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Welcome to the first issue of the Cogent electronic bulletin

Although some of you will have heard of and worked with Cogent over the last two years, this e-bulletin marks the start of a new era for this Sector Skills Council. Cogent is no longer a trailblazer SSC for three industries (chemicals manufacturing, oil and gas extraction and petroleum), but a fully licensed employer organisation representing not three but five sectors, with the nuclear and polymer industries now forming part of Cogent's footprint. I would therefore like to extend a warm welcome to readers from those sectors.

The Cogent e-bulletin will be published every other month, providing an update on Cogent's activities on behalf of sector employers, as well as news from our partners and stakeholders in the drive to achieve business success through people development. Contributions are gratefully received, so please don't hesitate to send me your news. Your feedback will also be much appreciated.

I hope you will find this bulletin of interest. If you feel that other people in your organisation would benefit from receiving it, please e-mail me their details at editor@cogent-ssc.com. They will then be added to our mailing list.

I look forward to hearing from you. Best Regards
Jocelyne Bia, Editor

A look back at the launch of Cogent

The dedicated team of people involved in the creation of a new Sector Skills Council for the chemical, nuclear, oil and gas, petroleum and polymer industries saw their hard work finally rewarded on 2nd March with the five-year licensing and formal launch of Cogent.

The new Cogent Sector Skills Council brings together the trailblazer SSC of the same name (which covered the oil and gas extraction, chemicals manufacturing and petroleum industries) and the Polymer National Training Organisation. It was also developed in partnership with employers from the nuclear industry.

Over 160 delegates from industry and stakeholder organisations and the media attended the high profile event at the Institute of Civil Engineers in Westminster, which featured keynote speeches by Ivan Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under

Secretary of State for Education and Vocational Skills and Lewis Macdonald MSP, Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.

Presenting the licence to Cogent's chairman John Mumford, Ivan Lewis said: "Sector Skills Councils are at the heart of our skills strategy to improve our productivity. By launching Cogent today, we are giving employers a powerful voice in closing skills gaps in their sector. Together we can focus on our vital skills agenda to improve performance across the board."

Lewis Macdonald added: "The energy sector is one of Scotland's most vital, with oil and gas alone contributing around £21 billion a year to the UK economy and providing around 43,000 jobs. If this success is to continue it is critical to develop the potential of our workforce to meet the evolving demands of the industry. I am therefore delighted that Cogent is acting as a leader for the sector, addressing these skills and workforce development needs."

John Mumford thanked Ivan Lewis and Lewis Macdonald on behalf of Cogent and commented: "The launch of Cogent as a full Sector Skills Council gives us the ability to help employers provide better workplace learning and development opportunities for their staff. Our industries are a key part of the UK economy and Cogent is looking forward to working with businesses, both large and small, to grow performance through enhanced skills".

Concluding the ceremony, John Ramsay, Cogent's CEO, encouraged "all those with an interest in the sector to work with us in developing a strategy for skills that will improve the sector's business performance."

Video clips of the launch can be viewed on the [Cogent website](#).

Cogent remembers colleagues and friends Alan Hanslip and Tom McIntosh

Although celebrating the launch of Cogent as a new, fully licensed SSC, the Cogent staff has been in mourning since the beginning of the year with the loss of two pillars of the organisation: Board Member Alan Hanslip, from chemicals company Associated Octel, and Cogent Products and Services Team Leader Tom McIntosh. Both had just begun enjoying a well-deserved retirement after years of hard work and dedication when they were tragically struck down, Alan in January and Tom in March.

Alan Hanslip had been involved with the creation of Cogent from the outset, when the Trailblazer Sector Skills Council was formed back in 2001. He had also contributed to the promotion of the Skills for Business network as a whole, acting as a key employer spokesperson for Cogent and the Sector Skills Development Agency.

His commitment to workforce development was best illustrated through his achievements as Vice-President of Human Resources at Associated Octel. He helped implement major structural and cultural changes at their Ellesmere Port site, which earned the company a National Training Award in 2002. Most of all, he will be remembered for the restrained but firm style and relaxed manner in which he worked.

