

# Skills for a Sustainable, Low Carbon and Resource Efficient Economy

Report of a Round Table Meeting,  
11th February 2009

New Connaught Rooms, London

March 2009

Of interest to those in the FE system with an  
interest in skills for sustainability

### **Further information**

For further information, please contact the appropriate LSC partnership team at the local LSC. Contact details for each office can be found on the LSC's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk).

### **Learning and Skills Council National Office**

Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
T 0845 019 4170  
F 024 7682 3675  
[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

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# Executive Summary

The Learning and Skills Council hosted a round table meeting on 11th February 2009; bringing together a group of stakeholders from across the skills system to act as a reference group offering support and challenge to a high level cross-government forum on skills for a low carbon and resource efficient economy.

Speakers from the Sustainable Development Commission, the Department for Innovation Universities and Skills, and the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform outlined government thinking to date and posed a number of questions for the group to consider.

The feedback from the round table discussions identified some key success factors for the development of skills for a sustainable, low carbon and resource efficient economy:

- The need for a significant **culture change** that reaches into all parts of society and reflects a positive and proactive approach to meeting the challenges of a low carbon future.
- The importance of **learner engagement** whether institutionally driven through learner voice strategies in providers, or led in the workplace by trades unions through union learning representatives.
- The role of the wider **public sector** in providing **leadership** and demonstrating the importance of this agenda through its operating practices and procurement strategies.
- The proportionate and appropriate use of **regulation and legislation** to drive change without constraining the ability of the system to respond.
- The importance of the **role of government** and its agencies to provide strategic leadership and stimulate the articulation of latent demand.
- The identification and dissemination of **next practice** as well as best practice, looking for hotspots of innovation and ensuring that lessons learned can be quickly taken up by others.
- The role of **professional bodies**, including those for teachers and trainers, in ensuring that necessary skills are updated through continuing professional development.

The discussions of the group will also help to inform the skills chapter of the Low Carbon Industrial Strategy due to be published later in 2009.



# Introduction

In November 2008, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) agreed to hold a meeting of key stakeholders in early Spring 2009 to discuss how to progress sustainable development in the context of skills content and delivery, with particular reference to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) proposals for simplification of the skills delivery system.

Subsequent discussion with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) identified the need for a stakeholder reference group to provide challenge and support to a high level cross-government forum on skills for a low carbon and resource efficient economy (LCREE).

The purpose of the round table was therefore to bring together stakeholders from across the skills system to inform government thinking on the delivery of a strategic skills solution for sustainable and LCREE skills.

The round table event was held on Wednesday 11th February 2009 at the New Connaught Rooms in London and was chaired by Frances O'Grady, Deputy General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and Vice Chair of the LSC National Council. Relevant government departments were invited to the event along with key stakeholders from the demand and supply side of the system including Sector Skills Councils (SSC), UKCES, Trades Unions and learning and skills providers.

It was felt to be important to include both the demand side where the need for LCREE skills is starting to be articulated in some areas but not in a way that is widespread or consistent across all sectors, and the supply side where there are some good examples of providers working with individuals, employers and communities to deliver the skills required although this is not widespread throughout the system

A list of attendees is attached at Annex 2.

