

Press release - South Yorkshire Business

By The Master Cutler, James Newman

IT IS always more difficult to be optimistic in the very cold weather. Add heavy rain to the forecast and it becomes even more of an uphill battle.

However, inclement conditions or no, we have much brighter prospects to look forward to in South Yorkshire.

The news that the Advanced Manufacturing Park is to be the site of the £25million Nuclear Research Centre is welcomed by industry across the region. Rolls-Royce is taking the lead role, working with the Universities of Sheffield and Manchester. Some £15m of funding will come from the Department of Business, Industry and Skills and £10m from Yorkshire Forward. It will be money well spent, putting the region at the forefront of nuclear technology.

Add to that the news that Sheffield Forgemasters is moving ever closer to raising the finance required to compete for nuclear reactor contracts and the future looks increasingly brighter. Forgemasters needs a substantial investment to buy a new press capable of producing suitable forgings. A large part of the funding has been won through Government intervention. This again brings a very welcome, positive boost to the economy of the region, not only securing employment at Forgemasters but also benefiting the region's suppliers and sub-contractors.

Both projects will enhance South Yorkshire's reputation as a significant base for innovation and development, the benefits of which could be felt for the next 30 years. We now need to ensure that the supply chain includes local businesses and that finance is made available to them or they will miss out.

In addition, we should not underestimate the importance of these projects for our young people looking for training and careers. The cities of the region, the councils and all those involved in education, learning and skills need to provide the necessary funding to ensure these young students benefit from the investment being made in their future.

There has never been a better, or indeed a more important, time for schools, colleges, universities and businesses to work together. True, we have a long way to go before we can say the good times are here but these two new projects demonstrate an optimism in the region which was previously lacking. Our renewed sense of direction and purpose should now take us through to sunnier times.