"Alan was a great enthusiast for the cause of workplace learning, both inside his own organisation Octel and as part of a number of industry task forces and initiatives", commented John Mumford, Chairman of Cogent. "He was very supportive of the chemicals employer engagement team in Cogent, helping them gain credibility and a lot of business in this industry. As one of the founder members of the Cogent board he was a great friend and ally. He devoted much thought and energy to helping mould the Cogent organisation. However, our lasting memory of him will be leading a chorus of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' at the Christmas party in a vain attempt to drown out Walter Williamson's bag-pipes! Alan will be sadly missed by all who worked with him."

Chemical Industry Focal Point Rob Bevan, added: "Alan was an invaluable sounding board for me on issues relating to the Chemical Industry. He would always make time to chat or meet when I needed to bounce ideas off him. His knowledge and experience helped to shape my thinking on a number of occasions. I found Alan to be approachable at all times and miss his contributions greatly."

In recognising the contribution that Alan Hanslip had made to the work of the Chemical Manufacturing and Processing NTO and Cogent, John Ramsay, Cogent's Chief Executive, said: "The energy and enthusiasm that Alan put into developing the Cogent Proposition was instrumental in the successful application for Trailblazer status. He gave freely of his time and on a personal basis I valued his wise counsel."

Tom McIntosh had joined OPITO, the former National Training Organisation (NTO) for Oil and Gas Extraction and one of Cogent's founding organisations, in August 1997. He started work as a Project Team Leader overseeing National

Occupational Standards development, competence assurance and emergency response training approval, progressing to Team Leader for Products and Services in 2002 with the creation of Cogent. Before joining OPITO, Tom had worked as a Technical Teacher in Mechanical Engineering and then as Training and Development Manager at AOC International, a leading oil and gas service company.

Prior to retiring, Tom had worked on grooming his successor, David Doig, to the daunting task of extending the processes his team has successfully established in the oil and gas industry to the other Cogent sectors. Paying his personal tribute, David said: "Tom's background in engineering, education, training and development provided the cornerstone of his belief that people skills were at the core of all successful businesses. He was a stickler for detail and for doing things right, both of which have made a significant contribution to building Cogent's reputation and in putting in place sound foundations for the future. Tom played no little part in my own development and I shall be eternally grateful for his support and trust in me. "Go get it chum!" was a phrase he often used. How these words inspired me! Tom will be sadly missed by all who knew him."

John Ramsay added "Tom McIntosh had made an invaluable contribution to the work of OPITO and subsequently Cogent and it was tragic that he did not have an opportunity to enjoy his well earned retirement. His contribution to developing Products and Services for Cogent and in particular the work he did with the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation were invaluable."

In memory of both men, Cogent will be launching annual awards in their name: the Alan Hanslip trophy will be presented to an employer representative voted "Skills and Cogent Champion of the Year" and the Tom McIntosh trophy will go to the "Cogent Trainee of the Year".

The thoughts of all at Cogent are with Alan's and Tom's wives, Christine and Helen, and their daughters.

Apprenticeships reform: employers' engagement crucial to success

The Government has announced a sweeping reform of the Apprenticeship system which it hopes will boost workforce productivity by widening the range of work-based learning opportunities for young people and adults. It also called for employers to get involved in its development and delivery through their Sector Skills Council to ensure that the apprenticeship frameworks offer the flexibility they've been "crying out for".

The new apprenticeships package, which will initially only apply to England, was launched by the Secretary of State for Education Charles Clarke and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown on Monday 10th May. Its key features include the launch of a "Young Apprenticeships" scheme combining school study with access to workplace training for 14 to 16-year-olds and the removal of the upper age limit currently set at 25. The label "Modern" is also to be dropped.

John Ramsay, Chief Executive of Cogent, welcomed the changes: "These proposals offer an opportunity to place employers at the heart of apprenticeships, which will enable young people to learn vocational skills at an early age and to gain experience of the world of work. Employers will be able to develop a workforce with the right skills to meet the demands of new technologies and business practices. The government, in sending a "call to arms" to employers and SSCs, provides an opportunity for employers to take the lead in developing frameworks which meet their needs."

