

East of England businesses among first to make the Skills Pledge

Date of issue	18 June 2007
Publication number	121
Embargo until	Immediate

East of England businesses among first to make the Skills Pledge

More than 45 businesses from the East of England are among the first to make the Skills Pledge to support all their employees to develop basic skills and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications.

Sir Digby Jones launched the Skills Pledge this month at an event in London before travelling to Hertfordshire to meet local employers to discuss training needs.

The UK Skills Envoy visited Oaklands College in St Albans where he had been invited by the Federation of Colleges and the University of Hertfordshire to talk with employers, colleges and training providers about the importance of training and skills and to promote the Skills Pledge. Sir Digby stressed the importance of training employees to at least Level 2 (the equivalent of five GCSEs at A - C grade).

Among the first to make the Skills Pledge was Leisure Connection which owns leisure and fitness clubs across the region.

Kate Casey, HR manager at Leisure Connection said: "We have really noticed the link between training, the quality of our services and staff retention and can see how our business and staff benefit from training programmes. We are very proud to be one of the first employers in the East of England to make the Skills Pledge."

Other regional businesses signed up to the Skills Pledge are Mortons of Horncastle Ltd; Construction Skills and the East of England Development Agency.

The Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006, warned that the UK must 'raise its game' on skills at all levels if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy. The Skills Pledge fulfils a key recommendation made in the review, at the heart of a new 'deal' where employers will be able to shape the skills system to meet their needs, in return for prioritising skills training at all levels.

Employers that make a commitment to the Skills Pledge will have access to a Skills Broker, part of the Learning and Skills Council's Train to Gain service, through whom they can access free literacy and numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses. The Skills Broker can assess the company's training needs and help the employer produce an action plan that will set out contributions from the state, the employer and the individual.

Speaking at the launch event Sir Digby Jones said: "I warmly congratulate all employers who have led the way by making the Skills Pledge today. By taking this step, you are showing other employers that, by investing in the skills of your people, you are investing in your business. At the same time, you are helping the UK seize the opportunity that globalisation presents, enabling us to compete in the brutally competitive world economy of the future."

For more information on the Skills Pledge, please visit traintogain.gov.uk or call 0800 015 5545.

-Ends-

Image attached: Sir Digby Jones talks to employers, colleges and training providers at Oaklands College in St Albans.

For more information please contact Donna Barker at Band & Brown Communications on 01603 417722 or email donna.barker@bbpr.com