

**NEWS RELEASE from**

**devon renaissance**  
working for rural prosperity



**14 July 2008**

**Top Defra officials to visit Devon Eco Business Park**

The Director –General of Natural Environment, Peter Unwin, and other officials from Defra will visit the Dunkeswell Eco Business Park in Devon on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July.

The Business Park has been set up by the Blackdown Hills Business Association with a £100,000 investment from Devon Renaissance. Additional funding has come from the Blackdown Hills Sustainable Development Fund, LEADER+, the European Social Fund, Devon County Council and Defra. Business units have been created from disused buildings on the former airfield using eco-friendly materials, will be heated by environmentally friendly wood pellet boilers and will also contain features such as composting toilets.

Among the first tenants is the Blackdown Hills Natural Fibre Group. They will be setting up and running a large carding machine and felting table to produce large quantities of felt from local low grade sheep's wool and the low grade fibre from other fibre animals such as alpacas. There is no other company doing this and the felt will be used for a variety of products such as building insulation, hanging basket liners, designer garments and soft furnishings. The business has also been supported by Devon Renaissance through a separate grant and is an example of a truly innovative way of recycling what would otherwise be in effect, a waste product.

Another early tenant is a digital video enterprise called Tower Studios which has been set up by three local people.

The Defra party will arrive at the Business Park at lunchtime accompanied by Ian Piper, director of Sustainable Communities for the South West RDA, and representatives of Devon Renaissance.

Earlier in the day the Defra officials are due to visit the RDA headquarters in Exeter where they will be briefed on how the Agency is leading the development of a low carbon, resource-efficient economy in the region.

Simon Mallett of Devon Renaissance said, 'The Dunkeswell Eco Business Park project is one that really struck a chord with the team here when we were approached to help with funding.

"It shows how a local organisation, thinking innovatively, can bring redundant buildings back into productive economic use, recycling brownfield land that would otherwise just sit there. It really benefits new and emerging businesses and is doing all of this in a way that demonstrates how environmental issues can be addressed in really practical terms."

Ends

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

Devon Renaissance is the rural regeneration partnership organisation for the county. It is a not for profit partnership of the private sector, local authorities and community-based organisations. The organisation is funded by the South West Regional Development Agency, Devon County Council, and North Devon, Torridge, West Devon, South Hams, East Devon and Teignbridge district and borough councils. Devon Renaissance provides grant funding

and works with projects to help create prosperity and jobs and improve access to services in rural areas. It has funding of £7 million over three years which is estimated to be worth £25 million to the Devon economy with match funding.

[www.ruraldevon.org](http://www.ruraldevon.org)

Release issued by pr dogs limited, public relations consultants, on behalf of Devon Renaissance

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