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# Cogent Focus

The Sector Skills Council for  
Chemicals, Nuclear, Oil and Gas,  
Petroleum and Polymers

 cogent

SKILLS, QUALIFICATIONS, COMPETENCE AND INDUSTRY STANDARDS



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# From the CEO



Welcome to the first issue of **Cogent Focus** our quarterly round-up of news, views and updates on our activity.

Our Sector Skills Agreement (SSA) features strongly in this issue. We believe that it is of major significance to the employers across our footprint. It is providing a much needed, evidence-based framework which employers and stakeholders can use as the basis of a skills delivery plan which works for all parties concerned.

Employers are firmly at the centre of this agreement and Cogent has worked to understand and quantify the skills challenges they are facing. We are moving towards the facilitation of this agreement with Government, particularly in relation to qualifications and training design, funding and of course delivery.

The plan will bring economies of scale, new approaches and in some areas consolidation of what is a fragmented and often poorly understood skills landscape. Employers are telling us they face a variety of skills shortfalls and shortages. They are also telling us that the skills challenges they face are often just too big for them to handle on their own.

We are already working to address skills needs and shortages, to collect industry intelligence, to deliver standards and to promote best practice – across the Nations and the English Regions.

Partnerships must be at the heart of everything that we do – and we are working to achieve this, through our networks, through our Advisory Councils, through our regional representatives and direct contact with employers and stakeholders.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the process so far. We are still collecting views – the more input we get, the more we can be confident of a robust and widely debated SSA.

Joanna Woolf  
CEO

(If you would like to provide your views on the actions proposed for your industry, visit [www.cogent-ssc.com](http://www.cogent-ssc.com) and click on the questionnaire links.)

# Academy champions support bid

**Cogent** is supporting employers in preparing an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a Process Industries National Skills Academy (PINSAs), and a Nuclear National Skills Academy (NNSA).

Employers in the Cogent footprint are very supportive of the Skills Academy initiative and see this as a real opportunity to influence future training provision.

The vision for the academies is to provide a focus for excellence in workforce skills development. Employers will be expected to be involved in the management of Skills Academies and will need to take on some of the funding.

The UK Chemical (including Pharmaceutical) and Polymer industries are responding to the challenges of competing in a global economy. Technical innovation and world class performance sit at the forefront of this

ongoing transformation; a transformation that requires a highly skilled workforce to manage and operate advanced technology, safely and efficiently.

"The sector has skills shortages and skills gaps," says John Holton, Cogent Strategy Director, "but it is working against a backdrop of reductions in science entrants, less science graduates choosing an industrial career and with major demographic changes over the next 15 years, making the industry more dependent on the skills of the existing workforce."

"Employers envisage a Skills Academy that will provide national leadership and, as a driver of change, will move employers and their current level of skills to those which will be needed to take the sector forward into a bright and sustainable future in the UK."

"The nuclear industry

is also undergoing very significant changes," added John Holton, "as the sector moves into decommissioning, coupled with the potential new build scenario."

"While the nuclear industry has been committed to training, the provision has been fragmented, often site or company specific. The NNSA would address the skills gaps, put in place coherent training frameworks linked to accredited providers and qualifications."

The Government has already announced the go ahead for academies dedicated to manufacturing, construction, food and drink and financial services.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has said that it wants to see a further eight skills academies to start by 2008, and has made it clear that nuclear and chemicals are priority sectors because of their strategic importance to the UK.

## HAVE YOUR SAY:

*"We have had tremendous support and enthusiasm for both expressions of interest," said John Holton "with pledges of funding from process industry employers, and the major players in the nuclear industry."*

*"We would be happy to supply copies of the EOI documents, or further information, and I would urge anybody who would like to offer any form of support to contact me directly as soon possible so that we can demonstrate to Government the breadth and depth of employer interest."*  
[john.holton@cogent-ssc.com](mailto:john.holton@cogent-ssc.com)

 British Nuclear Group

  
Nuclear Decommissioning Authority

  
British Energy

 UKAEA  
Restoring our Environment



Sellafield Visitor Centre.

