
 - o 137,500 businesses assisted
 - o £638m investment, 45% levered from private sector
 - o 200ha Brownfield land remediated
 - o 148,500 people assisted in skills development
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