



England's
Regional Development
Agencies

RDA Secretariat
Fifth Floor, Oceanic House
1A Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5BG
0207 968 0600
www.englishrdas.com

Chair of Chairs: South West Regional Development Agency
April to September 2010

Dr Vince Cable MP
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

12 May 2010

Dear Secretary of State

Many congratulations on your appointment. On behalf of the Chairs of England's RDAs, we extend a warm welcome to you in your new role. As key operational arms of your Department, we look forward to working with you closely to help re-build and re-balance the economy in these precarious times.

We know that significant change lies ahead for RDAs. As business leaders we are well aware of the financial pressures to be faced, along with the specific views expressed in the manifestos about RDAs' future. As organisations responsible to you, please be assured that we are ready for change.

In the meantime, our skills and experience make us uniquely well placed to help make your policies a reality on the ground, and swiftly, including through our extensive networks of business relationships. From the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos, it is clear that encouraging enterprise and innovation (especially in developing the low carbon and environmental technology sectors, advanced manufacturing, and other emerging industries), expanding private sector employment and investment, and ensuring a skilled workforce for the future, will be priorities for you. Our staff have significant expertise that will be of use to you in all these areas.

Looking further ahead, we have hands-on experience to support you in shaping an ambitious and enterprise-led model for future economic success, built around practical and proven low carbon principles. We are ready to help, and to assist you and our local partners in ensuring that all parts of the country can share in rising prosperity again.

As you begin to develop potential alternative approaches to economic development, we can offer expertise and analysis of the many programmes undertaken by the RDAs to support businesses, key sectors and local economies, not least during the recession. You will no doubt also want to seek the views of the business organisations. Our experience from the frontline shows in particular that:

Empowering business requires a close understanding of business, from key international companies through to the local firm. We have found that businesses' activities rarely respect administrative boundaries;

Whitehall Departments need effective levers to make change happen on the ground, to translate national strategy into area or sector-specific priorities – and then to turn those priorities into action and results quickly and efficiently, demonstrating the best possible returns on investment;

Building sustainable prosperity is a long-term business, and the most difficult aspects need long-term commitment, strong leadership, and an approach that can join up all the diverse elements needed for economic success;

Large projects crossing boundaries need a catalyst to bring partners together. Furthermore, scale of operation really does matter, particularly when leveraging in significant contributions from corporate investors. Economic development expertise and capacity takes time to develop. Major private sector players demand specialist knowledge, experience and dedicated contact from those leading and co-ordinating this work; and

Clear prioritisation is even more vital when resources are scarce. Backing initiatives that will make the greatest difference, and in the right places, is crucial. That inevitably means making hard choices. It also requires close alignment of resources and effort to secure the best outcomes.

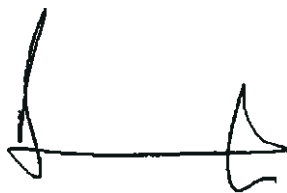
This is a critical time for the Government and for the economy. As business leaders, and as your workforce on the ground, we would very much welcome an early opportunity to discuss these matters with you directly.

With our best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Sir Harry Studholme
South West RDA
Lead Chair for the Network



Bryan Jackson
emda
Lead for Enterprise



Rob Douglas
SEEDA
Lead for Innovation and Skills



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019 214 1500 South West Regional Development Agency
April to September 2010

Mark Prisk MP
Minister of State
Department for Business, Innovation & Skills
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

14th May 2010

Dear Mark,

Many congratulations on your appointment. On behalf of the Chairs of England's RDAs, we extend a warm welcome to you in your new role. As key operational arms of your Department, we look forward to working with you closely to help re-build and re-balance the economy in these precarious times.

There is no better way to get to grips with the issues of the economy than to see things on the ground. We would be only too delighted to host a series of visits or meetings to bring together businesses and other key partners to discuss the practical issues they face and their priorities for action.

At our previous meetings, we highlighted that our skills and experience help make BIS policies a reality on the ground, swiftly and effectively. Our networks of business relationships and economic intelligence provide eyes and ears for the Department. Our staff have hands-on experience to support you. In particular, we work to spread prosperity across England, and have practical experience in many of the areas highlighted in the Conservative and Liberal Democrat manifestos, including low carbon technologies, advanced manufacturing, and other emerging industries. We are ready to help, and to assist you in ensuring that all parts of the country can share in rising prosperity again.