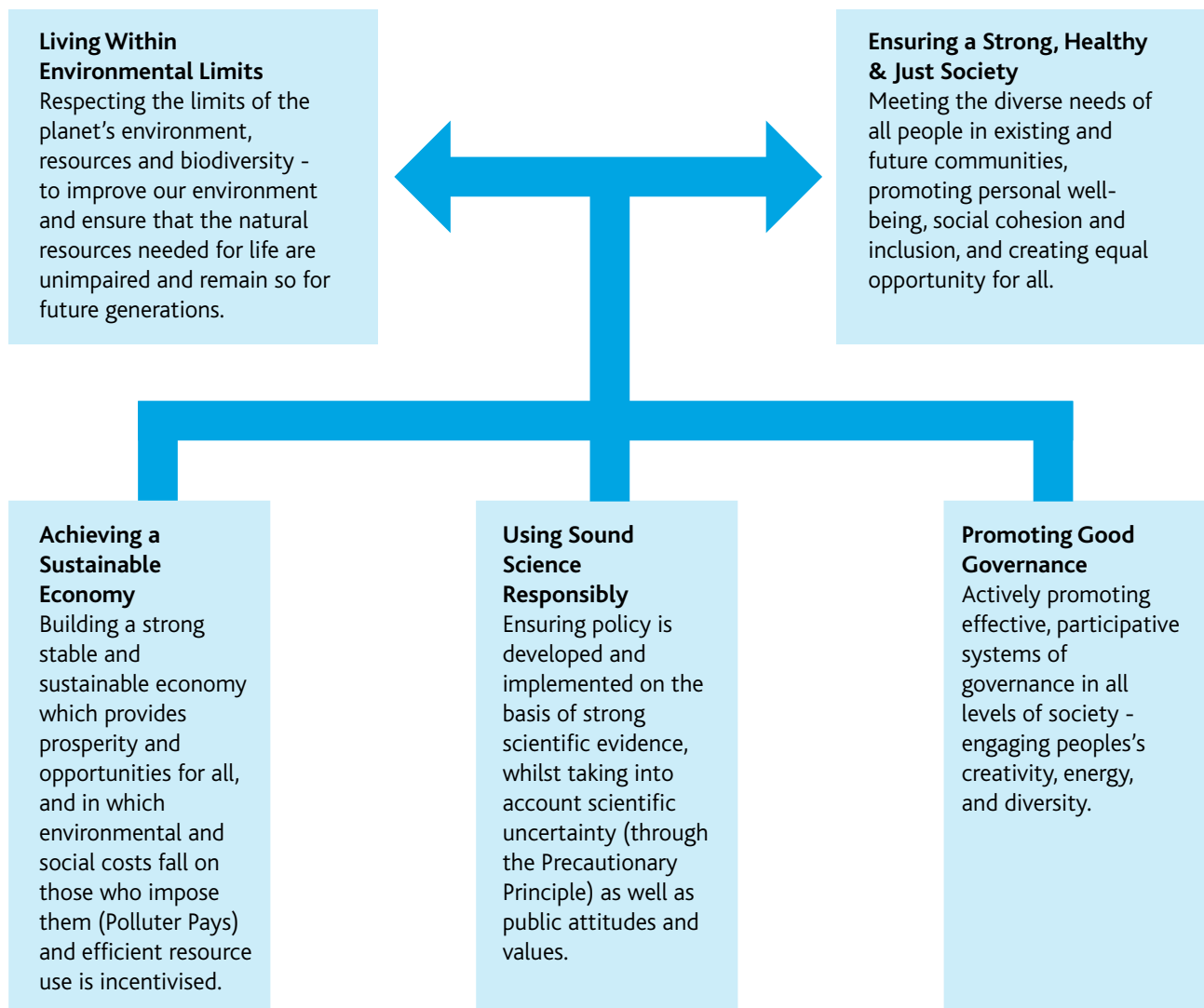
# Keynote Presentation

## Frances O'Grady - Chair's welcome

- It seems clear that a far more coherent and joined up approach is needed if we are really to deliver the skills needed for a LCREE.
- This meeting has the potential to contribute significantly to the way forward because of the range of key strategists and thinkers in attendance.
- The purpose of the event is to be a critical friend to Government on this agenda. In other words to be 'on-side' in trying to drive forward a LCREE but to challenge where this is needed.

## Tess Gill – Sustainable Development Commission

- A previous event held by DIUS and reported in *Windsor Consultation: Skills for a Sustainable Future: facing the challenge*<sup>1</sup>, has already proved useful in starting the debate.
- The Government's shared principles<sup>2</sup> for sustainable development provide a strong framework for any discussion.



- Another useful model is the Trades Union Congress (TUC) JUST Transition<sup>3</sup> approach which sets out how we could move to a low carbon economy from the perspective of trade unions and workers.
- Clarity and common understanding is important but we should not allow a debate on language and definitions to get in the way of action.
- There are clearly some specific and technical skills for a LCREE. But just as important is the wider set of generic skills needed by everyone.
- The importance of these skills for communities as well as the economy should not be overlooked.
- DEFRA has published research on gaps in respect of LCREE skills. A key finding is that it is not just about giving people new skills but also about enhancing and developing existing skills.

### **Jonathan Mackey – Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills**

- A high level cross-government forum has been convened to bring coherence to the skills effort and is meeting regularly.
- A Low Carbon Industrial Strategy is currently in the early stages of preparation. It is expected to position the UK's economic recovery as a low carbon recovery.
- Government needs to lend its weight to employers' voice in order to articulate strategic demand for LCREE skills.
- Progression within the workforce is critical i.e. upskilling those already in work to contribute to a LCREE.
- The lead time for changes in the current system can be lengthy so embedding skills for a LCREE in National Occupational Standards and then in qualification development may not be the whole answer for the curriculum. We need to look for ways to accelerate progress including identifying cutting-edge employers and hotspots of delivery.
- The need for LCREE skills is cross-sector and at every level of employment but our demand-led system is organised on a sector basis. Progress is starting to be made in overcoming this barrier e.g. SSCs are working together on a renewables strategy and on a general sustainability qualification.

