

A hub of high-tech, knowledge intensive businesses

Launched in April 2006, the Hethel Engineering Centre is one of the EEDA's network of Enterprise Hubs - a series of linked initiatives aimed at stimulating innovation growth in knowledge-intensive and high-tech businesses, particularly the region's advanced engineering, electronics and motorsports cluster. The centre provides a range of specialised support for businesses and start-ups in the high-tech engineering field, helping to ensure sustainable success.

Based on three acres of land close to the Lotus headquarters at Hethel, the centre features workshops and adjacent office units, meeting rooms and high quality training facilities. The centre provides start-up accommodation for new and existing small businesses with 'easy in and out' terms tenants - it is expected that they will outgrow the centre within a few years, creating room for their successors. The centre is set to create 57 new jobs and safeguard 115, create 26 new businesses, assist 738 people in skills development and recover more than one hectare of brownfield land.

Hethel Engineering Centre already has seven tenant companies in place, has hosted a variety of training courses and events, and has opened a regional automotive academy. In addition, it has launched a competition for start-up businesses in the region to win a year's free workspace and professional services support, worth up to £50,000. EEDA contributed £500,000 towards the building of the £4m centre, and a further £350,000 has been approved for prototyping

Investing in Universities in the East

EEDA has undertaken a major drive to bring more people into training and higher education, creating new jobs and business start-ups.

The Agency set the ball rolling for the expansion of the University of Essex beyond its Colchester campus and into Southend by buying the old Odeon Cinema site there for £4.5m. The new £27m South Essex University Campus will accommodate up to 1,500 students studying subjects ranging from business to performing arts, and is already providing employers with graduates equipped with relevant skills.

The Campus has a business development centre and a business incubator centre for technology-focused firms allied to the University's academic research, and is the site for the new South East Essex College of Arts and Technology. The college offers courses ranging from learning to be a chef to training to be a musical technician, attracting young people who might previously have opted out of further education.

Suffolk residents have historically faced difficulties accessing higher education because of a lack of provision. EEDA has also invested £18m for the creation of Suffolk's first university. University Campus Suffolk, a collaboration between the University of East Anglia and the University of Essex, will provide 7,500 student places and create an estimated 1,655 jobs.