

NEWS RELEASE

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# devon renaissance

working for rural prosperity

**24 August 2007**

## **Devon Renaissance funding for Torridge tops £1 million**

Devon Renaissance, the rural regeneration partnership organisation for the county, is putting more than £38,000 into two projects to improve business skills in Torridge. One of the projects, called Skillstarters for Torridge, will help 40 small businesses which have not got involved with formal skills training to raise the skills levels of their workers. The other, called Graduate Skills for Torridge, will encourage 20 small and medium sized companies to take on graduates to improve their business operations.

The Devon Renaissance investment in the projects amounts to £38,627, and it brings the organisation's total investment in projects for Torridge to more than £1 million.

These latest projects are designed to tackle the acute skills problems that exist in Torridge, which in turn impact upon the wide issues of poor productivity and low incomes.

Skillstarters for Torridge will help businesses review their development needs, get their commitment to training and demonstrate the business benefits of improved skills.

Graduate Skills for Torridge will help businesses to offer placements for graduates. Despite having acute higher-level skills needs and a low productivity, businesses in Torridge have a very poor record of take-up of placements, but where they do occur business benefits have been significant.

Robin Makeig-Jones, Devon Renaissance programme manager, said: "The average business benefit in Devon of a graduate placement is estimated at £25,000, and in 70 per cent of cases it has resulted in a permanent appointment and continuing benefits for business.

"This scheme will not only help businesses improve productivity but will also help local graduates find jobs in the area.

"Skillstarters for Torridge is also an important step to improving productivity, particularly among micro-businesses which have not realised the benefits that skills training can bring."

Devon Renaissance's £1 million investment in Torridge covers a wide range of projects and programmes, including the Bideford Regeneration Initiative, Women into Construction, Rural Enterprise Development and bringing redundant buildings back into employment use.

James Morrish, Leader of Torrington District Council praised the support of Devon Renaissance. "It is vital for the wellbeing of community life in Torrington District that we make every effort to develop the economy and provide employment opportunities for our young people, after all they are the business leaders of tomorrow," he said.

" With this in mind I applaud Devon Renaissance in supporting the Skillstarters and Graduate Skills projects and look forward to working in partnership with them to make Torrington a better place to live, work and visit."

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#### **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, Torrington, 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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