Peter Crowther, Cogent's Standards and Qualifications Co-ordinator, added: "Employers in our sector have always recognised the business benefits of developing staff through the apprenticeship route. We look forward to working with them and other agencies to introduce these changes. In particular, we welcome the emphasis placed on giving employers a much bigger say in the development of the apprenticeships of the future. Ownership and involvement will be the key to achieving the buy-in from more of them."

To view the DfES press release, click [here](#). The DfES has also launched a [dedicated website on Apprenticeships](#) providing information for employers wanting to find out more.

Cogent takes the lead in Energy Efficiency Programme implementation

Cogent was appointed Lead SSC to implement a major Energy Efficiency Training Programme on behalf of a partnership of organisations consisting of four SSCs (Cogent, Energy & Utilities Skills, Summitskills and CITB), the Energy Saving Trust,

City and Guilds and the National Learning and Skills Council. The industry, through CORGI and trade association OFTEC, has played a key part in the development of the initiative and its ongoing evolution.

The programme was launched in response to the Government's 2003 Energy White Paper on reducing the UK's contribution to global warming, and forthcoming changes to the Building Regulations (April 2005) that will make it compulsory for any new boiler installed to be of the energy-efficient condensing type (note this will still require registration and appropriate training via OFTEC in the case of the oil sector). Whilst OFTEC has conducted energy efficiency training for a number of years, this programme is designed for wider boiler technician sectors. The Energy Efficiency Heating Installer Certification for Domestic Heating (City & Guilds 6084) course ensures that attendees are specifically trained and able to provide appropriate advice and guidance to customers.

Cogent and its SSC partners, working under the 'Skills for Business' umbrella, have appointed, and will quality assure, over fifty training centres charged with delivering the training course to a target of 45,000 installers by March 2005. 'Train the trainer' workshops are currently taking place and a publicity campaign has been launched to recruit applicants for the Certificate. A pilot training course delivered by Worcester Bosch has already seen over 1,000 installers going through the programme.

For further information, please contact [Tom Wolstenholme](#) - tel: 01277 633378; mob. 07775 627635.

East of England Skills for Energy Project

Recent developments in the energy sector in the East of England have led to the launch of a unique joint venture between Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and regional partners. The aim of the project is to provide a three-year action plan on skills that will help sustain the region's energy-related industries.

The 'Skills for Energy' project brings together Cogent, the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), Energy & Utility Skills (the SSC for electricity, gas, waste management and water), SEMTA (the SSC for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies), the DTI and regional and local partners including the Learning and Skills Council Norfolk, the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR) and the East of England Development Agency. The DTI and LSC Norfolk are funding its first phase.

Following an assessment of the impact on recruitment and skills of the relinquishment of assets by major oil companies, the arrival of new operators, decommissioning programmes for offshore oil and gas and nuclear and the development of renewables, a three-year action will be established to help existing and new entrant companies meet their workforce requirements.

Data from energy-related companies is already being collected for analysis by consultants and a report putting forward recommendations for action is due to be published in June 2004. The subsequent action plan will be rolled out over the next two to three years.

Liz Johnson, Skills Development Adviser for Cogent, explains: "The data currently collected by the SSCs enables us to gain an in-depth and up-to-date understanding of the skills, training and recruitment issues facing businesses in the energy sector in the East of England, and we hope that the resulting action plan will make a real difference for employers in the region."

For further information, contact [Liz Johnson](#) - tel: 01707 656367 mob: 07715 014099.

MA recruitment campaign for upstream under way

In late March, Cogent, in partnership with the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB), launched the recruitment campaign for this year's intake of upstream oil and gas trainee technicians. This annual scheme is a key element of the services Cogent provides for the upstream oil and gas industry.

The trainees are recruited from throughout the UK and the numbers of yearly appointments are determined by known industry demand, established through Cogent's annual upstream technician review. This means that most trainees can expect to get a job at the end of their apprenticeship.

