

MEDIA RELEASE

SEEDA'S CHAIRMAN GOES 'BACK TO THE FLOOR' TO SUPPORT NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

1 February 2010

The South East England Development Agency's (SEEDA) Chairman, Rob Douglas, become an apprentice for the day on Monday 1 February in support of National Apprenticeship Week (1 – 5 February).

SEEDA, as part of the national Regional Development Agency (RDA) network, is committed to creating economic prosperity through developing and harnessing the skills sets required to give the UK an international competitive advantage. National Apprenticeship Week is organised by the National Apprenticeship Service and aims to celebrate the talents and skills of apprentices.

Rob learned about boatbuilding and composites during lessons at Southampton City College's Maritime Technology Centre followed by a trip to Solent Refit, where he changed into overalls and helped Tom Noble, 24 – an existing apprentice with Yacht project Associates – rebuild two main engines for a large vessel.

The day showcased the talent found within the region and demonstrated the value for business in employing and supporting apprentices in the workplace.

Rob Douglas commented: "Equipping young people with the skills necessary to support growth industries will ensure the future success of the region. The marine sector currently makes up 25 per cent of the Solent economy and generates 25,000 jobs throughout the area. Continued investment in this sector will build on the area's strengths, provide a platform for future growth and ensure that the South East remains a leading centre for the marine sector."

Tom, who has been an apprentice with Yacht Projects Associates since September 2009, added: "An apprenticeship is a great opportunity for someone of my age. When I left school I didn't know what I wanted to do. Now that I do, it's nice to be given a second chance to establish a career in something I'm really committed to. The marine industry is a really exciting sector and it's a great time to be part of it."

SEEDA acquired the former RAF Hythe site, which is recognised as a key waterside employment site within the Solent Waterfront Strategy, from the Ministry of Defence in 2007 when the US Army left the site. SEEDA has worked with all tenants on site and encouraged them to become active in apprenticeship schemes. Tom is one of 15 apprentices across the site that manages the Solent Refit facility, in partnership with CB Richard Ellis, on SEEDA's behalf.

Lindsey Noble, Principal at Southampton City College, concludes: "We were delighted to welcome Rob to the marine centre at City College as part of National Apprenticeship Week. I am keen to encourage as many businesses as possible to think about whether they can offer a young person an opportunity to train as an apprentice. We have many keen young people, with a good basic training already, looking for opportunities right now in a wide range of industries."

Each of the nine RDAs throughout the UK are committed to developing regional skills and recognise the value apprenticeships play in delivering economic success. SEEDA leads on skills for the RDAs and for more information please visit www.seeda.co.uk.

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- **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
- **Maritime Technology Centre**
Located in the heart of Southampton by the river Itchen and committed to meeting the specialist marine educational needs of the region, the Maritime Technology Centre provides a comprehensive selection of marine based courses, many of which are not available anywhere else in the region, from boatbuilding to marine engineering and marine design to leisure & water sports.
In particular, the Maritime Technology Centre has a long history of providing boat building courses and it is the only place in Hampshire where students gain specialist training in both traditional and new wood techniques as well as the latest range of composites.
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