As we have said to the Secretary of State, as you begin to develop potential alternative approaches to economic development, we can offer expertise and analysis of the many programmes undertaken by the RDAs to support businesses, key sectors and local economies, not least during the recession. You will no doubt also want to seek the views of the business organisations. Our experience from the frontline shows in particular that:

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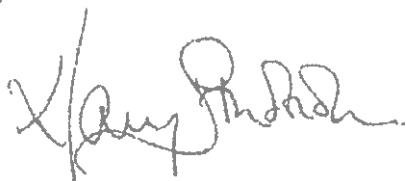
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Clear prioritisation is even more vital when resources are scarce. Backing initiatives that will make the greatest difference, and in the right places, is crucial. That inevitably means making hard choices. It also requires close alignment of resources and effort to secure the best outcomes.

We know that significant change lies ahead for RDAs. As business leaders we are well aware of the financial pressures to be faced, along with the specific views expressed in the manifestos about RDAs' future. As organisations responsible to you, please be assured that we are ready for change. We would very much welcome an early opportunity to discuss these matters with you directly.

With our best wishes,

Yours sincerely



Sir Harry Studholme
South West RDA

As lead Chair for the Network and on behalf of Bryan Jackson, Chair of EMDA and lead for Enterprise.

Robert H Douglas CBE Chairman



Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department of Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9DA

12 May 2010

Iain Duncan Smith
Dear Secretary of State,

Many congratulations on your appointment and, on behalf of England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), may I offer a warm welcome to your new role. SEEDA leads for all 9 RDAs on relations with your Department.

We share your objectives of creating new opportunities to help people move from unemployment back into work, getting the economy moving and increasing the global competitiveness of the UK. We are keen to help you tackle the key challenges of establishing and creating a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people to find work.

RDAs work closely with Department of Work and Pensions officials and with Jobcentre Plus at national, regional and local level. We are able to bring our detailed understanding of the opportunities available in businesses in our regions to ensure individuals, especially the long-term unemployed, are well prepared to get jobs in companies that are growing. Examples include the jobs created when we help a company set up or expand into England. We are working with Jobcentre Plus to ensure their offer is joined-up with Business Link services, so that people are easily able to get advice on setting up their own business. We also work very closely together on redeploying workers in the event of a major redundancy situation, for example through job matching into companies that are taking on staff.

We know that significant change lies ahead for RDAs. As business leaders, we are aware of the financial pressures to be faced, along with the specific views expressed about RDAs' future. Please be assured that we are ready for change. We are also ready to work with you and our business and local authority partners in the most effective way possible to support employment and enterprise that will grow the economy and help to reduce the public deficit.

We have worked closely with your officials on these issues and I would welcome an early opportunity to discuss them directly with you. I will be in touch with your office and hope to meet you as soon as convenient.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Douglas', with a horizontal line drawn through the bottom of the signature.

Rob Douglas CBE
Chairman
South East England Development Agency
RDA National Lead for Innovation and Skills, Work and Pensions

Robert H Douglas CBE Chairman

David Willetts MP
Minister of State for Universities and Science
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

13 May 2010

Dear Minister,

Many congratulations on your appointment and, on behalf of England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), welcome to your new role. SEEDA leads for the 9 RDAs on universities and adult skills, science and innovation and on the Department of Work and Pensions

We are able and ready to help you to tackle the key challenges of increasing the skills and level of innovation within Britain's businesses, sharing our well-established relationships with, and deep understanding of, our businesses, supply chains, knowledge base and centres of excellence.

RDAs provide a critical link between businesses and university research that increases the global competitiveness of existing businesses as well as creating, and growing, new businesses. RDAs also promote the UK's universities to attract Foreign Direct Investment to the UK.

RDAs coordinate strategic advice on the skills needed to support economic growth and share it with BIS, skills funders, local authorities and providers. Our business support programmes stimulate employers' own investment in skills to support business growth, helping employers and businesses to use their employees' existing skills to the full, and encourage them to fill skills gaps such as skills for innovation and new technologies, a critical element of any business's plans. We also fund skills programmes and interventions to help businesses to meet long term as well as immediate needs and economic priorities.

In relation to science and innovation, RDAs provide strategic advice to BIS and to the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) on the needs and opportunities of innovative and high-technology businesses with growth potential. Each region has identified a small number of sector priorities and centres of excellence with regional, national and international significance. Co-investments have supported the growth of high-technology sectors such as plastic electronics, wave technology, ultra-low carbon vehicles and space, through programmes aligned across boundaries and with those of the TSB to deliver complex investments, bringing together the public and private sectors.

We know that significant change lies ahead for RDAs. As business leaders, we are aware of the financial pressures to be faced, along with the specific views expressed about RDAs' future. We look forward to working closely with you and our business and local authority partners to help rebuild and re-balance the economy in these precarious times.

We have worked closely with your officials and I would welcome an early opportunity to discuss these matters directly with you. I will be in touch with your office and hope to meet you as soon as convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Douglas

Rob Douglas CBE
Chairman
South East England Development Agency
MDA National Lead for Innovation and Skills, Work and Pensions