The training consists of eighteen months' college or training centre-based training followed by two years' worksite training. During the latter phase, trainees may expect to earn up to £20,000 per annum. The potential overseas opportunities for ex-trainees are also becoming increasingly significant as oil and gas developments expand in other continents.

Reflecting on the success of past campaign, Neville Gall, HR manager for Cogent, said: "With now well over two hundred trainees on the Cogent payroll, this is a significant responsibility for the company. The partnership with the ECITB ensures that the interests and responsibilities of the key industry stakeholders are equally recognised and shared. In addition, this partnership provides for cost savings in terms of economies of scale and generally 'spreading the cost' more evenly throughout the industry."

For more information contact [Neville Gall](#) – tel: 01224 787820 or visit www.oilandgastechicians.com

Seminar urges polymer manufacturers to “get smarter to survive”

How to remain competitive in the global market is a crucial issue for Scottish employers in the plastics and rubber sector. A one-day seminar in Cumbernauld, Scotland on 24th March sought to answer this burning question and provide employers with the tools necessary for survival in the current economic climate. Organised by the Scottish Plastics and Rubber Association (SPRA) in partnership with Cogent, the “towards Smarter Manufacture in the plastics and rubber sectors” seminar offered advice to Scottish businesses on how to undertake the organisational changes that will make them more innovative, more efficient and stronger in the face of international competition.

Chaired by John Ramsay, Cogent's Chief Executive, and Colin Hindle, President of SPRA, the seminar addressed the issues of innovation, supply chain management, technology translation and new ways of learning that will lead to increased competitiveness in the global market. The various speakers (including Prof. Umit Bititci, of CompetitiveScotland, Chris Thompson, of Viadynamics and Prof. Douglas MacBeth from the Centre for Supply Chain Management at Glasgow University) urged companies to take advantage of the science and engineering capabilities in universities and to look at new ways of learning to maintain skills development.

An adjacent exhibition, featuring over 20 polymer organisations, offered practical advice and assistance in making the organisational changes needed to improve competitiveness. These included not only innovation, but also technology transfer and skills development. The seminar was followed a week later by an introductory workshop on Lean Manufacture conducted by two expert consultants, Chris McKellen and Ralf Woodhead. Designed to introduce companies to the concept of lean manufacture, the workshop featured hands-on exercises and demonstrations of the lean tools and also gave delegates the opportunity to assess their own plant and discuss the results with the workshop tutors.

Reflecting on the two events, John Ramsay said: “Employers in the Scottish plastics and rubber industry increasingly understand how important continuous innovation and skills development are to the survival of their business. Working in partnership with the relevant organisations, such as SPRA and ourselves, guarantees that they receive the support and advice they need to succeed”.

For further information on these and forthcoming events, contact:

For Cogent: [Bill Erskine](#) - tel: 01952 681808

For SPRA: [Charlie Geddes](#) – tel: 01592 651269

Standards and Qualifications update

Process Engineering Maintenance – the UK Co-ordinating Group approved this new set of National Occupational Standards in February 2004. They were developed with industry input to provide competence statements for maintenance occupations in the Chemical, Oil and Gas and Petroleum sectors. Three awarding bodies are now preparing submissions to QCA and SQA for delivering the S/NVQs.

Chemical, Pharmaceutical and Petro-chemical Manufacture – The awarding body PAA/VQSET has secured accreditation for the S/NVQs at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 in the above qualification. These replace the qualification known as Process Operations (Chemicals). Further information can be obtained from [PAA/VQSET](#).

2004 Standards Development Plan - Cogent has received funding for four projects covering standards development.

- 1) Nuclear – Complete a functional analysis and occupational map of the nuclear industry. This will form the basis for planning future standards development activities.
- 2) Liquid transfer – Development of a set of National Occupational Standards covering the occupations involved with the transfer of products from the jetties through to transportation from the storage facilities. The first meeting of this industry work group has taken place.
- 3) Polymers – Review of the existing National Occupational Standards for Polymer Processing and Related Operations. The first meeting of this industry work group has taken place.
- 4) Signmaking - Review of the existing National Occupational Standards for Signmaking. The first industry work group meeting is for planned 7th May 2004.

