

JOHN HADDON, COGENT SSC**June 2007****INVESTING IN A LONG TERM WORKFORCE FOR NUCLEAR**

Cogent SSC is the Sector Skills Council for the chemical, nuclear, oil & gas, petroleum and polymer industries. It was established and licensed by SEDA in February 2004. It is a not-for-profit company.

Sector Skills Councils have a general remit to

- Reduce skills gaps and shortages
- Improve productivity, business and public service performance
- Increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce, including action on equal opportunities
- Improve learning supply, including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards.

Of course this can only be achieved by working with the collective employers in the industries. The nuclear employers, both those responsible for the operation and decommissioning at Licensed Nuclear Sites and those which support these sites through the supply chain, have shown strong enthusiasm for the work.

Cogent's work is funded partly by grant from DfES and the rest by the employers and by income from specific projects.

Find the Gap

When Cogent did the research 2 years ago we discovered some potential shortages, mainly in specialist resources such as Radiation Protection, Safety case authors and some of the computational disciplines. Gaps were also identified in the skill sets of the existing workforce for instance in programme and project management, particularly among the people working on the sites which were going into the decommissioning and cleanup phases.

We found that the age profile of the industry tended to be higher than the national workforce norm.

In discussion with employers it became clear that there is a huge commitment to training in the industry and lots of it going on within the businesses and sites, and it is rather aimed at meeting local needs. This is a major expense and has not always been cost effective. The preoccupation with safety management and regulation processes is very striking in this industry – and training has focused on it.

The case for action

We concluded, with the employers, that there was a strong case for industry wide or national standard-setting in the nuclear job roles for the long term: the benefits would be in defining training and qualification requirements fit for purpose, enabling more effective training programmes to be delivered and making better use of external training resources.

The result should be a qualified workforce which is easier to manage and has more transferable skills – while maintaining the levels of competence required. We also concluded that the continuing recruitment of young people into SET roles in the industry is critical to a sustainable workforce and could become a pinch point in future unless action is taken. Research shows that the industry needs about 1500 recruits pa – at a time when the number of school-leavers is falling and uptake of science is static or in decline.

The major companies in the UK and the NDA have accepted this case. Of course, demand is picking up across the industry with the recent order of the fourth Astute submarine, the replacement for Trident expected and with an Energy White Paper which anticipates a significant new build of nuclear power stations in addition to all the cleanup work for the NDA.

Our gap analysis included for all these factors and we analysed potential supply and demand of skills in various scenarios to 2025. The analyses and our plans and industry discussions are published on our website: www.cogent-ssc.com

Cogent and NSA Nuclear

Cogent has a major programme of work aimed at these issues in nuclear. Many of them are common with those of other industries in the Cogent sector.

Last year, Cogent with a group of key employers bid for a National Skills Academy for the Nuclear industry. This is a national programme offered by DfES that brings substantial funding and other benefits, such as a focus for interest of young people. The business plan for NSA Nuclear has just been submitted for review and it is hoped that the Academy will start operation at the beginning of 2008.

Cogent's role will continue as being to

- research the future gaps between supply and demand
- improve the mechanisms, processes and provision of training and development
- develop NOS & Qualifications with employers which industry needs.

Cogent is now embarking on a review of the qualifications strategy for the nuclear and other sectors.

I think it is with young people and on the boundaries between standards, qualifications and training that attention is most needed and the National Skills Academy for Nuclear provides a great opportunity to make it work. Cogent and NSAN will work to promote the industry to young people by supporting schools science and providing good information on jobs and careers in the industry.

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