# Skills mix for success

**Cogent's research has highlighted some big themes which employers have recognised need immediate and close attention – and more importantly action.**

From its ongoing dialogue with employers in industries right across the Cogent footprint, some key target areas for intervention have emerged.

These "Big Ticket" items will form the basis of Cogent's work going forward. Joanna Woolf says that delivery is key. "We are collaborating with both employers and public

bodies to develop workable solutions. Some of these are areas for consolidation or review, while others are interventions which will need significant time, energy and of course funding.

"We've already started a number of projects in these areas, common to employers in our footprint. We want to support companies in their drive to get the right people on board and to achieve better performance through the skills and talents of their employees at every level in the organisation."



The Issue	The Solution
<b>Careers and Attraction</b> Confusion and inconsistency around career paths, roles and qualifications requirements in the Cogent industries	<b>Cogent Career Pathway</b> Develop a clear training and qualification pathway, with associated funding linked to real jobs and opportunities
<b>Technician Recruitment</b> Too few qualified technicians coming into the Cogent sector	<b>Cogent Apprenticeship Scheme</b> Development of industry-backed, regionally based technician/apprenticeship programme attracting both young and mature entrants
<b>Health and Safety</b> Still too many accidents and near misses in industry	<b>Cogent Competence Framework</b> Development and roll-out of a best practice-based competence assurance system
<b>Mobile Contractor Workforce</b> Concerns over skill levels in the contractor workforce – compounded by increased reliance on contractors	<b>Cogent Industry Passports</b> Implementation of an industry-owned contractor passport scheme
<b>Skills Shortfalls</b> Existing employees don't have all the skills needed to drive business forward against global competition	<b>Cogent Upskill Programme</b> Develop a modular approach to Upskilling existing employees to national standards which recognises experience and links to available funding streams
If you want to give feedback on these solutions, email <a href="mailto:john.holton@cogent-ssc.com">john.holton@cogent-ssc.com</a> For a full picture of the interventions by industry, go to <a href="http://www.cogent-ssc.com">www.cogent-ssc.com</a>	

## Accelerating oil and gas skills

**In October 2005, the Oil and Gas Industry Leadership Team (ILT) commissioned OPITO, part of the Cogent Group, to investigate the industry's current workforce shortages or "pinch points"; the impact they would have and then to propose solutions. The initial information-gathering process resulted in over two hundred companies, along with all the major trade associations, providing confidential information, which gave consistent and repeated messages.**

All sectors reported technician-level shortages. Contractor responses reflected the skills they require for annual shutdowns e.g. riggers and scaffolders. While the drilling sector identified a

workforce deficiency for floormen. A general theme emerged that all the reported pinch points were exacerbated by the difficulties of bringing people into the industry.

From this information, OPITO defined a number of "Accelerate" projects which have been agreed by industry and are now going ahead:

1. Online Skills Screening Tool
2. A web-based Industry Information Centre
3. A Skilled Entry Technician programme
4. A fast track entry route for work-ready riggers
5. An industry trainee scaffolders programme
6. A review of Green Hand training for rig floormen

7. A research project into employers' needs and supply chain capacity for development of qualified subsurface and subsea engineers

The website, [www.oilandgas4u.com](http://www.oilandgas4u.com), was launched in June. And is aimed at individuals, employers and stakeholders (schools, colleges, Jobcentre Plus, Talent Scotland and so on).

The aim is for the site to be a one stop industry information and advice point providing a balanced view of the industry and the opportunities on offer.

All the Accelerate projects will be delivered throughout 2006 and will provide the industry with robust mechanisms for replenishing the workforce.



# Safety first for highlands forecourts



Gillian Black, Commercial Development Director Forth Valley College with Cogent's Walter Williamson.

