



Minister for the
South East



21 April 2009

MINISTERS LISTEN TO BUSINESS CONCERNS IN MILTON KEYNES

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) Chairman, **James Brathwaite CBE** and South East Regional Minister, **Jonathan Shaw**, today heard how business support and bank finance are helping South East companies, and asked about any additional support needed.

They hosted two meetings in Milton Keynes to explore how the current economic climate is affecting people and businesses. The fourth meeting of the South East Economic Delivery Council (SEEDC), was followed by a Regional Lending Seminar with Gareth Thomas, Minister for Trade, Development and Consumer Affairs.

SEEDC considered how best to offer solutions in terms of support from banks and access to funding, to housing and regeneration. Members were also keen to share lessons and best practice across the South East.

On a local level, initiatives and support packages already available and working in the city were identified, together with what additional support might be needed.

The Regional Lending Seminar, run in conjunction with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform built on the Government's 'Real Help Now' initiative, informed local businesses on help available to support them through the downturn. Advisers from Business Link and representatives from banks were on hand with practical advice and assistance.

James Brathwaite, said: "Between us, we are working hard to ensure that the Government understands the vital contribution businesses in the South East make to the UK economy. SEEDA is uniquely placed to pull together business leaders, expert advisers from Business Link and government ministers, in order to explain to local businesses what help is available to support them through the economic downturn.

"We want to ensure that the South East is in the best position it can be when it comes out of the recession. Without a doubt, when the good times come, the South East will be ready for them."

Jonathan Shaw said: "Milton Keynes is a key centre for investment and growth in our region and as such I was very keen to hold these important events in the city. It is hugely important for us to engage with businesses and other local

organisations, especially during the downturn, and SEEDC provides an ideal platform for us to tackle the issues which are important at a local level.

"I congratulate Milton Keynes Council and the organisations working hard to address the economic downturn locally. I'm encouraged by the fact the city has recently held an Economic Summit and developed an Economy Task Group. During this difficult period it is important the region shares best practices, which is exactly why it's so important for the SEEDC members to hear how such initiatives are working."

... ENDS ...

Notes to Editors

- **South East Economic Delivery Council (SEEDC)**

The formation of the SEEDC was announced in October 2008. The group meets every six to eight weeks.

Standing members of SEEDC are:

Jonathan Shaw (SE Regional Minister and Joint Chair)
James Brathwaite (Chairman of SEEDA and Joint Chair)
Pam Alexander – Chief Executive of SEEDA
Colin Byrne – Regional Director of GOSE
Candy Morris and Jim Easton – Chief Executives of South East Coast and South Central SHAs respectively
Cllr Paul Carter – Chairman of South East England Councils
Paul Williams – Regional Director of JobCentre Plus
Marinos Paphitis – Regional Director of LSC
Phil Wood – Regional TUC
Rodger Broad – Regional Director of the Institute of Directors
Malcolm Bradshaw - SE England Chambers of Commerce
Malcolm Young – CBI
David Edwards – Homes & Communities Agency
Sue Dovey – Chair of RAISE
Frank Nigriello – Chair of Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
David Seall – EEF South Chief Exec
Roger House – Regional Chair of Federation of Small Businesses

- **Regional Minister** - Jonathan Shaw was appointed Regional Minister for the South East in 2007. His role is to act as champion for the region ensuring the region has a voice in central government, and that government policy takes account of the differing needs of the South East. The Minister's priorities for the region include housing, infrastructure, the economy and skills & employability.
- **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
- **James Brathwaite CBE** was appointed to the Board of SEEDA the Development Agency for the South East of England in December 2001 and in August 2002 was appointed Chairman.
- Tanya Reed, Media Relations Manager, SEEDA; Tel: 01483 501362; email: tanyareed@seeda.co.uk