

South East marks 1,000 days to 2012 Paralympic Games

3 December 2009

Today (Thursday, 3 December) marks 1,000 days to go until the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

As the proud birthplace of the Paralympics, the South East will be a showcase for the next 1,000 days, hosting major events and training facilities for Olympic and Paralympic teams from across the globe. Also, already more than 1,000 South East companies are shortlisted as suppliers to the Games.

A key project unveiled today is Accentuate, a London 2012 Legacy Project, launched at the Brighton Dome. Accentuate is a three-year programme, funded by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the Legacy Trust UK.

Accentuate promotes the South East as the UK's most welcoming region for deaf and disabled sports competitors, creative professionals and visitors. It also fosters links between young and disabled people in the region with others in competitor countries.

Tourism South East is also focussing on disability and is working with communities to improve facilities, service and welcome for people with disabilities. It has developed a special programme of 'Access Audits' and other activities to kick-start this process in key destinations. Brighton was the first town to participate and, using this experience as a model, other towns and cities are now undergoing the same process, part-funded by Accentuate.

Keren Jones, SEEDA Director for Culture and Communities, said: "SEEDA is extremely proud to be one of the Accentuate partners. The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be a great time for everyone and will benefit our region not just in sporting opportunities, but will also help improve quality of life economically and culturally well beyond 2012.

"As a Regional Development Agency we are very excited that so many businesses and entrepreneurs across the region are becoming motivated by the Paralympic movement and using it to create new opportunities in industries such as film, performing arts, communications, digital technology, leisure and tourism."

Elsewhere in the region, Paralympic Judo silver medalist Ian Rose marked the 1,000 milestone with a visit to Lent Rise School in Burnham, Buckinghamshire, and in Surrey, Rachel Morris, gold medalist in hand-cycling, helped launch a celebration event at Guildford Spectrum.

UK Sport also launched its national Paralympic talent recruitment campaign to identify Paralympics athletes in Brighton today. The athletes that are identified will receive training with an objective of winning gold in 2012. For more information visit www.ukssport.gov.uk/pages/talent

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Notes to Editors

- **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** is responsible for leading the South East Partnership for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Partnership is a group of regional agencies working together to create and promote new market opportunities in tourism, environmental technologies, digital technologies and cultural, creative and sporting industries, as well as the significant procurement opportunities in the run up to the Games through the online tendering system CompeteFor.
- **The South East Partnership** has been formed to ensure that the region delivers a world class performance so that every young person, every business, and every community has the opportunity to gain a positive legacy from the 2012 Games. SEEDA is looking well beyond the 1,000 days to deliver a lasting legacy for the region from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The work of a wide range of partner organisations will result in ongoing economic, social and sporting benefits well beyond Games time in 2012.
- **Accentuate** is funded by SEEDA (£850k) and the Legacy Trust UK, an independent charity set up to help build a lasting cultural and sporting legacy from the 2012 Olympic Games. Accentuate is run by Screen South, the regional screen agency of the UK Film Council for film in the South East of England, working with five other cultural agencies, English Heritage; Museums, Libraries and Archives; Arts Council England South East; Tourism South East; and Sport England, to deliver 15 major projects. Screen South is passionate about developing a dynamic environment in which film and media culture can flourish.
- **Accentuate's** results in achieving a cultural shift will not just be measured through changes in media portrayals and coverage of disabled people, as it also aims to create more than 200 new jobs and benefit the region's economy by up to £11m.
- Leading figures from politics, the arts and sport from across the South East attended the Accentuate launch, which will also showcased specially commissioned work by disabled artists Jon Adams, Caroline Cardus and Rachel Gadsden, Project Artworks' *Sensory Soundings* installation, and performances from the Signdance Collective – a company of dancers with a disability recommended by *Time Out* magazine and winner of the Ability Media International Dance Award.
- Accentuate's new website goes live on the day of the launch, for more information go to www.accentuate-se.org.
- **Tourism South East** is the strategic tourism body for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey and West Sussex.
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