As the lead SSC Cogent has delivered, with its partners, an innovative programme aimed at both upskilling local electricians and ensuring the future and safety of petrol stations in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

With financial assistance from the Highlands Skills Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, a team from Forth Valley College took a simulated petrol station rig to venues in Inverness, Elgin and Thurso to deliver courses leading to the industry standard Comp'ex qualifications.

Cogent, through its relationship with the petrol retailers, oil distribution companies and enforcement agencies identified a need for proper installation and maintenance of electrical equipment in petrol forecourts.

Walter Williamson, Cogent Skills Director, added: "This project is essential in supporting and sustaining petrol filling stations in the Highlands and Islands, especially small independent rural sites that do not have the support of multi-national supermarket chains or franchised facilities."

## Skills development in Wales

Cogent is developing an in-depth industry skills profile within its industries operating in South Wales, particularly the chemicals, refining, storage and polymers industries. This will enable employers to develop specific employment and skills intervention plans. The Welsh Assembly Government is a key partner.

## East of England skills for energy

The East of England Skills for Energy Programme (SfE), which Cogent along with partner SSCs, the ECITB, Learning and Skills Council, Renewables East, Lowestoft College CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence for Offshore Technology), EEEGR and industry are driving forward is now in its implementation phase.

The SfE Partnership Board, chaired by Cogent CEO Joanna Woolf, who will oversee the programme's strategic direction will be launched on 13th July 2006 at the EEEGR06 Annual Summer

conference in Norwich.

This will be a high profile Board with key employers and stakeholders drawn from the energy sector in the East of England. Cogent is leading the workforce competence strand of the SfE programme and employers in the East of England are working with Cogent, EU Skills, the ECITB and the programme's other partners to ensure that the skilled individuals needed by the energy industry over the coming years are available, suitably trained and are ready to deploy.

[www.skillsforenergy.com](http://www.skillsforenergy.com)



## Scottish skills forum for renewables

The aim of this project, in which Cogent is a partner, is to ensure a sustainable forum of employers and other stakeholders so that all issues around skills and learning related to renewable energy are handled in a coherent manner.

The forum will drive the skills agenda forward within the Highlands and Islands as the renewable energy

sector progresses in the region.

The project's objectives are to carry out research into the skills requirements for the sector, to develop a one-off employer consultation forum and to hold three community events throughout the Highlands and Islands. The longer-term aim is the establishment of a strategic employer skills forum within the Highlands and Islands for renewable energy.



## NEPIC competence assurance pilot

This important project is using the Cogent Competence Assurance Framework as a basis for the development of a validated framework appropriate to each of the main sub-sectors within the North East Process Industries Cluster (NEPIC) – chemicals, biotechnology, speciality, pharmaceuticals and services. The companies involved are a mix of top or lower tier Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) and non-COMAH sites.

Their competence data was analysed and fed back on an individual basis. A discrete web site is in the process of being set up that will allow up to 30 companies who have expressed an interest in participating, to have access to the self-assessment questionnaire which has been developed. [www.picaf.co.uk](http://www.picaf.co.uk)



# Energy review must address skills

**Cogent** has welcomed the Government's Energy Review. In responding to the consultation, Cogent noted that the document made no mention of skills – and whatever the actions arising from the review, their success will very much depend on availability of highly skilled people, both now and in the longer term.

John Haddon, Cogent Skills Director for Nuclear, said: "Without positive action to reverse the trend of decline in science and engineering, Cogent is concerned that the pipeline of people who are willing and able to take responsibility for the technical roles in providing the energy which the economy demands, will simply dry up."

Cogent has urged the Government to make a policy statement on the need for technology to achieve the transformation of society's energy use and for it to increase funding to

schools, colleges and universities for Science Engineering and Technology (SET) activity. Cogent also wants to see a requirement for schools, Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) institutions to include energy generation and use as an integral part of the SET curriculum. Cogent also wants to see continuing investment in technical training, in order to respond to industry demand for more apprenticeships, technicians and production workers.

