

Issued: 08 August 2007

John Hutton MP meets Gloucestershire businesses to assess recovery following flood chaos

John Hutton MP Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform this week met with Gloucestershire businesses affected by the floods to discuss their needs in the aftermath of the crisis.

He began with a visit to Tewkesbury Saw Ltd, a woodworking equipment supplier, which lost much of its stock in the floods. The company is receiving support from the £2 million Gloucestershire Flood Recovery Scheme being funded by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA).

Mr Hutton said: "Our job is to ensure that businesses recover from this catastrophe as quickly as possible. One thing that's important is that just because the water has receded, it does not mean the problem has gone away." He added that the South West RDA's response so far has been excellent.

Bruce Keen, managing director of Tewkesbury Saw Ltd, said: "We are getting back on our feet now – our showroom is up and running again and we are in the process of clearing up our workshops. We are pleased to have had the chance to explain our situation to Mr Hutton and discuss some of the issues we are facing."

Escorted by Mr Keen, Mr Hutton then undertook a tour of Tewkesbury to meet with representatives from other companies including tyre dealer Ski Tyres; Chillway Express Specials Ltd, distributor of chilled products and meat, and electrical suppliers, Sub Assembly Services.

This was followed by a visit to Cheltenham based aircraft landing gear company, Messier-Dowty Ltd. Production was stopped at the firm for several days after two workshops were flooded.

Rebecca Wassell, director of human resources at Messier-Dowty, said: “The cost to businesses in the region is significant, and the support of Government in this recovery phase is highly valued. Mr Hutton was clearly interested in how businesses have coped and demonstrated his desire to help.”

Business representatives from across the region met with Mr Hutton after the tour to discuss issues caused by the flooding, how they can be addressed and future funding requirements.

He was accompanied on his visit by Juliet Williams, chairman of the South West RDA and Ian Thompson, director of operations in the north of the region. Ian said: “This visit from Mr Hutton is a real boost for the region. It was a great chance for us all to see first hand the fantastic resilience of businesses in the area.

“We urge businesses to get in touch so they too can benefit from the emergency flood fund and recover from this situation.”

The Gloucestershire Flood Recovery Scheme offers grants to small and medium sized enterprises to help them get back on their feet after the recent flooding chaos. The South West RDA has developed this scheme in conjunction with Gloucestershire First and Business Link. More than 200 businesses have already contacted the scheme seeking help following last month’s floods.

Eligible businesses are able to claim up to a maximum of £2,500, which could include clean up costs and materials and alternative temporary accommodation. Longer term items such as business continuity planning and marketing and business advice will also be covered. All types of small and medium sized businesses are eligible including farms, sole-traders and tourism companies. Once a call to the scheme has been registered, eligible businesses are given the opportunity to be visited by an advisor within 24 hours.

To contact the Gloucestershire Flood Recovery Scheme call **0845 6009006**.

Guidance and application forms are also available on the following websites/pages:

www.southwestrda.org.uk

www.businesslinksw.co.uk

www.glosfirst.co.uk

ENDS

For further information contact:

Sue Dawson at CHPR on 0117 944 1415 / sue.dawson@chpr.co.uk, or;

Beth Motley at Camargue on 01242 577 277 / bmotley@camarquepr.com

Notes to editors:

The South West of England Regional Development Agency was established by government in 1999 to promote the long-term economic success of the region. It does this by working with others to give people the skills they need, encouraging enterprise, improving infrastructure, helping communities with regeneration and promoting the strengths of the region.