For further information on any of the above projects or if you would like to become involved please contact [Peter Crowther](#) - tel 0224 787824

Chris Hunt appointed Director General of UKPIA

The [UK Petroleum Industry Association](#) (UKPIA) announced in early April the appointment of Chris Hunt as its new Director General.

Chris, who was UKPIA's Commercial Director, had been Acting Director General for several months whilst a permanent successor was selected for Malcolm Webb who took up the post of Chief Executive at the UK Offshore Operators Association (UKOOA).

Ken Rivers, UKPIA's President commented: "We had significant interest in this role during the recruitment process from first-class candidates. Chris Hunt had the combination of skills and experience that we were looking for to continue the work of making UKPIA a proactive, dynamic and participative organisation, as well as a leading advocate for our sector."

Events:

All Energy Opportunities Conference and Exhibition – Aberdeen, 25th - 27th May

The fourth All-Energy Opportunities Exhibition and Conference, which will take place in at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre from 25th to 27th May, is believed to be the largest show devoted solely to renewable energy ever held in the UK.

The conference will be opened by Energy Minister, Stephen Timms MP and will also feature keynote addresses by Mark Hope of Shell Exploration and Production and Richard Erskine of Norsk HydroTechnology Ventures. Then speakers will look at a series of key issues – the grid, planning, the Innovation Review and diversification, the importance and applications of diversification to Aberdeen and the importance of the community – all of which will be explored in more detail in parallel sessions the following day.

Lewis Macdonald MSP, Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Scottish Executive will deliver the opening keynote address at the start of Day Two with a DTI view of market opportunities following. Then the conference breaks into parallel streams for the rest of the day. The conference will also look at key topics such as the grid/transmission issues and embedded generation; the importance of the community nationally, regionally and locally; opportunities for diversification; offshore health and safety issues; and offshore site investigation.

The final morning of the conference will look at funding a wider renewables industry. The opening session 'Finance for renewables – needs and sources', involving key players from large corporations, independent companies and the government; will be followed by a panel discussion involving speakers representing banks, the stock market, equity finance, development capital, portfolio investors, non-traditional sources, and big companies.

The exhibition will feature 180 exhibitors ranging from wind turbine manufacturers to CHP specialists; wave and tidal device developers to suppliers of solar energy products; those involved with bioenergy to fuel cell developers;

grid connection specialists to power companies. There will be group stands too from around the regions as well as individual companies ranging from giants to one man bands; and trade associations and government departments.

Attendance to the conference is free of charge. For further details, visit www.all-energy.co.uk

SSAScot Annual Conference – Nairn, Scotland, 2nd- 3rd June

The Sector Skills Alliance Scotland (SSAScot) will be holding its annual conference at the Newton Hotel, Nairn, on 2nd and 3rd June. This year's event will feature a wide range of presentations and seminars from leading figures within the Scottish skills arena. Award-winning BBC journalist and broadcaster Lesley Riddoch will facilitate both days of the conference, ensuring lively debate on current and emerging skills issues.

Topics of discussion at the conference will include:

- Meeting the Skills Challenges in the Highlands and Islands
- Engaging with Employers in the Highlands
- The future of Vocational Qualifications
- SQA – the way forward

Speakers will include Alasdair Morgan MSP, Convenor, Enterprise and Culture Committee, Mark Batho, Head of Lifelong Learning Group at the Scottish Executive, Anton Colella, Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Christopher Duff, Chief Executive of the Sector Skills Development Agency.

The 2004 SSAScot Awards Ceremony, which will take place in the evening of 2nd June, will be hosted by Scottish TV presenter Cathy MacDonald and will celebrate the many outstanding contributions made to skills and lifelong learning in Scotland over the past year.

Further information on the conference and booking forms can be found on the [SSAScot website](#).