

MINUTES OF NW REGIONAL FORUM MEETING

Held on Wednesday 6th August 2008

Macdonald Tickled Trout Hotel

ATTENDEES:

Tom Jones	AMEC (Chair)	(TJ)
Tony Featherstone	ECITB	(TF)
Peter Brierley	ECIA	(PB)
Dave Downey	Boulting Group plc	(DD)
John O'Kane	Boulting Group plc	(JO)
Steve Partington	Severfield Rowen	(SP)
John Dodd	Watson Steel Ltd	(JD)
Neil Macdonald	Fairport Site Operations Ltd	(NM)
David Norman	Archbell Greenwood Ltd	(DN)
Willie Reid	Sellafield Ltd	(WR)
John Napier	AMEC	(JN)
Gary Phillipson	The AA Group Ltd	(GP)
Philip Cooper	The NETA Training Group	(PC)
Margaret Dalgity	Redhall PLC	(MD)
John Toole	Jordan Nuclear	(JT)
Kathryn Clark	VT Nuclear Services	(KC)
Dave Spencer	AMEC	(DS)
David B Taylor	Interface Contracts Ltd	(DT)
Nick Houghton	Shepley Engineers Ltd	(NH)
Elaine Allcroft	Business Link NW – Train to Gain	(EA)
Alan McCluskey	Hertel (UK) Ltd	(AM)
Alan Smith	Maritime & Engineering College North West	(AS)
Terry Weston	Maritime & Engineering College North West	(TW)
Mark Bullock	ECITB	(MB)
Rachael Sewell	ECITB	(RS)
Diane Greenwood	ECITB	(DG)

APOLOGIES:

Mike Edwards	Edwards Elite Engineering Ltd
Hayley Jones	Lakervent Engineering Ltd
John Drake	Sitemech Utilities Ltd
Sarah Ashton	Walker Engineering (NW) Ltd

1. Welcome and Introductions

Tom Jones welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Mark Bullock gave an overview of the agenda, and the areas to be discussed at the meeting.

2. Actions from last meeting

Not discussed. No actions outstanding.

3. ECITB National and Regional Update

Tony Featherstone discussed the need to address the skills shortage within the industry and referred to the 'Bridging the Skills Gap' and 'Securing Engineering Construction Skills for the future' papers.

Tony Featherstone discussed targets for training nationally for 2008, and it is intended that approximately 7000 people would go through ECITB training as follows:

600	Apprentices
650	TECSkills
3,500	Training, Supervisory and Management Programmes (TS & MP)
1,500	ACE
1,500	Regional Discretionary Grant (RDG)

Current figures indicate the recruitment of 750 apprentices and the registration of 800 TECSkills learners. It is anticipated that there will be a shortfall in the figures for TS & MP, and the group felt that it was important to provide training for supervisors to meet the needs of the industry.

Tony Featherstone reported that the NW had supported over 1,000 learners through RDG, which in itself exceeded the national target. TF thanked the NW team for their contribution.

4. TECSkills

At the present time TECSkills registrations for 2008 are nationally below target, however overall apprenticeship and TECSkills numbers have increased by 20% from 2007.

Tom Jones commented on the changes in the CDM regulations and how these would affect contractors. He stressed the importance of identifying and developing people with leadership potential, and training them to NVQ standards.

Tony Featherstone talked about the significance of the Sellafield SMTD pilot programme with 25 learners being assessed to NVQ3 in Leadership & Management.

It is anticipated that this model of training will enable learners to go on to a Foundation Degree in management.

Peter Brierley asked what proportion of the 800 TECSkills learners were up-skilling rather than completing a full NVQ.

Tony Featherstone reported that approximately 400 learners, primarily off shore, were undertaking specific 'bolt-tensioning' units. Of the remaining 400, 150 learners were registered on NVQ2, and 250 learners on NVQ3.