## Nuclear future?

As part of its SSA, Cogent has conducted a scenario planning exercise for the nuclear industry, looking at future skills needs and identifying the shortfalls and gaps in provision. John Haddon added: "There is no question that nuclear decommissioning, combined with a new build scenario is re-stimulating growth of the nuclear industry which has been in decline for several years.

"But all of this means investment in skills is critical, particularly as any investment in new build would probably involve overseas companies who would need to ensure and guarantee high skill levels underpinned by UK standards. A Nuclear Skills Academy would be well placed to implement national standards and qualifications where needed and the industry is very supportive of this development."

The 12 week consultation period for the Energy Review closed in April. The Government sought views on the measures that are needed by 2020 and beyond to tackle climate change, and ensure secure and affordable energy supplies in the UK. A statement on energy policy will be made in the summer, amid clear evidence of the need for infrastructure investment in electricity generation and transmission to ensure the electricity supply for the future.



# Plastic industry awards celebrate Rosti success

**Rosti Technical Plastics** took away a top plastics accolade at the annual Plastic Industry Awards, in the Best Training and Development Programme category, sponsored by Cogent SSC. In the opinion of the judges the company "demonstrated a continuing positive approach to workforce development through the use of structured training".

The company says it embarked on

"an aggressive and ambitious change and diversification programme". Training was one part of the Rosti programme, involving analysis of business areas, and a detailed operating and marketing plan to give the company new opportunities.

Rosti pins a lot of the credit on its training of staff, for which a specific budget has been set aside for its continuation over the coming year. Productivity "continues to exceed

expectations" and has shown improvement by more than 60 per cent by employing various lean manufacturing techniques.

Cogent Skills Director Brian Manning said: "Rosti's award is well deserved and underpinned by the incredible dedication and commitment of the workforce. The company is making great strides, customer satisfaction is at an all-time high and employee satisfaction levels are also up. Cogent is delighted to support their success in this way." Barry Coughlin, Managing Director at Rosti Technical Plastics said "Rosti are extremely proud to be recognised by the industry in the way we train and develop our people."

## Finalists:

### HBC Engineering Solutions

Like Rosti, HBC has held Investors in People status since 1999 and clearly takes training and development seriously. The company has a successful apprenticeship programme, and works closely with IPS International on its training provision.

### Finalists: Hi-Technology Group

Waterloo-based Hi-Technology is another company that reaches out to local schools, providing work experience to students. It also offers industrial placements to undergraduates from the nearby university. In its entry, the company said it wanted its training to change from being "transactional" to become inwardly driven by employees.

# Chemical industry gets the Midas Touch



**Cogent** is leading a Department of Trade and Industry (DTi) sponsored initiative to align funding with accredited qualifications under the banner of the "Chemical Gold Standard".

The Gold Standard will define the skills, competencies and qualifications required for a world-class industry. Individual companies will be able to measure themselves against this and structure their training accordingly. The Gold Standard is focussed around License to Operate, productivity and innovation. The first stage will focus on training people to a minimum standard of NVQ Level 3. After this attention will turn to identifying science, engineering and technology skills needed for innovation.



Cogent's Brian Manning (right) pictured with Kenneth McIntosh and Karl Stillman from Rosti.

# Trades unions have central role to play

**The UK's leading Trades Unions have a key role to play in the implementation of Cogent's Sector Skills Agreement.**

Cogent met representatives from Amicus, Prospect and the TGWU to share its interim agreement which sets out the necessary training and development interventions for the Cogent industries.

Cogent Strategy Development Director, John Holton, said: "We look forward to working with the Trades Unions in developing a

plan designed to enhance skills and boost productivity across the Cogent sector. We will also be working closely with the Union team to develop a strategy to increase the attractiveness of careers in our sector and encourage young people to take up roles in our industries."

