

SEEDA celebrates National Enterprise Academy success

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South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is celebrating the first graduations from the National Enterprise Academy's (NEA) Pathfinder project.

Today, young entrepreneurs from Buckinghamshire will attend their NEA graduation ceremony. The students, aged between 16 and 19, are the first to complete a course of this kind as part of the pilot.

They will receive their awards from Peter Jones, one of the Dragons' Den team and founder of the Peter Jones Foundation, which runs the NEA. They will also hear from VIP speakers about the valuable contribution their new skills make to the economy. These include Stephen Hillier, Director of Skills at Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, and Oona Muirhead CBE, Executive Director for Skills and Sustainable Prosperity of SEEDA.

The Pathfinder project was set up in Buckinghamshire in January 2009 with SEEDA funding. The pilot has proved so successful that the NEA will formally launch its first full academic intake in September. In addition, NEA hubs will be launched across the UK. The headquarters for the national scheme will be based in the South East as it expands over the next four years.

The NEA Pathfinder matched students with local entrepreneurs who mentored them over a six-month period. They worked together to build enterprise skills and confidence to help the young entrepreneurs make a success of their own business ideas.

Oona Muirhead of SEEDA said: "SEEDA is delighted that the NEA Pathfinder has been such a success. The NEA now has a bright future as a full-time academic institution with centres across the UK and that is thanks to the efforts of everyone involved – students, mentors and Peter Jones Foundation. Entrepreneurialism and an innovative spirit are key to the South East's economy. It is these skills that will help drive our region and the national economy out of recession. The NEA's work is essential to fostering these skills in our future entrepreneurs and that is why SEEDA is in full support of the Academy."

Alex Pratt, SEEDA board member and CEO of Serious Brands said: "Those of us who have set a business up at 16 understand just how difficult it is to do, that your confidence can be fragile and that learning at the pace of life is an essential skill. The NEA offers future generations the opportunity to learn from real life

entrepreneurs and encourages our talent to side step safer career paths like law or the Civil Service, and to pursue their entrepreneurial potential".

Peter Jones, said: "I am delighted to see the first wave of students graduate from the National Enterprise Academy Pathfinder programme. These 28 aspiring entrepreneurs have experienced a truly unique programme of enterprise education designed to give them the skills they need to succeed in setting up their own business or to shine in an established business. The NEA aims to unlock the potential of Britain's young entrepreneurial talent and this graduation is a celebration of that talent. I very much look forward to welcoming the next wave of young entrepreneurs when the NEA opens its doors for the first full year course this coming September."

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Notes to Editors

- The NEA was the brainchild of leading British entrepreneur Peter Jones CBE and is run through the Peter Jones Foundation. It is an employer-led, national centre of excellence for enterprise learning, with the aim of stimulating entrepreneurial activity in young people.
- SEEDA has contributed over £1m grant funding to the NEA and will invest over £2.25m by March 2010.
- Two examples of successful entrepreneurs that were involved in NEA are:
 - Levi Roots (April 27th) - Levi presented a masterclass to the students at Thai Fusion cooking school - he kicked off with a cooking lesson while sharing the ups and downs of his own success.
 - Conor Woodmand (July 2nd) - Conor of 'Around the World in 80 Trades' fame provided a practical class to the students which showcased the need for enterprise skills, whatever sector you work in.
- **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:
 - 17,500 jobs created or safeguarded
 - 32,500 people helped to get work
 - 10,000 businesses created or attracted to region
 - 137,500 businesses assisted
 - £638m investment, 45% levered from private sector
 - 200ha Brownfield land remediated
 - 148,500 people assisted in skills development
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