

**Press Release: Date: Tuesday 3 October 2006:
Embargoed until: 1600 Wednesday 4 October**



*****PRESS RELEASE*****

PHIL HOPE VISITS SPORTING EXCELLENCE APPRENTICES

Skills minister Phil Hope MP has visited Richard Huish College in Taunton to present awards to the first students in the country to complete the highly acclaimed Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence programme (AASE).

The minister began his visit at a local golf club, picking up tips from professional golfers and students, while finding out about how AASE has improved prospects for students enrolled on the course. He then visited the college itself to tour its facilities, including a newly opened sports dome, which has furthered the college's reputation as a centre of sporting excellence.

Developed by SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure and Learning, the LSC and with a number of governing bodies of sport, AASE has been designed to meet the needs of young people who have the 'realistic potential to achieve excellence in their sport and are seeking to perform at the highest level as their main career goal.'

SkillsActive's chief executive, Stephen Studd, who also attended the event said; "Phil Hope's visit to Taunton to highlight the success of AASE is evidence that skills in sport are key in the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and beyond. We hope to continue rolling out AASE across the country in more sports given the success of the programme so far."

The minister spoke to an invited audience about the AASE programme and the government's commitment to skills development and apprenticeships, before presenting certificates to successful students from Richard Huish College (golf), Solihull College (golf) and Brockenhurst College (football).

He said; "Spending the day with the students and staff at Richard Huish College has given me a real insight into how employers, training providers and SkillsActive are working together to improve the skills of future athletes and close the skills gap in the active leisure and learning sector. The success of programmes such as AASE proves the commitment that people across the sector have to shaping skills in the sector."

The visit was part of Phil Hope's nationwide 'Summer of Skills' tour of organisations and sites that are exemplars of good practice in improving skills and work based learning.

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
2. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
3. SSCs are employer-led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs. In return they receive substantial public investment and greater dialogue with government departments across the UK.
4. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ www.skillsactive.com
5. SkillsActive has developed a Sector Skills Agreement for the Active Leisure and Learning Sector which defines the Sector's skills needs and ultimately forms an agreement between employers, government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years.
6. SkillsActive is *Shaping Skills for the Future*, through...
 - PEOPLE...
...ensuring all people in the sector are appropriately trained and qualified.
 - PRODUCTIVITY...
...ensuring better performance through the professional development of the sector.
 - PROVISION...
...ensuring the sector has accessible, relevant and funded training across the UK.
 - PROMOTION...
...ensuring the contributions of the sector are recognised at a governmental level.