Linda McCulloch, Amicus National Officer and Cogent Trade Union Board Member said: "This process is all about upskilling the existing workforce, developing the managers of the future and allowing individuals

to fulfil their potential. We are fully behind getting these plans off the ground, with the support of Union Learning Representatives in the key Cogent regions."

There are now 8,000 union learning representatives (ULRs) involved in training and development around the UK, with the aim to have 21,000 in place by 2010.

ULRs are completely independent, and can provide information about learning opportunities, available both inside and outside the workplace.

Representatives are trained to work with providers of learning to shape the opportunities to meet the needs of workplace learners. They can provide reliable information about everyday training matters, as well as existing learning and skills initiatives such as Basic and Key Skills, NVQs, leardirect, Foundation degrees and other professional qualifications.

## Workforce Engagement

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has said that the role of union learning representatives in the workplace

provides a significant new source of expertise and engagement in promoting the learning agenda at work.

CIPD research shows that Union learning representatives can have an important contribution to make in changing attitudes to learning. Their role in advising members about their training, educational and development needs may contribute to raising 'bottom up' demand for learning and to a cultural change in organisations.

David Tarren, Amicus National Training Adviser added: "Trade Union involvement in learning has a long history and promoting and providing opportunities for lifelong learning is now a central part of union activity and strategy.

"Amicus, having secured funding from the Union Learning Fund to continue its work supporting members through learning for a further two years, will be playing its role in ensuring that as many workers as possible benefit from the work of Cogent. In addition to our ULRs, the union has over 40 Learning Organisers whose job it is to work with employees and employers to maximise learning opportunities."



## More choice, more flexibility

**Cogent is currently working in partnership on the development of two specialised Diplomas – Engineering and Manufacturing – along with other SSCs including Skillfast-UK, Proskills and SEMTA. The Diplomas represent new, world class qualifications designed to stretch and challenge young people – whether they are wanting to continue learning or go into the workplace.**

Specialised Diplomas are being introduced by the Government, via SSCs, to improve the opportunities for young people (aged 14-19) as they consider what area of work and what kind of education will help them to develop their skills to match what employers are looking for.

They are being designed to enable young people to learn in a style that suits them using a mixture of classroom teaching and practical experience. Functional skills (English, Mathematics and ICT) and personal development will be

central to Specialised Diplomas.

Dawn Allen, Cogent's Diploma Development Manager said: "The contents of these qualifications are being driven by employers in the Cogent sector. Ultimately the providers of education will be able to offer young people learning that will make them highly attractive to employers because they will understand their sector and have the flexibility to work in a wide range of jobs."

Cogent is currently seeking further representation from the chemicals and pharmaceutical industries for the Manufacturing Diploma Steering Group.

The Engineering Diploma will be available for teaching in September 2008.

The Manufacturing Diploma will be available from September 2009.

For more information or to get involved in the Specialised Diplomas in Engineering and Manufacturing please email dawn.allen@cogent-ssc.com or go to [www.engineeringdiploma.com](http://www.engineeringdiploma.com) [www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk](http://www.manufacturingdiploma.co.uk)

## Demand for degrees

**Cogent has been commissioned by Foundation Degree Forward (FdF) to carry out research with employers in its five industries to assess demand for Foundation degrees (FDs).**

The biggest change in higher education to date, Foundation Degrees were introduced in 2001 as a new vocational qualification that would be employer and demand-led. They are validated by universities.

Cogent Skills Director Liz Johnson said, "employers must lead in their design and development to ensure that the skills and knowledge in the programme of study are designed to meet current employment needs."

The results of the Cogent study will be known in September, with a report to FdF. The project plan includes meeting with existing providers of FDs in the Cogent industries to assess provision.

Cogent will then develop options and questions to put to employers in each industry and meet with industry groups to raise awareness and consult on options. It will then conduct follow up meetings with industry groups and hold some one-to-one employer interviews to explore issues in more depth, before producing the final report.

Foundation Degrees are proving themselves of value to both students

and industry, but there is still room for further growth.