Tom Jones confirmed that TECSkills is designed for up-skilling and multi-skilling. However, in the NW, all the learners were currently registered on full NVQ qualifications.

Mark Bullock gave an example of Jordan Nuclear, and Shepley Engineering at Sellafield, who had identified long-term, semi-skilled workers who would be trained through TECSkills to NVQ3 and reach craftsman status.

Gary Phillipson and John Dodd commented that contractors who were involved in Engineering & Civil Construction Projects were required by the Capital Clients Group to undertake a 2-day Supervisory course and a 2-day safety course.

ACTION 4.1 It was agreed that Mark Bullock would contact Gary Phillipson & John Dodd to discuss supporting this training through the RDG, as an initial Supervisory Training Scheme, to meet contractors site requirements, whilst encouraging supervisors & managers to go on to the 12-month modular SMTD programme linked to the NVQ3.

Elaine Allcroft commented that she had been invited to a meeting with National Skills Academy Nuclear (NSA-N) to discuss the introduction of the Nuclear Skills Passport.

Concerns were raised by a number of people over the increase in competency cards required by workers on different sites.

Tony Featherstone reported that the policy of the ECITB was, where possible, for there to be a minimum number of competency cards. In response to a question it was confirmed that mutual acceptance of CSCS and the CCNSG safety passport logos was in place. There was also reciprocity between the JIB card and the ACE Card.

Tony Featherstone stated that the National Skills Academy Nuclear (NSA-N) was the pre-eminent skills organisation for the Nuclear Industry and the ECITB were looking to collaborate on the development of a SMTD programme specifically tailored to meet the needs of the nuclear Industry.

Tom Jones referred to the Bridging the Skills Gap document, and asked the meeting for their comments on skills shortages affecting their companies within the region.

They were also asked to comment on company growth over the coming years. In response to questions members replied that they expected to train between 5% and 10% of their overall workforce labour strength each year for the ongoing 3-year period.

David Norman commented that sub-contractors growth and training requirement would depend on market forces, and the current economic climate.

Tom Jones questioned whether the NW figures reflected what was happening in the industry nationally. The NW team were currently looking at the budgets for 2009, and would need to take into consideration the region's comments on this matter.

A further discussion then took place regarding Labour requirements for large projects such as Wilton, and future Nuclear build.

Willie Reid reported that in future Sellafield might present a requirement, within tender documentation, for contractors to commit to training, including the engagement of a defined proportion/percentage of apprentices.

It was noted that UK training initiatives usually by-passed foreign contractors working in the UK.

It was noted that the Marchwood Project was predominately manned by foreign contractors and labour and yet no levy was paid to the Board as the companies were not in-scope.

Elaine Allcroft informed the meeting of the Government Skills Pledge. If companies were to train staff they needed to first sign the skills pledge. This was an overall requirement and not just for Government contracts. Train to Gain brokers were asking companies to sign the skills pledge. Reference was made to the necessity to sign the skills pledge before an organisation embarked on 'Investors in People'.

5. Apprentices in the North West

Mark Bullock reported that there are currently 127 apprentices in training. 65 apprentices were recruited in 2007. For 2008 the proposed target was 65/70. At the time of the meeting there were 58 pledges plus an anticipated further 5 identified who were out of scope but would undertake ECITB NVQ qualifications.

There were 4 outstanding Gen II apprentices who needed placing. Gen II had originally taken on 50 community apprentices for placement on site. Future enrolment had to take into consideration whether apprentices could be absorbed by contractors.

The ECITB was prepared to pay a completion grant of £5000 for such apprentices: the LSC would fund training but the company would pay their wages. Apprentices chose their trade at the outset of training.

In the NW there was a good mix of trades. Only 1 apprentice had been lost from the system over the last 12 months, which represented an excellent retention rate and was a credit to the apprentices and the organisations that had taken them on.

6. Arrangements for Apprentice Training

ECITB policy is to recruit and train apprentices locally.

