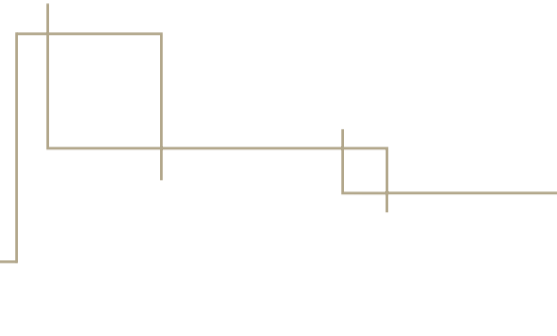


PROCESS INDUSTRIES



NATIONAL SKILLS ACADEMY PROCESS INDUSTRIES GETS OFF TO A FLYING START IN THE REGIONS.

Parliamentary e-briefing, July 2008

Following the national launch of the National Skills Academy Process Industries in January this year, three out of the four regional spokes planned for the first phase have been launched, in the Midlands, the North East and the North West. The last of the four launches, in Yorkshire and the Humber, takes place in mid-July.

On 30th May, at the National Space Centre in Leicester, employers and training providers from across the Midlands turned out in force to hear how the Skills Academy is working with employers and brokers to meet the urgent need to address industry skills gaps.

Delegates heard Joanna Woolf, Chief Executive of the Skills Academy's parent body, Cogent Sector Skills Council, outline the practical measures the Skills Academy will use to bring together employers, providers and brokers and ensure a cohesive and supportive training and skills framework.

Joanna Woolf said: **"One of the key aims of the Skills Academy is to bring together and simplify the various training and support strands, help employers identify what help they need and give them choices about where and how they access it.**

"The aim is to work together to co-ordinate the various levels of existing activity and without duplicating any effort, creating a more robust framework which employers themselves will specify and drive."

At the North East regional launch, held at the Skills Academy's central hub at the University of Teesside on 13th June, a group of young apprentices who are studying with a local training organisation and on placement with employers, took the chance to quiz guest speaker John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, on exactly how the Government's skills agenda and creation of the National Skills Academy network will impact upon their current and future career opportunities within the process industries. The Secretary of State was accompanied by Dari Taylor, MP for Stockton South, who is a passionate supporter of skills and the process industry sector.

John Denham commented: **"The Government is committed to working with business to tackle the skills shortages that stand between us and full employment and economic success. The process industry has big part to play in the economy. What I have heard today from employers and the young apprentices gives me confidence that the Skills Academy will be a real force in the North East, training people for well paid jobs."**

Dari Taylor said: **"I want Teesside to be the number one thought in the Government's plans for increased monies to apprentices. Teesside should be a leading light both in pilot training schemes and because we have the industry in companies like NEPIC and TTE, who are keen to prototype good, high quality apprenticeships. I want everyone to recognise the quality we have to offer in Teesside."**

Friday 11th July saw the North West spoke launched at the Catalyst Science Discovery Centre at Widnes, where an audience of industrialists, brokers and providers listened to Claire Curtis-Thomas, MP for Crosby, encourage employers and providers to get involved with the Skills Academy's activities, which have the potential to boost not just their own businesses but that of the wider regional economy.

The next few months will see the organisation broaden its geographic reach by establishing spokes in the South East of England, with preparatory work ongoing towards setting up spokes in the South West, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Initial response to the National Skills Academy's work in the regions has been very positive, with organisations ranging from global companies to small owner managed businesses pledging their support, and in total representing 17% of the total employees in the UK process industries. There has also been considerable interest from industrialists keen to sit on the industry-led regional boards that will drive each area's activities on the ground.

Work on products and services continues, and July sees the launch of the Best Practice Guide, which is designed to showcase good practice in planning and managing successful skills development programmes across a range of organisations.

The coming months will also see the establishment of the Gold Standard benchmark for skills and competence, currently being developed in conjunction with Cogent SSC.

The new website, due to be launched in Autumn, will be an essential source of guidance and advice for employers and providers, underpinning the National Skills Academy's aim of working alongside employers and other stakeholders to close the skills gap which is holding back the UK's process industries and which will boost efficiency, productivity and innovation.

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