FdF's primary objective is to support the development of high quality Foundation Degrees. It works in partnership with all relevant agencies, institutions, organisations and interest groups to ensure that the development of Foundation Degrees is driven by the needs of students and employers.



# Contractorisation: Getting The Big Picture

The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) has commissioned Cogent to conduct a research project examining the supply and demand for contract workers in different sectors and how this might be optimised to improve the long term competitiveness of UK business.

Cogent Director of Research and Policy, Liz Rooney said: "The supply chain skills needed by the industries within the Cogent footprint feature strongly within our SSA process and we know that other sectors are experiencing the same issues, often relying on the same contractors to meet their needs.

"Cogent will involve other SSCs as well as contractor organisations to provide the required input to the project."

## Reliance

The output will be better quantification and understanding of what is a complex pan-sector issue.

Companies in the Cogent sector rely upon a contractor workforce for ongoing repair and maintenance as well as project work and site turnaround. In the case of larger employers, there are often long-term maintenance contracts

in place with supporting companies, providing a level of stability in the employment base and an incentive to invest in skills development of contractors.

However, skills shortages are being experienced by these very same contractors. So while the industry may not be experiencing these shortfalls first hand, the situation with the contractor supply chain exacerbates problems over skills supply. There is also a tremendous demand on the same contractor companies.

Liz Rooney added: "There is evidence of co-operation within industries to ensure that demands are evenly spaced and to ensure equal access to preferred suppliers and associated skills. However this co-operation does not necessarily extend to other industries outside the Cogent footprint who use these contractors, once again limiting the availability of suitably skilled personnel.

"In addition to this, there is evidence that employers are not necessarily accessing appropriately skilled contractor personnel on occasion, leading to delays to essential work programmes. These factors too can only exacerbate the skills gaps and shortages which exist across the industry."

# Tanker standard set to boost skills

Cogent and Skills for Logistics have worked with the UK Downstream Oil Distribution Forum, (UKDODF) to launch a new Standard for tanker drivers transporting petrol, diesel, gas oil, aviation fuel, heavy fuels, bitumens and lubricants.

The Common Road Tanker Driver Induction Standard, (CRTDiS), combines the industry's existing best practice into one single national standard skills framework

This is fully supported by the recently formed UKDODF, which comprises representatives from Trade Associations, oil companies, haulage contractors, Transport and General Workers Union, SSCs and the Department for Trade and Industry.

The new skills framework can be adapted to suit large and small hauliers.

It focuses on three main stages:

- loading operations
- transportation of petroleum products
- offloading operations

The emphasis is on safety awareness and the need for personal responsibility for drivers' own safety and those around them during these three phases.

Tanker drivers will receive a certificate which will be transferable and can form part of their CV, so that when they change jobs they can highlight achievement of this safety critical standard.

A record of all drivers participating in the standard will be placed on the Skills for Logistics database.



## New Cogent Members: Sign up now and pay next year

**Cogent offers two types of membership: Individual membership at rates between £50-£1000, and Corporate Membership- which is negotiated by special arrangement, see right\*.**

As a member of Cogent you'll be part of an impressive network of employers, education and training bodies and national and regional stakeholders.

You'll have access to services, information and advice that will help you succeed in your industry and help your industry succeed.

### What's on offer?

- **Competence Assurance:**  
- Discounted access to online and paper-based competence assurance systems, including: Design and implementation Accreditation Certification
- **Salary/Benchmarking data:**  
Discounted access to pay, benefits, and conditions survey LMI data.
- **Careers pathways and role profiles across the sector**
- **Kite-marking of training provision and industry relevant qualifications**
- **Brokerage support services including signposting to funding**
- **Networking opportunities, including expert best practice and advice seminars and the annual Cogent Skills Awards Dinner.**
- **Access to contacts on our database**
- **Preferential rates on Cogent products and services**

### Low annual fees:

#### Employers

0-50 employees £50  
51-250 employees £300  
251 + employees £1000

#### Education membership:

All UK students: Free  
Schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges: £125  
Universities and HE institutions: £300

#### Training Providers: £250

**Sign up before September 2006 and enjoy free membership until January 2007.**

**\*Corporate Membership.** Corporate members benefit from a closer relationship and influence on policy and strategy, and receive a wide range of discounted and dedicated services. For information about Corporate Membership please contact us to arrange a personal visit by a Cogent Skills Director.