### **Dominic Scullard – Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform**

- Government has been looking at low carbon business opportunities for over a year, originating in the need to address climate change.
- BERR is developing the Low Carbon Industrial Strategy and DIUS is leading on the skills section of the strategy.
- There will be a consultation on the strategy. Informal consultation has already started through existing groups and contacts.
- Key questions for the strategy to address include:
  - How can every organisation de-carbonise its operations? How can organisations become resource efficient? What skills are needed for this to happen?
  - What companies produce the products and services that will support and enable carbon reduction and resource efficiency by others?
  - What adaptations are needed by organisations to be low carbon and resource efficient?
  - What should Government's role be, in the short, medium and long-term e.g. research, regulation, stimulating demand etc?

# Comments from the group following the presentations

- Reports and projects going back as far as eight years ago have all reached a similar conclusion. What is missing is Government pump-priming to kick-start change and overcome barriers in the market - businesses will quickly catch up.
- Is the Low Carbon Industrial Strategy designed to deliver the Turner Report<sup>4</sup> which recommended action in a number of areas including decarbonised energy production, low carbon vehicles, insulation and energy efficiency? (Dominic Scullard confirmed that there was a close link between the Turner Report and the strategy.)

The group then split into four tables for discussions and considered the following questions:

- What is currently working
- What is not working?
- How can we accelerate progress?
- What are the priorities?
- Who should be doing what?

The notes from individual table discussions have been collated in Annex 1. The key thoughts from each table were fed back in a plenary session and summarised.

# Summary of feedback from table discussions

There was a great deal of consensus in the feedback from the four tables and a number of key areas were highlighted as critical for success.

## Culture change

- We must stimulate a culture change around skills for a LCREE through the entire education and skills system. It must be part of all provision e.g. Apprenticeships and graduate work placements, both specific content where needed and generic knowledge and skills.
- We need a clear and common language for this agenda that everyone understands and that moves away from sustainable development being seen as a cost. We should be more proactive and upbeat in our language to engage people, rather than talking about a deficit model.
- We must use the opportunities provided by the economic recession. If survival and the bottom line are now the priorities of business we can position skills for a LCREE as a solution.
- We must foster a culture of lifelong learning around skills for LCREE. Everyone needs to become receptive to learning and developing their skills throughout life. We will not achieve this widespread culture change without engaging the workforce too.
- There are small but effective steps that can be taken by everyone. We need to ensure these are being taken as widely as possible to build momentum. We need to help people see that learning is often transferable – what is learnt at work can be used at home or in the community and vice versa.

## Learner engagement/learner voice

- Countries that have been successful in developing skills for a LCREE tend to have used constructive engagement with the workforce. So we should use Trades Unions. They already have structures and relationships that can be used and some specific programmes such as the Green Workplace Project to build on.
- Although leadership is important, bottom-up approaches appear to work best. The learner voice can be powerful in FE and is already a Government priority so we must use it more strongly in support of LCREE skills.

- We should look at a social learning model i.e. people learning together in their local community or work community. There is currently increasing recognition of the role of informal adult learning. Sustainable development/skills for a LCREE should be a key theme here.

## Public sector leadership

- The Public Sector must show more leadership and address skills for a LCREE in how it operates. Good practice must be found, shared and adopted widely.
- We must start to embed skills for a LCREE in all public sector procurement opportunities. This should stimulate business to start demanding the skills needed to meet the requirements.

## Regulation and legislation

- We should support and use environmental representatives in the workplace more widely and use legislation and regulation such as carbon reduction targets, Energy Performance Certificates etc. as drivers.
- There are two key drivers in Further Education – funding and inspection. Inspection will include sustainable development from 2009 but it will not be graded so the focus may not be strong enough. If LCREE skills are more strongly embedded in funding this will certainly help generate change.
- We must give FE providers the freedom to be innovative. This may mean freeing them from the restriction of some or all of the targets they currently have.
- Everything is based around success in achieving targets. We must also recognise the importance of learning through failure as some of the most effective learning happens here. The system needs to be released to experiment and 'have a go' even if the main outcome is finding out what does not work.