Rachael Sewell provided a breakdown by trade of the number of apprentices taken on for the 2008 intake:

- 14 Pipefitters
- 11 Welders
- 5 Mechanical Fitters
- 4 Mechanical Maintenance
- 1 Design & Draughting
- 5 Project Control
- 17 Electrical Trainees

Apprentices were pre-interviewed by the Training Provider & ECITB, before interview by the pledging company. Within a week, the number and names of apprentices to commence in the autumn of 2008 would be known.

Discussion took place that concerned the mechanism of training and number of Project Control Apprentices for the 2008 intake.

Phil Cooper spoke of the Project Control pilot course in the North East for 16-year old school leavers. The course could equally run with trainees with A-levels with commencement at a different entry point. An acceptable cohort would be necessary before the course could be run in the NW. He added that irrespective of which point a student enters the course, the

programme has highlighted that students need a 1-2 week introduction to Project Control module.

A request was made to companies to consider taking on a number of E & I apprentices, who had completed their first year, from a company who was suffering from a lack of suitable work.

7. Technical, Supervisory & Management Programmes

Mark Bullock made reference to the ECITB website for information on 'open courses' and an A4 sheet was available that gave information on available courses that were offered.

ACTION 7.1 DG to distribute list of courses with minutes.

Post meeting comment (DG) – Please find the list of courses as a separate attachment to the minutes. More detailed information on ECITB TS&MP courses can be found on the following link to the ECITB website:

<http://www.ecitb.org.uk/courses/>

TJ recommended that companies distribute to their relevant workforce.

Two SMTD courses were currently underway at Sellafield and learners were undergoing NVQ assessment by GENII. Two more SMTD course are planned for the southern half of the North West region and are due to commence on the 8th and 15th September. There was an urgent need for companies to respond, otherwise courses may be cancelled.

A number of 2-day Shop Steward/Supervisors NAECI courses had been scheduled for August, it was reported that the start of these course would be delayed until suitable ECIA/NJC attendance could be finalised. It was a pre requisite that ECIA/NJC representatives have to be present.

Post meeting comment (DG) – NAECI course now due to run at the Maritime & Engineering College North West (formerly The Laird Foundation) on Thursday 21st & Friday 22nd August.

Two 1-day CDM courses concerning changes to the Regulations would be run depending on company up take.

Tom Jones and Tony Featherstone pointed out the MSc in Project Management taking place at Manchester University in October 2008. The last date for are applications with funding approval will be the 29th August 2008. Also an MSc in Professional Engineering pilot through Kingston University and Northumbria University is being developed and offered to Off-Site companies.

Tom Jones reported to the meeting that a North West Team submitted by Simon Carves had recently won the Active Cup. Companies were encouraged to consider entering individuals or teams for the next active cup in January 2009. As numbers are limited, it is recommended that companies express their interest as soon as possible.

More details can be obtained through Sheila Sorley at ECITB head office – Sheila.sorley@ecitb.org.uk on all the above courses.

8. Train to Gain – LSC Funding

Elaine Allcroft, from Train to Gain, advised that from the 1st August 2008 training providers would not have to prove that the employer had contributed towards LSC funding. The company nevertheless was expected to provide 42% of training costs.

It was essential that discussion took place concerning the circumstances of each individual case in order that the best funding arrangement was arrived at.

Sample funding arranged by T to G, that involved two companies were handed out during the meeting. It was noticed that any company could use Train to Gain services, not just in-scope companies.

It was noted that in the first instance LSC/T to G funding should be drawn down. ECITB would advise companies about eligible ECITB grants.

9. TECSkills

A system was in place to track TECSkills trainees who left a company before training was complete.

Attention was drawn to TECSkills completion timescales: the requirement to complete within 12 calendar months for level 2 and within 3 years from registration for attaining level 3, if in both cases the company wished to claim grants.

It was incumbent on companies to inform the ECITB if timing became a problem.

