

### **Improving training and education in Kent**

There has been a long-term problem of skills shortages along the north coast of Kent, and the situation was exacerbated by the closure of Chatham, a former Royal Navy dockyard on the River Medway, with the loss of 7,500 jobs and attendant workers' training and education courses.

SEEDA helped develop a solution through a major educational initiative, increasing the number of people in higher education while bringing regeneration to the area. Universities at Medway (UaM) is a partnership between SEEDA and the universities of Greenwich, Kent and Canterbury Christ Church, and Mid-Kent College. In 1999, SEEDA took over the Chatham Maritime site, investing £4.4m in securing its historic buildings, and a total of £8.6m in UaM. The Agency helped bring the universities together to deliver a multiversity campus, and acted as a conduit for securing and managing a £15m investment from central government.

The result was a £50m shared campus combining the historic nature of the site with the best of British contemporary, energy-efficient architecture. Student numbers are now close to 6,000, with subjects ranging from literature and law to sports science and sustainable development. The historic dockyard now provides education, training, homes, business and jobs, and is expected to bring £10m into the area each year.

### **All change at Hastings – improving education, homes, transport and businesses**

Only a few years ago, weekly earnings in Hastings were £100 below national average and employment 2% above. 23% of households were on housing benefit and 10% of property in serious need of repair or replacement. Education and training were suffering too.

SEEDA stepped in with £38m from government, £10m from the EU and £15m from English Partnerships and formed the Hastings & Bexhill Task Force, aiming to improve education, homes, transport, businesses, jobs and the urban environment. Their key idea was to make regeneration education-led. By improving training at all levels, people could move through education and into productive employment. The new University Centre Hastings (UCH), managed by the University of Brighton, is the UK's first 'University Centre', offering courses through regional universities and international institutions. To date 750 students have attended.

Physical regeneration is underway with the Priory Quarter project, which includes an £85m rebuild of the Station Plaza, complete with college, primary healthcare centre, residential apartments, retail outlets and business premises. The project aims to create an impressive gateway for Hastings, connecting the railway station with the rest of the town.

Deprivation levels have fallen, crime has dropped, 1,000 jobs have been created, 190 new businesses have been created and household income has risen 9 percent against the regional average.