## Role of government and agencies

- If Government money is being deployed to help individuals and business through the recession, can this be quickly linked to LCREE skills? Similarly if funding is being invested in developments like Skills Academies it must be more strongly linked with LCREE skills.

- We need to make more use of existing opportunities such as the Innovation Pathfinder Initiative. If this is repeated LCREE skills should be embedded more strongly and lessons from the first round shared. (NB Jonathan Mackey confirmed that at present there is no funding for a further round but if this changed there would be an opportunity to position LCREE skills at the forefront of the initiative).
- Top down processes from Government or agencies do not generally work well for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) and micro-businesses. Their needs and circumstances are different and often overlooked. Their involvement is essential so if existing processes do not engage them we need to understand what will and change in response. The role of the supply chain between micro-businesses and supermarkets in the Lantra sector is one example.
- Sector Skills Councils are in a key position to influence and must do more. Government needs to steer SSCs to include sustainable development/skills for a LCREE in the production of National Occupational Standards and sector skills agreements, through re-licensing criteria.
- The role of Regional Development Agencies in the regions needs to be broadened. DIUS should lead on this.
- If you allow experimentation and innovation, that can make the picture more complicated. That requires Government to do more to pull everything together, to harness the enthusiasm, share the solutions and drive more and effective sharing of learning and good practice.
- A cross-Government approach to skills for a LCREE is essential.
- We must understand and use supply chains more extensively. Many private companies have made progress by doing this. We must learn from them and apply the good practice in the public sector.
- There is often a reluctance to share progress and good practice with competitors. There is some evidence that collaboration works better in local groupings e.g. different businesses within a geographical area coming together rather than sector-based groupings.
- We need to do more to encourage experimentation at a local scale. The best way to acquire LCREE skills is 'by doing' or 'having a go'. We must allow for a hundred different ways of doing something if they work – there is no single solution and never will be.

### **Role of professional bodies (including for teachers/trainers)**

- Skills for a LCREE must become part of everyone's continuing professional development. There is therefore a significant capacity to effect change amongst private training companies, professional associations and professional bodies.
  - An effective focus on 'training the trainers' on skills for a LCREE is critical for success. Sustainable development/ LCREE skills should be embedded in roles and progression routes e.g. teaching standards in Wales include global citizenship and sustainable development.
  - Teachers and trainers often have excellent links with or back to industries and trades. Funding should be found to support and utilise this to bring cutting-edge thinking into providers.
  - This will be a continually changing and developing agenda. Everyone must come to understand that their skills for a LCREE will always need refreshing, extending and developing.
  - Leadership for LCREE skills happens at all levels and should be better supported and encouraged.
- Next practice and best practice**
- We cannot wait for the whole learning and skills system to respond because that will take too long. We must find and take the key opportunities to push change and develop some influential examples of success.
  - Values driven companies really seem to understand and be successful with this agenda. We need to find ways to share this, especially with those who are reluctant to change.
  - We need to share stories of success in an engaging and inspiring way and find ways to share news of progress and developments. Relevant qualifications are already being developed for example, but not everyone knows about it.
  - We should make more use of actual examples. What do LCREE skills look like for a CORGI gas fitter or for other roles that people are familiar with.

# Speakers' Responses

The speakers were invited to respond to the feedback from the table discussions. They generally welcomed and supported the views expressed.

## *Tess Gill – Sustainable Development Commission*

- Agree that skills for a LCREE will continually evolve and change. It is important that they be seen and understood in this way.
- We need to be clearer about what we mean e.g. in our goals and the language we use. There will never be an absolute answer however so we should only focus on the clarification that will really help us to accelerate progress.
- Involving the workforce is critical. This must be a priority in any way forward.
- Sustainable development/skills for a LCREE must be an integral part of all public funding strategies and processes.
- Sustainable development/skills for a LCREE must be fully embedded and visible in the Ofsted inspection framework.
- There is good practice to share and learn from but we are not doing this well. We must find ways to share it in ways that break down resistance and help people to act.

## *Jonathan Mackey – Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills*

- The discussion today will inform the development of the Skills chapter of the forthcoming Low Carbon Industrial Strategy
- A 'hotspots' approach to identifying and sharing innovative practice has potential
- The importance of 'place' – regional, sub-regional, local, community etc has been emphasised and will be taken forward in policy development.
- Workforce culture is critical, particularly the importance of complementary top-down and bottom-up approaches. Bodies like the TUC need to be represented on high level forums.

