

Cross-Party Group on Skills

Friday, 25 March 2022 (1000-1100), Virtual Meeting

Minute

Present

MSPs

Pam Gosal MSP
Clare Adamson MSP
Sharon Dowey MSP
Tess White MSP

Invited guests

Kevin Patrick, Lantra Scotland
Emily Dewar, Lantra Scotland
Professor Peter Edwards, University of Aberdeen
Jim Brown, ESP

Non-MSP Group Members

Joanne Buchan, Colleges Scotland
Tom Hall, Colleges Scotland
Geoff Campbell, Nithcree Training
Ian McCulloch, ITC Academy
Anne Galbraith, SECTT
Kirsty Summers, The Scotch Whisky Association
David Stewart, FEDCAP
Lauren Pennycook, CITB
Fiona Harper, Select
Robert Bruce, Enginuity
Nicola Smith, SCQF Partnership
Stuart McKenna, Scottish Training Federation
Aimee Logan, Universities Scotland
Alastair Sim, Universities Scotland
Duncan Mackay, Universities Scotland
Emma Slavin, Skills Development Scotland
Marek Zemanik, CIPD
Tommy Breslin, STUC
Catherine Garvie, STUC
Shona Matthews, Chartered Banker Institute

Matthew Ball, Chartered Banker Institute
Donella Beaton, Robert Gordon University
Paul Little, City of Glasgow College
Paul McGuinness, Skills Development Scotland
Derek Young, Institute of Physics
Alison McLure, Institute of Physics
Rachel Cook, Federation of Small Businesses
George Brown, SQA
William Hardie, Robert Gordon University
Jonathan McAveety, CECA Scotland

Apologies

Michael Marra MSP
Gillian Martin MSP
Beatrice Wishart MSP
Stephen Kerr MSP
Kaukab Stewart MSP
Simon Williams, NHS Education for Scotland
Maira Houston, Chartered Banker Institute
Ishabel Bremner, EDAS
Kirsty Colon, Universities Scotland
Kerri Haynes, SSERC
Olivia Carson, CIPD
Wendy Burton, STUC
Julie Cavanagh, SCQF Partnership
Gordon Nelson, Federation of Master Builders
Ian Rogers, Scottish Decorators
Fiona Stewart, Skills Development Scotland
Liz Barron-Majerik. Lantra Scotland

Welcome and Apologies

The Group Convener, Pam Gosal MSP, opened the meeting. Apologies were also noted.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting which took place virtually on Wednesday, 17 October 2022, were approved.

Presentations and Discussion

The focus of the meeting was Green Skills and how the sector is preparing for next-zero. Presentations were heard from:

- Kevin Patrick, Development Manager and Emily Dewar, Sustainability Co-Ordinator, Lantra Scotland;

- Professor Peter Edwards, Vice-Principal Regional Engagement & Regional Recovery at the University of Aberdeen; and
- Jim Brown, Partnership Director, Energy Skills Partnership.

Kevin Patrick began by giving a presentation on the work of Lantra Scotland in the land-based and aquaculture sector. He stated that although green skills is now a key focus for government, a lot of these skills are already integral to land-use and aquaculture. He also noted that there is a misconception around the need for mainly practical skills in the land-based sector, but said that other skills were also required, particularly in STEM, with new technology an innovation taking place e.g. precision farming and vertical farming.

Kevin said that strategic and focused interventions already taking place with Skills Development Scotland taking a fresh approach on redesigning apprenticeships – current and recent apprentices informing work with employers’ sense checking work to develop apprenticeship frameworks and design qualifications. Future-proofing apprenticeships and ensuring sustainable working practices fully embedded as opposed to being bolted on.

Emily Dewar noted that while there is now a significant demand for green skills, there are still challenges around identifying and filling skills gaps. She discussed a recent successful [event](#) that Lantra Scotland held to look at practical solutions. Emily also highlighted the [Climate Change Fund Courses](#) that are available to help the rural economy mitigate the impact of climate change and undertake succession planning.

Professor Peter Edwards then gave a presentation on the role of universities in supporting the green skills agenda. He said that universities are at the forefront in delivering green skills and will be integral in growth of Scottish economy and the transition to net-zero.

