

£3.5m SEEDA and DECC funding secured for global R&D centre on Isle of Wight

7 December 2009

The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) have together awarded Vestas Technology £3.5m for research and development, in addition to over £6m they jointly awarded the wind power firm in July this year.

This brings the total government investment in the development of new wind technology on the Island to just under £10m; half from SEEDA and half from DECC. It is the final piece of funding needed to allow Vestas to develop an R&D programme in their new facility, which will lead to the next generation of offshore blades.

The funding is being provided on a competitive basis: Vestas along with other companies bid against the Environmental Transformation Fund (ETF) scheme for offshore wind research and development.

Vestas currently employs 160 people on the Isle of Wight. By the time the new R&D centre opens in 2011, this figure is expected to grow to 200 people and to 400 over the following years.

Vestas submitted its bid earlier this year for funding of R&D projects to develop new wind energy products for the global market at the custom built facility on the Island. It submitted its bid in two parts to access funding for two different projects under ETF: developing new ways of validation and testing; and developing automated manufacturing processes.

The R&D centre will strengthen the composites cluster and expertise on the Island, which includes leading aerospace engineering company GKN, with who SEEDA is also working. It will help to further develop the sector, creating additional highly skilled jobs as well as helping to support the economy of the Island.

Pam Alexander, SEEDA Chief Executive, said: "This award is good news for the UK's position in the offshore wind market and also for the Isle of Wight's workforce and economy. Vestas is a key employer offering high value jobs and we are keen to retain them at the heart of the Isle of Wight's centre of excellence in advanced composite materials. The R&D centre will shortly be leading the development of new offshore wind technologies for the rest of the world."

Isle of Wight Council Chief Executive Steve Beynon, said: "We have worked hard to support Vestas through the process of obtaining planning permission for the R&D centre so we are naturally delighted both by the announcement of welcome inward investment and by the confirmation from Vestas that they are committed to the plant. I believe that the development of offshore wind energy can produce the sort of economic and environmental benefits that we all wish to see."

"We will continue to work with SEEDA in assisting both Vestas and other renewable energy technology companies to retain and expand their operations on the Island."

South East Regional Minister Jonathan Shaw, said: "It is opportune that this news comes as the eyes of the world are on Copenhagen and the climate change talks.

"We need to act to tackle climate change but let's also be clear about the immediate benefits which will flow in terms of green jobs and a healthier, cleaner and quieter environment from a low carbon Britain and a low carbon world.

"With this award we will see immediate benefits in terms of the Isle of Wight economy, and, further afield, I am delighted the Vestas centre on the island will be a beacon for the rest of the world to follow."

SEEDA's primary aim is to help businesses take advantage of opportunities during the recovery of the global economy. 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 £3.5m grant is in addition to over £6m previously announced on 27 July (funded equally by DECC and SEEDA), bringing the total amount to just under £10m. Vestas is investing £80m alongside this government funding. This money is for a high-tech R&D building; to develop the river frontage; and to employ skilled staff for the centre.
- **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
- **For media enquiries**, please contact:
Jessica Stewart (Media Relations Manager): 01483 501307 jessicastewart@seeda.co.uk