- We must find ways to catalyse the learning and skills system to innovate. At the moment the key drivers seem to be extrinsic such as funding and inspection. We need to encourage the influence of more intrinsic value driven drivers as well as using legislation and regulation where appropriate.

- We need to talk much more about innovation and less about being reactive. A deficit model is not motivating or empowering.

## *Dominic Scullard – Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform*

- There seems to be potential for greater partnerships between business and others, such as schools and colleges, in the skills for a LCREE agenda.
- The role that the public sector can play is important and there should be support in the system to encourage and enable the sector to do more. This is starting to emerge in, for example, the training of brokers in Train to Gain and Business Link.

# Chair's Summary

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and highlighted her own key learning points from the event.

- Champions at all levels are important as is bringing a wide range of views and ideas into planning and delivery. Key stakeholders must not be overlooked such as workforce representatives or the learner voice.
- Reality tests are important. Talking about LCREE skills and having ideas is easy. Shifting people's views and getting them actively involved is much harder. Before an idea is taken forward we must do a reality check. For example, we may want to encourage colleges to offer particular qualifications but if the funding is not there or if funding priorities push colleges in another direction, it will not happen.
- We should not forget the value of international perspectives and we should look at what we can learn from others.

# Annex 1:

## Table Discussions

### What is currently working?

- Asset Skills has worked with the Department of Communities and Local Government to develop National Occupational Standards for those who do the assessment for Energy Performance Certificates. A consultation is starting shortly around the injection of funds into energy advice and qualifications are being produced for energy advisers for houses and commercial buildings. This is a good example of skills for a LCREE being developed for a particular context. Questions included whether this progress would have been made without the presence of regulation as a driver and the extent to which the skills identified were all technical. Does the training focus on other skills for a LCREE such as leadership, negotiation, measurement, persuasion etc.
- Another example of progress is the TUC Green Workplaces Project<sup>5</sup>. This is based around employees investigating issues and identifying solutions. Those involved have some training and guidance is provided on technical issues.
- Some providers have invested in new equipment and new courses but the take-up has been slow. Successful providers have developed partnerships with industry e.g. Bedford College, Warwickshire College.

### What is currently not working?

- The demand led approach is not embedding sustainable development in business and education. Where embedding is happening, for instance in industry, the leaders are usually self-motivated. The companies involved are often value-led and use their values to create and feed internal demand.
- The particular agenda of skills for a LCREE is clearly not working well. For some this lack of success is because of a lack of agreement and articulation of what skills for a LCREE are. If the demand for something is clear and strong, the system often aligns itself to deliver. It was also emphasised however that clarity does not always deliver results. The impact of low levels of literacy and numeracy has been known for some time for instance but the demand for up-skilling has not solved the problem.

- There is a significant risk in relying on a reactive approach i.e. the market will demand what is needed and the supply side will provide. This relies on someone knowing what is needed and is that knowledge really there?
- Are we approaching providing skills for a LCREE in a way that matches how people best learn new skills, how they best sustain and build existing skills. Many of the skills needed for a LCREE could be learned by observation or by trying them out rather than by reading about them or seeing them described in a presentation. People are already well aware of the issues – the best approach may simply be to give them an opportunity to have a go at thinking about and applying skills for a LCREE. There are some good examples of this happening but there are not extensive.
- Although drivers like legislation can play an important role, they can also bring complexity and the challenge of working across different perspectives and priorities. In universities for instance, Environmental Managers may be driven by a legislative perspective, students from an ethical one. If you can harness various motivations effectively, this can be powerful.

### What will accelerate progress?

- Clarifying language. There are too many definitions and descriptions and not enough agreement and understanding around the key goals.
- More engaging stories of action taken and the benefits. These could range from very simple examples to the more ambitious and complex. The case studies that exist already are not written in a way that really engages people.
- More partnerships between schools and local businesses around co-learning. There are real opportunities for the skills for a LCREE to be developed here but it would need funding and support.
- Using the opportunities presented by the economic recession. There will be a focus on saving money and resources so we need to link skills for LCREE to this agenda.