ACTION 9.1 **Mark Bullock to draft a letter, to be sent to each registered TECSkills trainees advising them of the necessary steps to take to ensure continuity of training if they left their current company.**

Individuals maintained possession of their portfolio with details of the level of training reached.

Members expressed a wish for trainees wishing to become proficient in operative type jobs, i.e. MEWP drivers, store keepers, material controllers to be in-scope of the TECSkills Scheme.

Phil Cooper of NETA was formally introduced to the meeting. NETA's role in the NW was explained. He expressed a view that T to G had been particularly successful in unlocking a bottleneck, which had arisen in progressing ACE.

10. ACE

Willie Reid- ACE North West Regional Chair

Discussion took place re the provision to tick a box on the ACE card application form for the inclusion of other competency card logos. The final conclusion regarding this matter had not been reached by the ISG. Some companies were of a view that they did not wish multiple logos on the ACE card so an optional box was probably necessary.

The ISG was also discussing the ACE card renewal process. First renewals would take place in April 2009, none of which are in the NW region.

The ISG was considering the addition of certain trades to the Scheme.

A pilot study was taking place to determine whether it was appropriate to issue ACE cards based on NVQ3 attained through other awarding bodies other than the ECITB, this pilot would look at mapping across the various occupational standards.

In the NW the ACE group had concentrated on progressing as many ACE registrations as possible by Approved Centres.

A cautionary approach was being adopted as a result of ill feeling that had been generated at certain sites because of significant lack of progress.

It was reported that nationally there had been 500 ACE registrations in 2008. In the North West 118 people had been registered for ACE assessment and would be funded by T to G.

The next meeting of the NW ACE Group would be on **Thursday 11th September 2008** and companies were encouraged to engage with the ACE process and attend the forthcoming meeting.

ACTION 10.1 **DG to distribute details regarding the location of the meeting with the minutes.**

Post meeting comment (DG) - [The meeting will be held at the Salwick Sports & Social Club, Springfields. Coffee at 10.00 am for a 10.30 am start. Directions to the Salwick Club attached separately.](#)

11. Regional Budget

Details were given of the calculation of the NW's budget based on 10% of levy plus funding from the LSC.

In 2009 the available budget could reduce on account of one company moving their head office to the Midlands.

The discretionary grant for 2007 had been £50,000. The grant for 2008 had increased to £170,000.

An explanation was given to remind companies what training was eligible for discretionary funding, it was also reported that there would be no accrual of discretionary funds. Tony Featherstone stressed the need for invoices for courses to be submitted not later than the end of December 2008.

ACTION 11.1 **MB to provide information regarding which courses have been eligible for support to date in 2008.**

In the North West Region 1000 learners had been supported by the discretionary grant to date for 2008. Not all the discretionary grant had yet been spent.

12. Careers

A sample of a DVD that promoted the Engineering Construction Industry in schools presented by the TheatreAnd Group was shown to attendees. 35,000 children had been targeted by the

Scheme, which had been well received. Performances had been scheduled to take place in the North West over a over a two week period in September and companies would be asked to attend local performances were possible.

ACTION 12.1 DG to distribute timetable/schedule of performance dates, and participating schools.

Post meeting comment (DG) Timetable attached separately. If any company representatives would like to attend a performance, if you could let me know asap how many will be attending, which school you would like to visit, and how you wish to be involved e.g. prize giving, short presentation or just to watch the performance, I'll pass the details over to TheatreAnd to inform the relevant schools.

Any other business

No other business was discussed. TJ thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions, and welcomed feedback from attendees about the content of the meeting.

General feedback was extremely positive. Attendees felt the meeting was inclusive and informative, and everyone thought that the region was performing well and exceeding targets.

Companies reported that they were looking forward to participating in the November meeting, and contributing to the development of the region.

Date for next meeting: Wednesday 26th November, 2008

Venue: The Macdonald Tickled Trout Hotel, Preston.