



MEDIA RELEASE

Former Vestas workers finding routes back into work

05 October 2009

Figures collated by Jobcentre Plus, part of the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)-led taskforce, show that positive in-roads are being made, with over 160 former Vestas employees having found work since redundancy in August or on training courses.

So far 70 people have secured new employment and 94 are on training courses to develop new skills. In addition, a number of people secured jobs on the Island and mainland directly through jobs fairs organised by the taskforce. Those re-training include, six people training to become driving instructors and 24 on the Southampton City College Aluminium Welding course.

A number of former workers have established their own business. These include the following on the Island:

- A new turbine repair company – 15-20 employees
- Three new landscape gardening businesses
- Two new guesthouses
- A new supply chain consultancy on the island, set up by a former Vestas manager
- A couple of painters and decorators setting up independently

The number of people claiming jobseekers allowance has fallen steadily since the redundancies were made – from 274 to 204. However, there is still significant work to be done to support former workers and so the taskforce will continue to identify suitable opportunities and provide advice.

Oona Muirhead, SEEDA's Executive Director of Skills and Sustainable Prosperity, said: "It is still early days but former Vestas workers are securing jobs, entering training or starting up their own businesses. The efforts of the taskforce, which is led by SEEDA and includes Jobcentre Plus, Learning and Skills Council and Isle of Wight and Southampton Councils, have started to deliver benefits for redundant workers and local employers. We are keeping up the pressure, actively seeking out opportunities with existing companies as well as attracting new ones to support the Island's workforce and economy and secure its future prosperity."

Helen Edmunds, Taskforce Project Manager, Jobcentre Plus, said: "At Jobcentre Plus, we are seeing former Vestas workers going into work every day. Island employers have been keen to employ them as they are highly sought after employees, seen as positive team workers with problem solving skills going beyond the basic requirements of production based jobs. They are also taking up self employment options, returning to previous employment or training in new skills, supported by our Business Link colleagues."

Former workers that would like more information about job opportunities should contact Jobcentre Plus, call Newport on 01983 273115 (Anne Marie) and Ryde 01983 276888 (Steph).

ENDS...

Notes to Editors

- **Please contact Jessica Stewart in the SEEDA 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
- **For media enquiries**, please contact:
Jessica Stewart, Media Relations Manager, SEEDA; Tel: 01483 501307; Email: jessicastewart@seeda.co.uk
- **Jobcentre Plus**
Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department for Work and Pensions, brings together employment and benefit services for people of working age and is a key element in the Government's objectives to help people based on 'Work for those who can, support for those who cannot'. It provides a professional and modern service to meet the diverse needs of employers and those seeking work, including:
 - Personal advisers to provide practical support and advice to help those in need find and keep work, including training provision and benefits guidance
 - A dedicated service to support employers in filling their vacancies quickly and successfully
 - Ability to place and search for jobs both online and over the phone (via Jobpoints and through Jobseeker Direct and Employer Direct).
 - Swift, secure and professional access to benefits for those entitled to them.

Customers can access Jobcentre Plus services through around 1,000 locations across Great Britain, including nearly 750 newly refurbished Jobcentre Plus offices. Touch-screen terminals and Customer Access Phones are also available in a further 120 sites such as libraries and local authority premises. Jobcentre Plus has 13,000 Personal Advisers and their immediate support staff to help customers, and nearly 5,000 staff who see customers every fortnight to review their efforts to find work and offer support. It works with over 275,000 employers to place people into work every week. On average, 10,000 new vacancies are listed each day on its website and more than 4m job search requests are received, making it the number one UK recruitment website.

For further information on the services that Jobcentre Plus provides employers and people of working age visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

Vestas Wind Systems is the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer. The Danish owned company had its UK operation on the Isle of Wight.

The plant closed in August, resulting in 427 redundancies.

A Rapid Response Unit was established by SEEDA and Jobcentre Plus to work with employees affected by the closure. This was based on the Rapid Response Service that Jobcentre Plus offers to every employer with 20 or more redundancies. It can be made available more widely in any local community who have been disproportionately affected by multiple smaller scale redundancies.

Funding has been increased for Jobcentre Plus' Rapid Response Service from £3m to £12m, to provide help for those about to be made redundant.

Regional Minister for the South East Jonathan Shaw worked with organisations like Jobcentre Plus, Isle of Wight Council and Business Link to ensure the workers received the help they need.