- Engaging the workforce. If employees support change and contribute creativity, expertise and ideas, this should increase momentum and impact.
- Giving everyone an entitlement to some action learning on sustainability which could be in a local business, university or school etc.
- Encouraging a closed loop approach i.e. re-thinking the whole of a business.
- Using enthusiastic people. We have informed and enthusiastic people coming through from schools and universities. We also have rising unemployment, fewer employment opportunities for new graduates so could we link this potential human resource with business?
- Using existing programmes e.g. Train to Gain flexibilities to deliver LCREE skills through short courses.
- Aspiring to and working towards a complete culture change. The commitment to a LCREE needs to be evident in all decisions. At the moment it is too often the case that where there is a conflict, economic growth is always the priority – we see this in the decision on the extra runway at Heathrow for instance.
- Understanding what the carbon reduction commitment means for large companies and public sector organisations. The impact of this may drive a demand for new skills that we should be ready to meet.
- Understanding the role of the general population as consumers (and voters) who can demand products and services that utilise LCREE skills. Does the general public have a commitment to low carbon values? What is the role of the whole education system in reinforcing this?
- Need to try and identify/ map the untapped demand.

### What are the priorities?

- Engaging those organisations that are not yet engaged. This could be done around the simple changes, especially those that can save money. In this way you move people from 'Yes but' to action in the change cycle.
- Encourage audits. These can be an easy way to initiate action and to start learning by doing. Another benefit is that they often identify that progress is already being made which is motivating and encouraging.
- Accepting that skills for a LCREE will always need refreshing. Skills needs may change as often as year to year so how do we address this?
- Setting out some really clear short-term steps linked to the longer terms goals, which may be difficult for individuals and businesses to engage with.
- Engaging the workforce. The example of a Green Workplace project in United Utilities was cited. A green champions' programme existed but was having limited impact until it became a joint management/workforce programme, with workforce involvement through the union.
- Finding a way to bring together the three areas that will probably deliver a LCREE. These are traditionally managed separately but we need an integrated, joined up approach.
  - Management/leadership/prioritisation
  - Workforce engagement and enthusiasm
  - Skills and competencies

### Who should be doing what?

- Sector skills councils should be building sustainable development and skills for a LCREE into all their National Occupational Standards, Sector Skills Agreements etc. Not all SSC will understand what this looks like in a NOS but this knowledge gap could be addressed very quickly. You could for instance demonstrate what needs to be added to the NOS for a Corgi gas fitter.
- Government should be ensuring that all stakeholders are engaged in this agenda.

## Annex 2:

# Attendees at the Skills for a Sustainable, Low Carbon and Resource Efficient Economy Round Table

Richard Foxwell	Asset Skills
Esin Esat	Bedford College
Dominic Scullard	Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)
Aveen McHugh	Connect
Professor Steve Evans	Cranfield University
Sue Whitehead	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Maurice Neville	Derbyshire Adult Community Education Service
Lesley Harry	Derbyshire Adult Education Service and LEAFEA
Jonathan Mackey	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
David Edwards	Engineering and Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB)
Paul Beers	Environmental Industries Consultant
Peter Young	Enviros Consulting & Member CEMEP Commission
Barry Lovejoy	Further Education, University and College Union
Charles King	GMB
Elaine McMahon	Hull College
Martin Baxter	Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
Dr Gordon McGlone	LANTRA (Chair) and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Debbie Watson	Learning and Skills Council
Stephanie MacDivitt	Lifelong Learning UK
Simon Beer	The National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE)
Jim Robbins	National Union of Students
Chris Baugh	The Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)
Sue Ferns	Prospect

Sean Geoghegan	RMT - the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
Tess Gill	Sustainable Development Commission
Charles Seaford	Sustainable Development Commission
Philip Pearson	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Iain Murray	Trades Union Congress (TUC)
Simon Perryman	UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES)
Tom Beattie	Unite
Mary Heslop	Warwickshire College
Di Dale	Wiltshire College

<b>In attendance:</b>	
Mary Kelly	Learning and Skills Council
Elizabeth McCann	Learning and Skills Council

## Links

<sup>1</sup> Windsor Consultation: Skills for a Sustainable Future: facing the challenge  
[http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/documents/skills\\_sustainable\\_outcome.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/documents/skills_sustainable_outcome.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Shared UK principles of Sustainable Development  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/what/principles.htm>

<sup>3</sup> TUC JUST Transition project  
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/what/principles.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Building a Low Carbon Economy – the UK’s contribution to tackling climate change,  
 Committee on Climate Change, December 2008 <http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/>

<sup>5</sup> TUC Green Workplace Project <http://www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/G201207.pdf>



Learning and Skills Council  
National Office

Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
T 0845 019 4170  
F 024 7682 3675  
[www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

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