To join, email [membership@kogent-ssc.com](mailto:membership@kogent-ssc.com)

By post: you can return your details to us in the enclosed envelope.

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For advice on membership call Kate Amos on 01925 515220 or email [kate.amos@kogent-ssc.com](mailto:kate.amos@kogent-ssc.com)

## Cogent's Regional Representatives



The Sector Skills Council for  
Chemicals, Nuclear, Oil and Gas,  
Petroleum and Polymers

### Engagement with National and Regional Stakeholders



**Jaine Chisholm-Caunt**

Tel: 01925 515218  
Mobile: 07786 017222  
Email: jaine.chisholm-caunt@cogent-ssc.com

### NORTHERN IRELAND



**Brian Manning**  
Polymers

Tel: 01925 515216  
Mobile: 07717 486107  
Email: brian.manning@cogent-ssc.com

### UK NUCLEAR



**John Haddon**  
Nuclear

Tel: 01572 747452  
Mobile: 07717 486120  
Email: john.haddon@cogent-ssc.com

### COGENT HEAD OFFICE WARRINGTON



**John Holton**  
Strategy Development

Tel: 01925 515216  
Email: john.holton@cogent-ssc.com

### NORTH WEST ENGLAND



**Rob Bevan**  
Chemicals

Tel: 0151 3426930  
Mobile: 07786 707431  
Email: rob.bevan@cogent-ssc.com

### WALES AND SOUTH WEST



**Mike Lynham**

Mobile: 07795 505350  
Email: mike.lynham@cogent-ssc.com

### SCOTLAND



**Walter Williamson**  
Petroleum

Tel: 01506 825828  
Mobile: 07748 400613  
Email: walter.williamson@cogent-ssc.com

### NORTH EAST ENGLAND, YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE



**Mark Chapman**

Tel: 01287 637203  
Mobile: 07795 505351  
Email: mark.chapman@cogent-ssc.com

### WEST & EAST MIDLANDS



**Bill Erskine**

Tel: 0845 2269307  
Mobile: 07860 610314  
Email: bill.erskine@cogent-ssc.com

### EAST ENGLAND



**Liz Johnson**

Tel: 01707 656367  
Mobile: 07715 014099  
Email: liz.johnson@cogent-ssc.com

### SOUTH EAST



**Peter Gent**

Tel: 01342 837935  
Mobile: 07876 594393  
Email: peter.gent@cogent-ssc.com

## BOARD

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University of  
Bradford

### INDUSTRY RESPONSIBILITY:

Oil and Gas	Joanna Woolf (CEO)	Tel: 01925 515210			
Petroleum	Walter Williamson	Tel: 01506 825828	Mobile: 07748 400613	Email: walter.williamson@cogent-ssc.com	
Chemicals	Rob Bevan	Tel: 0151 3426930	Mobile: 07786 707431	Email: rob.bevan@cogent-ssc.com	
Polymers	Brian Manning	Tel: 01925 515216	Mobile: 07717 486107	Email: brian.manning@cogent-ssc.com	
Nuclear	John Haddon	Tel: 01572 747452	Mobile: 07717 486120	Email: john.haddon@cogent-ssc.com	

### Cogent Focus

Unit 5  
Madarin Court  
Warrington  
WA1 1GG

phone: 01925 515 200  
fax: 01925 515 240

Cogent SSC welcomes  
feedback.

Please email Judith Cowan  
judith.cowan@cogent-ssc.com

www.cogent-ssc.com

