

Vestas success in £6m bid for global R&D centre on Isle of Wight

27 July 2009

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is delighted that Vestas Technology's bid for government funding has been successful. The grant of over £6m has been awarded to the wind power firm for a Research and Development facility to be built on the Isle of Wight.

The Department for Energy and Climate Change is awarding Vestas over £3m as part of the Environmental Transformation Fund (ETF) scheme. SEEDA is also putting in over £3m to enable the cutting-edge facility to be built on the Island.

Vestas is the first company to receive a grant from the ETF scheme. The company submitted its bid earlier this year for an R&D facility to focus on developing new wind energy products for the global market, which is expected to be led by the UK and Europe over the next decade. The new centre will safeguard 100 and create a further 150 jobs on the Island in the short term and may offer jobs to some workers from Vestas' closing manufacturing plant.

The Island is already host to a number of companies with strengths in composite technology and boasts a highly skilled workforce. Vestas' R&D facility will help provide the critical mass in the sector to create a cluster of composite companies, allowing expertise in composite engineering techniques to be further developed on the Island.

Jim Brathwaite CBE, SEEDA Chairman, said: "This announcement is great news for the Island's workforce and economy: it will put the Island at the forefront of developing the next generation of off-shore wind turbines that the UK needs to deploy in significant numbers over the next decade. We are very conscious of the difficulties faced by the current manufacturing plant and have been working hard with our Task Force colleagues to identify skills-match and re-skilling job opportunities for those facing redundancy at Vestas and have had a good degree of success: some 100 jobs look secure so far with many more job opportunities still being identified, albeit a proportion are likely to be off the Island. This announcement further bolsters this number of skilled jobs on and near the Island. We will continue to seek out these opportunities and to find ways of supporting people back into work."

Jonathan Shaw MP, South East Regional Minister, said, "This R&D funding is extremely good news for the Isle of Wight. The Government is committed to renewable energy in the UK and to developing the low carbon industry. We are also committed to helping businesses and communities through the recession and, in light of the current difficulties, I

have been working with organisations including Jobcentre Plus, Isle of Wight Council and Business Link to make sure that the affected Vestas workers get the help they need."

SEEDA's primary aim is to support businesses through the recession and ready them for the upturn. It has identified hi-tech industry sectors, such as renewable energy, as key to re-establishing economic growth in the South East. SEEDA's match support for the ETF scheme is enabling R&D and innovation in environmental technologies. It also demonstrates confidence in the Island as a great place to invest and helps strengthen the Island's composites cluster.

The ETF scheme is an important step forward in delivering the Government's Renewable Energy Strategy. This grant for Vestas is a commitment to developing new technologies for next generation wind turbine blades in the UK.

...ENDS...

Notes to Editors

- **Please contact Jessica Stewart in the press office if you would like to arrange an interview**
- The £6m grant is alongside £80m of Vestas' own funding.
- A SEEDA-led taskforce is co-ordinating a cross-agency approach for the support of employees facing redundancy at Vestas, bringing together a wide range of support and services available from a number of Government agencies including
 - Isle of Wight and Southampton Councils
 - Learning & Skills Council
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - Business Link
- Newport Jobcentre Plus is providing help and support to the Vestas workers affected by closure of the manufacturing plant. It has assigned more staff to take benefit claims and have provided a dedicated local project manager to work with the company so that workers get the help they need. It is providing a range of advice and guidance including skills assessments, training, local job vacancies or business start up.
- **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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