



Annual Conference 2010 North East England and Low Carbon Economy

18th February 2010

9.00am – 4.30pm

Durham

It is now widely agreed that the development of the low carbon economy is an opportunity to transform the prospects and well being of North East England. Building on the region's rich strengths and capabilities in such areas as energy technology and marine engineering, much activity and investment has taken place over recent years, and particularly in the 12 months since the last NEEF conference. This investment and activity has established the basis for future success in the recovery from the recession.

Highlights of the last 12 months have included the announcement of the intention by Nissan to locate its electric vehicle battery manufacturing facility in Sunderland, the designation by Government of the national Low Carbon Economic Area for Electric Vehicles; the emergence of the region as a world leader in electric vehicle infrastructure; the development of new companies engaged in low carbon vehicles and related technology; the announcement of Round 3 Development Zones for Offshore Wind, with an anticipated £100bn investment; the establishment and growth in the region of national development centres for offshore wind technology, wave energy technology, printable electronics and industrial biotechnology; and the establishment of the JEREMIE fund to support the region's increasing number of new businesses.

However, there have of course been lowlights, including the difficulties affecting the steel industry and the chemicals industry, with their particular consequences for Tees Valley; ongoing reduced demand and general business difficulties, not least in construction and logistics; and high levels of unemployment, despite all indications that the region has fared better than in previous recessions.

Our challenge now is to move forward, using our new and revitalized strengths, to achieve more widespread and long-term success. Continuing difficulties affecting other parts of the region's economy and the strong likelihood of major public sector spending cuts, reinforce the need for us to make the most of our opportunities in the low carbon and related sectors.

How we will make this shift in scale and pace is the theme of this year's NEEF conference. Delegates will get the opportunity to hear and debate: the national and international context for the development of the economy post the recession, international examples of success relevant to the region, and new developments within North East England.

Key questions that will be asked will include: what will the new political landscape look like and what will be its impact on the region; how do we assist more companies to benefit from the growth in new activities; how will we ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure and resources; how will we capitalize on our new-found world-leading position in some key new markets; and how do we enable all of our region to benefit, including those parts badly affected by the recession?