

Press Release

25 February 2009

Pic caption 1: Les Southerton, SMI, John Armitt, Cll Ken Lupton, Stockton Borough Council, Laurence Morgan and Alan Slater, British Waterways

LEADING OLYMPIC OFFICIAL RALLIES NORTH EAST BUSINESSES

John Armitt - Chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) - travelled to the region today (February 25th) encourage more firms to take advantage of the £billions worth of commercial opportunities available in the run up to the London 2012 Games.

As part of his trip, Mr Armitt visited some North East businesses that have won work supplying the ODA directly or their contractors before heading to the North East Regional Business Fair to host a London 2012 supply chain seminar.

So far, 11 companies in the region have won contracts through the ODA. Mr Armitt said: "We want to help businesses from the North East make the most of the golden opportunities that are available.

"Companies of all sizes from across the country have already won work directly with the ODA. While we still have contracts left to place, the bulk of opportunities are now through our contractors and the supply chain. CompeteFor is already helping companies access this work and I urge companies to sign up to get involved in the largest project this country has seen for generations."

His day began at the Teesside White Water Course in Stockton, Tees Valley where he saw firsthand how work is progressing on the facility's proposed £4.8m upgrade, which will secure its status as a top international sporting venue.

When complete, the centre - which is listed in LOCOG's Pre-Games Training Camp Guide - will become the best white water course in the UK and be among the top seven in the world.

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Mr Armitt met with key representatives of partners involved in the project including Stockton Borough Council, Stockton Middlesbrough Initiative, British Waterways and One North East before being taken for a tour of its new canoe slalom facility.

He then travelled to Billingham and visited heavy lifting and transportation service provider Mammoet UK. The firm hopes to win new lucrative 2012 Games' contracts after helping to complete the Docklands Light Railway, which will transport thousands of sports fans to and from several competition venues, including the Olympic Park.

Mammoet UK has gone from strength to strength despite the economic downturn thanks to its £20m investment project, which has created 55 new jobs at its Teesside plant and added 16 cranes to its fleet of 63.

The firm has become involved in a number of other high profile contracts in recent years, including work on Beijing's National Stadium or 'Birds Nest' in preparation for Beijing 2008 as well as lifting the Millennium Wheel into place on the banks of the Thames in London.

For his next stop, Mr Armitt visited Newcastle-based architecture design practice FaulknerBrowns Architects, which has been appointed to design the Broxbourne White Water Canoe Centre in Hertfordshire.

The centre will be used as the official venue to host the canoe and kayak slalom events during the 2012 Games and afterwards will be developed to become a sporting and leisure facility, as well as a regular competition venue.

He viewed the designs and scale models of the new centre and found out more about projects the firm is currently involved in, including the design of the Dubai Aquatic Centre.

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Afterwards, Mr Armitt travelled to the North East Regional Business Fair in Gosforth where he and Morag Stuart, Head of Procurement at the ODA, hosted a London 2012 supply chain seminar. It is estimated that London 2012 will generate approximately £6 billion worth of contracts for businesses across the UK.

Together they highlighted how companies can bid for their share of contracts both directly via outlets such as online brokerage service CompeteFor – which is part of London 2012 Business Network – and through separate supply chains.

So far, approximately 1000 businesses in the region have signed up for CompeteFor, which is supported by One North East.

Stacy Hall, Director of Communications and Tourism at One North East, said: “I’m pleased that Mr Armitt has taken the time to travel to present the region’s business community with the wide range of commercial opportunities still available for the London 2012 Games.

“The number of firms signing up to CompeteFor continues to rise, and I would encourage all firms to get involved.”

Organised by Business Link, the North East Regional Business Fair will take place at Newcastle Racecourse & Conference Centre today (25th) and tomorrow of this week. Over 2,000 people from across the North East have signed up to attend, either as exhibitors, businesses in the Meet the Buyers section, or in their capacity as representatives of firms hoping to develop new business leads.

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For more information, contact Andy Aston (press office) on 0191 229 6894 or 07766 114798, or by emailing andy.aston@onenortheast.co.uk

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Les Southerton, SMI Project Director, said “I believe Mr Armitt was particularly impressed by our ambition not only to create a world class sporting facility, but one that is flexible enough also to be used by local people who want to try the sport out.

“Operationally, a major bonus will also be that the course will be sustainable in energy terms – with the new Archimedes Screws generating as much electricity as they will use at other states of the tide to pump the course itself.”

Michael Hall, partner at FaulknerBrowns Architects, said: “We were delighted that Mr Armitt was able to spare time to view our work on his trip to the North East. As a regionally-based practice, we are particularly proud of the track record we have gained of national and international centres of sporting excellence and to have delivered a project for the 2012 Games - the highlight of the sporting calendar.

Darren Adams, Managing Director of Mammoet UK, said: “It was a pleasure to present the wide range of services Mammoet can provide to 2012 projects. Our worldwide experience can provide any contractor with the assurance that we can deliver whatever they need. We pride ourselves on providing solutions to our customers and the ODA and we look forward to working with them in the near future”

Alastair MacColl, Chief Executive of Business Link North East, said: “The timing of the North East Regional Business Fair is critical. In the current economic climate, it is important that the region’s firms explore as many potential business opportunities as they can. This event has lined up a very impressive combination of major buyers, practical and useful seminars, and valuable information and advice. If they haven’t already booked their place, I urge businesses to come along to Newcastle Racecourse & Conference Centre and make the most of this very timely event.”

One North East is the regional development agency for North East England.

It is leading sustainable economic growth in the region through a targeted programme of investment of around £250m per year to get 70,000 more people into work and create 22,000 new businesses by 2016.

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