



£2.9 MILLION TO KEEP BUSINESSES PROFITABLE IN THE DOWNTURN

20 April 2009

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) has approved £2.9 million for low carbon initiatives that will help over 3,000 South East businesses cut costs and build profits.

Half the money is grant funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and SEEDA will set up programmes supporting sustainable procurement, sustainable design and innovation, sustainable construction and reduction, re-use and recycling. Planned targets include an 89,000 tonne reduction in the growth rate of CO2 emissions, a £3.2m boost to the region's economy and the potential creation of hundreds of jobs.

Oona Muirhead, SEEDA Executive Director for Skills & Sustainable Prosperity, said: "In these difficult economic conditions it's all the more important that we help businesses to take advantage of new market opportunities in the growing global green economy. This is good for profit margins and employment as well as for tackling the region's ecological footprint. This latest round of ERDF funding will help ensure projects that can contribute to a successful, sustainable future for the South East don't fall by the wayside, providing businesses with the resources to drive these projects forward."

The funding forms part of the South East England European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Competitiveness Programme 2007-13 that was approved in December 2007. SEEDA has provided match funding for the first £1.45 million of this round of grants.

SEEDA has recently launched a second round of this programme. One of the key priorities of this round will be encouraging micro and small businesses to work together, forming consortia that can better access and benefit from funding. The targets will be similar to the first round – improving competitiveness and businesses' bottom lines through sustainable regional initiatives.

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Notes to editors

- In December 2007, the South East was the first English region to have their programme adopted in the UK.

- SEEDA manages the ERDF programme on behalf of the region. The programme aims to promote competitiveness in the South East whilst reducing the region's ecological footprint. It supports new ways of linking good practice between weaker and stronger areas in the region.
- **Eight projects are now underway:**
 1. ***Sustainable Supply Chains through Innovation led by the Centre for Creative Design, University for Creative Arts*** – A consortium of three organisations looking to improve sustainable procurement among innovative SMEs, assisting 140 businesses and contributing £1.5m to the local economy.
 2. ***Procurement and Sustainable Supply (PASS) led by Reading Borough Council*** – A programme actively encouraging SMEs to participate in tendering for Public Sector contracts by simplifying processes and increasing the methods by which businesses can apply for them.
 3. ***ZeroWISE Bulky Waste led by Re-made South East*** – A partnership conducting an innovative research project to reduce volumes of waste going to landfill by finding recycling, re-use and energy-from-waste solutions for bulky waste streams from public and private sector sources.
 4. ***ZeroWISE Construction led by Re-made South East*** – A partnership delivering a range of initiatives to instil a zero-waste strategy among the construction industry, forming a re-use and recycling network that will reduce waste by a total of 80,000 tonnes.
 5. ***Sustainable Marine Transformation (SMART) led by Marine South East*** – A project targeting waste reduction and resource-efficient manufacturing among the 4,000 marine sector businesses in the South East.
 6. ***PLATO: SUSTAIN led by PLATO GB Ltd*** – A project raising awareness of the cost benefits of sustainable business practices among the CEOs and senior managers of 130 key South East SMEs.
 7. ***Design & Innovation for Business Sustainability (DIBS) led by WSX Enterprise*** – A programme stimulating action from SMEs to incorporate sustainable design into their products and services, cutting resource costs and attracting environmentally-aware customers.
 8. ***SMART led by Business Support Kent*** – A project using expert briefings, workshops and promotional campaigns to encourage the take-up of sustainable technologies within the construction industry, presenting a major opportunity for construction SMEs to develop new business.

More information on all these projects and the South East ERDF Competitiveness Programme, [can be found here](#).

- **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
- **For further information, please contact:**
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