

# Business leader praises budget initiatives to help small firms

A SURREY business leader has urged local firms to work together in the wake of last week's budget announcement.

David Seall, chairman of the Surrey branch of the Institute of Directors (IoD), praised chancellor George Osborne for including several "encouraging boosts" for small businesses in this year's budget.

However, he countered this with concern for forecasts of sluggish economic growth, as well as a lack of direct Government support for businesses in



David Seall

the South East.

"It was an interesting budget and included some good points for Surrey," said Mr Seall, who lives in Great Austins, Farnham, and is also a trustee of the Farnham Maltings and the Intech science centre and planetarium near Winchester.

"But we are traditionally disappointed by budget speeches in Surrey due the old-fashioned solution of pumping money into the north of England - and last week was no different."

Mr Seall welcomed a commitment to cut down on regulations and create a "friendlier, more benign" tax

environment for small businesses. He also praised the reduction of corporation tax over the next three years to 23 per cent, and said the decision not to increase income tax proves that "a tax on jobs does not work".

Another key factor, he said, was a commitment to provide more apprenticeships and work experience placements.

"There has been great concern about levels of unemployment, particularly among graduates and youth, and it is vital we do something about it now," said Mr Seall. "Hopefully businesses will engage with this and take on new recruits."

However, the local IoD chairman added the ongoing lack of direct Government support for businesses in Surrey was "frustrating".

He continued: "The Government has announced a series of new 'Enterprise Zones' to boost local economies, but of the first 10 of these, only one is south of Birmingham.

"A commitment to improve infrastructure on the A3 between Guildford and London and broadband

speeds in Surrey would have been useful. But unfortunately if the Government has to make a choice between spending money on the north or south of England, they will always go north - else it would be electoral suicide."

Mr Seall was recently elected chairman of Surrey IoD and has been a member for 12 years. A chartered engineer by profession, he began his career in the aerospace and defence industry and latterly became chief executive of EEF South, the manufacturers' organisation for London and the South East. He currently works as an independent director, advising several businesses.

"The budget doesn't do a lot for us directly," he said, "but this goes to show we're on our own and have to find a solution together on a local level.

"There are a lot of good business networks and breakfast clubs within Surrey, including the IoD, where people can get together and help each other out.

"I would encourage all businesses to see which networks are around and be proactive. The future is in

value added services - so we must find ways to improve ourselves."

Boasting over 2,000 members from a wide array of businesses and industries, Surrey's IoD branch is the second largest in the country and holds a Royal Charter for its role in supporting business leaders through skills development and networking.

For more information on joining the group and local events, visit [www.iod.com/Surrey](http://www.iod.com/Surrey) or phone 020 7766 8866.