

Cross-Party Group on Skills

Friday, 28 October 2022 (1000-1100)

Minute

Present

MSPs

Pam Gosal MSP
Stephen Kerr MSP
Claire Baker MSP

Invited guests

Professor Paul de Leeuw, Director of the Energy Transition Institute, Robert Gordon University
Jim Brown, Partnership Director, Energy Skills Partnership (ESP)

Non-MSP Group Members

Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
Jenifer Johnston, Colleges Scotland
Tom Hall, Colleges Scotland
Ian McCulloch, ITC Training Academy
Jim Metcalfe, CDN
Dale Thomson, Snipef
Robert Bruce, Enginuity
Sean Mosby, Enginuity
Wendy Burton, STUC
Rachel Cook, Federation of Small Businesses
Robert Orr, Skills Development Scotland
Jenny McDonald, Skills Development Scotland
William Hardie, Robert Gordon University
Donella Beaton, Robert Gordon University
Claire Bannister, Universities Scotland
Aimee Logan Universities Scotland
Lauren Pennycook, CITB
Moirra Houston, Chartered Banker Institute
Simon Williams, NHS Education for Scotland
Shona Matthews, Chartered Banker Institute
Mariam Lawal, Chartered Banker Institute
Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
Anne Galbraith, SECTT

Kirsty Summers, The Scotch Whisky Association
George Brown, SQA
Aileen Ponton, SCQF Partnership
George Hannah, CIPD
Michael Foxley, UHI

Apologies

Clare Adamson MSP
Michael Marra MSP
Beatrice Wishart MSP
Gillian Martin MSP
Kaukab Stewart MSP
Nathan Taylor, West College Scotland
Keith Robson, The Open University in Scotland
Kirstie Conlon, Universities Scotland
Kerri Haynes, SSERC
Julie Cavanagh, SCQF Partnership
Fiona Harper, Select
Geoff Campbell, Nithcree Training

Welcome and Apologies

The group's Convener, Pam Gosal MSP, opened the meeting. Apologies were also noted.

Annual General Meeting

Jenifer Johnston, Colleges Scotland, chaired the Annual General Meeting. The following office bearers were re-elected:

Convener – Pam Gosal MSP

Deputy Convener – Stephen Kerr MSP

Secretariat – Colleges Scotland

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2022 were approved.

Presentations

The topic for the meeting was Offshore Skills for the Future and presentations were heard from:

Professor Paul de Leeuw, Director of the Energy Transition Institute, Robert Gordon University.

Jim Brown, Partnership Director, Energy Skills Partnership (ESP).

Discussion

Professor Paul de Leeuw, Director of the Energy Transition Institute at Robert Gordon University gave a presentation on the skills for the future that will be required to support energy transition, based on the [workforce review](#) conducted by Robert Gordon University for the North East region and Scotland more widely. This review follows on from their UK-wide review published last year. Professor de Leeuw said that the landscape is changing dramatically with the demand for offshore wind, hydrogen and carbon capture increasing, and oil and gas decreasing. He also noted that over 90% of the regional oil and gas workforce have medium/high skills transferability.

By 2030 there will be a need for 200k jobs and £17bn investment. Professor de Leew said that without appropriate investment, there is a risk of a decline in the workforce from circa 45k to 28k, as well as missed opportunities to become a Global Energy Hub which would grow the workforce to circa 54k and secure Scotland's future as a world leader in sustainability. He noted that if Scotland loses capacity to deliver, the jobs will go elsewhere.

Jim Brown, Partnership Director of ESP, echoed Professor de Leew's comments on the growth and workforce demand of the energy sector. He also discussed the current and future skills gaps across the industry, with the biggest gaps being in skilled manual and technical jobs.

Mr Brown said that ESPs main focus is on joining the dots and working with employers, sector skills councils and colleges to look at the capacity and curriculum to ensure that the skills demand can be met. He said that colleges are working collaboratively, with training networks set up, aligned to the energy plan, with a plethora of activity happening and are holding supply chain and cluster events, bringing together employers, to promote the opportunities the industry has to offer. He stated that investment is required now to capitalise on the opportunities coming to Scotland.

A Q&A followed. Anne Galbraith of SECTT asked how the targets can be reached if there is no investment. Professor de Leew agreed and said that there is a narrow window to build capacity from 2023-26 otherwise jobs will go overseas. Mr Brown added that skills is a key factor in decision-making from international businesses

Stephen Kerr MSP asked what can be done to better get school pupils interested in careers in this industry. Jim Brown highlighted examples already happening such as the Lego League and Universal Robots. He also said that investment is needed to engage schools further, and also for upskilling and reskilling for the jobs that will be needed, including in staff, facilities and capital equipment.

Mr Kerr also asked about the effect of real terms cuts. Professor de Leew said that in order to deliver the net zero target, we would need to install one turbine per day for the next 10 years – capacity and facilities are needed first, then the ability to quickly train the workforce – investment drives capacity.

Aileen Ponton asked how we make sure that we have the qualifications and competencies. Mr Brown said that ESP has a working group looking at this and a skills framework is being developed collaboratively with agencies such as SQA and Skills Development Scotland. He said how this is packaged and communicated to industry and individuals is key. For example, 1,000 onshore wind turbines are needed by 2030, and a whole range of jobs will be needed to support this, not just fabricators and welders but also business, finance and HR professionals. Professor De Leew added that we also need to consider the current workforce which has the ability to be upskilled and retrained for the jobs of the future.

A question was asked about what was being done well and where there is room for improvement. Mr Brown said that regional STEM partnerships were proving powerful – colleges are facilitating these but working with all the key partners. He noted that the challenge was promoting job opportunities, for example, encouraging young people to see becoming a welder as a good career choice.

Close

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was brought to a close. It was noted that the next meeting would be held in the new year.