Professor Edwards highlighted the high-quality degree provision in STEM subjects which underpin the green agenda, with universities looking at opportunities to develop new degree programmes to support skills delivery for Just Transition e.g. MSc in Renewable Energy which can be delivered online. He also noted the work universities are doing to upskill and reskills the workforce, with the Scottish Funding Council’s University Upskilling Fund being a key component of this e.g. the Institute for Sustainable Construction at Napier University.

Professor Edwards also noted the importance of collaboration to deliver the green agenda e.g. the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) project underway supporting oil and gas transition and said the universities were mainstreaming climate change education across provision. He also touched on the importance of research and innovation for growing emerging industries and attracting inward investment.

Jim Brown, Partnership Director, ESP, gave an overview of ESP which was established 10 years ago to deliver the right skills to meet the needs of the energy, engineering and construction sectors, and now also has a focus on Net-Zero and the Just Transition. They act as a conduit between colleges, Industry, Scottish Government, and associated agencies, taking a Team Scotland approach to ensure that industry has a skilled future workforce.

Jim stated that a key element of what they do is listening to industry to understand their needs and that collaboration as a nation would be key to taking the green skills agenda forward. He noted that, for example, there is going to be a need for thousands of skilled welders and fabricators in the offshore wind sector, and that partnership working will be vital to ensuring these demands can be met.

Jim also highlighted the need to support inward investment opportunities and the role of key stakeholders such as Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Development International, as well as aligning with the Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan to provide workforce for the future and skills for industry.

A question and answer session followed. Paul Little noted that parts of tertiary system that are well staffed and well-resourced and asked if there enough collaboration between different silos and different pieces of education and skills system. Kevin Patrick responded by saying that he is seeing real progress being made but that there was still work to be done and Emily noted that there are more overlaps now around green skills and sustainability.

Professor Edwards noted the good collaboration between colleges and universities and highlighted the NESA project in the North East as one such example of good partnership working.

Jim Brown echoed this, saying there are some great examples of collaboration already taking place such as Dundee Michelin Skills Innovation Parc.

Robert Bruce then asked how we should define green skills. He also mentioned the need to change the narrative around green skills to skills that supports and underpins sustainability and net zero. For example enhancing electrical skills for an individual to install and commission photovoltaic cells is not necessarily a green skill but one that has a direct impact on sustainability of energy supply and carbon reduction.

Jim Brown agreed and defined it as the 'greening of skills' as every job will have to have a green element e.g. an engineering job but in a green industry.

Alison McLure asked how we can improve diversity. Jim Brown noted that the offshore wind sector has already set targets of 30% women by 2030 and 50% by 2050 which is being supported by a campaign. He said that there are looking at best practice and changing the language in job descriptions, Jim also noted the

importance of engaging with schools early to mainstream the industry and develop pathways into careers.

Kevin Patrick highlighted that Lantra Scotland are starting to change perceptions and introduce initiatives such as their women in rural economies course.

Professor Edwards said that the University of Aberdeen highlighted the work going on the School of Engineering which has a women in engineering programme and is working with schools to promote careers in green engineering.

Fiona Harper emphasised the need more females into trades to meet skills demands and welcomes engagement with others to collaborate and enhance diversity in trades.

Clare Adamson MSP highlighted her IT background, noting the diversity challenges in that sector. She also noted that the Education, Children and Young people Committee had done work in the previous parliamentary session around STEM learning in nursery and asked the group to consider ways to engaging nursery and primary level in green skills.

Tommy Breslin asked what could be done to engage parents and families in green skills and careers, and how we can ensure that wind turbines are manufactured in Scotland and in doing so provide local jobs.

Jim Brown said that discussions were underway regarding inward investment with key SDI, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and the companies are keen to locate in Scotland.

Kevin Patrick highlighted, not just the importance of careers information and guidance and shifting perceptions of roles relating to Climate Change, using industry influencers and STEM Ambassadors, including young people.

Kirsty Summers noted that the term STEM puts women off and that the breadth of skills and careers within STEM is very big and the "catch all" term is overwhelming. She said the Scotch Whisky Association is focusing on inclusion overall and the need to focus on the individual careers within STEM. Robert Bruce also noted the need to consider changing some of the language around some education programmes, for example, the use of design and environmental impact rather than engineering may be more attractive in recruiting women.

Paul Little made a final point around the importance of the social value and investing in small and medium sized enterprises to avoid partial solutions to continuing problems.

Close

With no other business to conduct, the meeting was brought to a close.