



Leading learning and skills

**PRESS RELEASE** - 11 November 2009

## **£4 million for Bridgwater's Energy Skills Centre**

Bridgwater College is set to receive more than £4 million in funding to launch the South West Energy Skills Centre, a specialist nuclear skills training centre.

The unique 'Energy Centre' will be the South West flagship delivery centre for the National Skills Academy for Nuclear and will provide high quality specialist training facilities in science, engineering and specialist construction to meet industry standards for a skilled, competent and safe nuclear workforce.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the South West RDA have confirmed that they will be investing £2.25 million and £2 million respectively. This will complement the £3.6m from Bridgwater College and Sedgemoor District Council's provision of land.

Malcolm Gillespie, Regional Director for the LSC South West, said: "This is significant news for the region and will bring a wide range of opportunities to help the economy prepare for the upturn by ensuring we have the right skills and training in place to support the nuclear industry.

"As with other sectors, we are seeing that the skills academy programme is successful in bringing together employers and Government to provide the world class skills that our economy needs."

Suzanne Bond, executive director of people and skills at the South West RDA, said: "The nuclear industry is likely to provide thousands of jobs in the South West over the construction period and hundreds more during the lifetime of the new power stations.

“We need to help businesses in the South West access opportunities in the nuclear supply chain. Investing in this foundation of skills provides a solid base on which to build routes to higher level employment and university level training in the longer term.”

Fiona McMillan, Principal of Bridgwater College said: “This is a huge accolade for Bridgwater. There is only one other National Skills Academy for Nuclear flagship delivery centre in the country, in Cumbria, and it is a testament to the College’s track record that the Skills Academy has designated the Energy Skills Centre as their South West delivery centre.”

The National Skills Academy for Nuclear create, develop and promote world class skills and career pathways to support a sustainable future for the UK nuclear industry. It brings together the very best quality providers with nuclear employers to develop and promote skills and training for the nuclear sector.

The RDA’s investment in the Energy Skills Centre complements the £355,000 it has made in Bridgwater Challenge – a project, led by Sedgemoor District Council, to create a new vision and strategic framework for the regeneration of the town. The initiative identifies the Centre as one of a number of strategic projects which will act as a catalyst for the transformation of the town.

Magnox South Ltd has donated £200,000 of simulator equipment and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and EDF Energy are also supporting the project.

The Government has decided that nuclear power has an important role to play in achieving a lower carbon energy mix in the UK and combating climate change and is taking active steps to encourage construction of new nuclear power stations.

The new ‘Energy Centre’ will double the number of training places in trades that can be directly employed by the nuclear industry – science, engineering and construction based subjects.

Jean Llewellyn, chief executive of the National Skills Academy for Nuclear, said: “This is an excellent development for the National Skills Academy for Nuclear, the nuclear industry in the South West and the future nuclear workforce. The Energy Centre will have an important role to play in delivering high quality skills for the

nuclear industry, and we are delighted to be working in partnership with Bridgwater College on this exciting development.”

Anthony Gibson, Independent Chair of the Bridgwater Challenge, said “This is really good news for Bridgwater, and especially for the young people of the town, who will now be able to acquire the skills that they will need to make the most of what will be a massive investment in low carbon energy. It is absolutely in line with our Vision for the future of Bridgwater and is testament to the determination of the Council and its partners to make that vision a reality.”

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**Notes to editors**

**What are National Skills Academies?**

National Skills Academies are specialist training organisations. They put employers at the heart of the skills system. They enable employers in a sector or an area of business such as enterprise, to act together to stimulate and set out employer demand and investment in skills. And they work with providers to deliver the right and best quality skills and training through tailored provision, including Apprenticeships and Train to Gain for their sector. National Skills Academies are managed by the Learning and Skills Council working in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the Skills for Business Network, and the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

There are now 13 approved National Skills Academies in key sectors such as Construction, Engineering, Nuclear, Food and Drink Manufacturing, Financial Services, Hospitality, Retail, Sports and Leisure.

**National Skills Academy for Nuclear**

The Energy Skills Centre is the South West hub of the Nuclear Skills Academy (NSA) for Nuclear. It will be a Centre of Excellence of national importance enabling UK energy policy and providing specialist training facilities in science, engineering and specialist construction to meet demanding industry standards.

The project has the full support of two Sector Skills Councils (Cogent and SEMTA) and is located on the Bridgwater College campus. Bridgwater is an outstanding Grade 1 Beacon College with FE success rates above the regional and national average. The college has exceptionally strong employer links and attracts 16-18 and adult students from across the South West and beyond.

The National Skills Academy business plan was approved by the LSC in May 2007. Since then there has been a significant shift in national energy policy, with the Government giving the green light for new nuclear build. Hinkley C (located 14 miles away from Bridgwater College) is proposed to be one of the first new stations to be built. New build at Hinkley C

will be a huge investment opportunity for the South West with a far-reaching impact on the region's economy. In light of the Government change, the size of the project has grown in terms of requested grant and space, in recent months public opinion has shifted dramatically towards nuclear and in addition to this perception change, there is an understanding that the energy sector in general and nuclear in particular is one of very few that is growing and has a sound future with the promise of new jobs, in the construction phase, and in the operation and maintenance phases.

As part of its remit the NSA will ensure a high quality of training across the nuclear sector and address what is perceived as a fragmented system for the delivery of training.

## **Background**

There are four existing new nuclear power stations in the South West – Oldbury and Berkeley in Gloucestershire and Hinkley Point A and Hinkley Point B in Somerset, and each will benefit from the training offered by the Academy.

The first project to benefit from the Centre is likely to be the proposed new twin unit power station at Hinkley Point (Hinkley Point C). The project is being developed by EDF Energy and would represent one of the biggest single investments in the South West to date.

Hinkley Point C, in conjunction with Sizewell C in Suffolk, also proposed by EDF Energy, are expected to be able to supply around 10 million homes once both are operating.

At the height of construction, around 4,000 workers of various skill levels will be needed for the new build programme at Hinkley Point. Construction work is expected to start on site as soon as planning consent has been granted and EDF Energy is encouraging local firms and workers to be fully involved in the opportunities for employment.

## **Funding**

Funding for this project has come from the LSC's Capital Specialisation Fund which was announced last year. The Fund supports three types of capital projects to raise skills levels in key areas of the economy – National Skills Academies, Skills Capital Projects and Regional Skills Capital Development Projects. The projects are fine examples of how employers can directly influence the supply of training so that learners have the skills needed.

## **RDA**

1. The South West RDA leads the development of a sustainable economy, investing to unlock the region's business potential It is helping companies respond to the economic crisis and charts a course for recovery. The RDA is developing or expanding initiatives which include: establishing a Business Loan Fund; coordinating the response to large companies in difficulty; preparing for economic recovery. More information can be found at [www.southwestrda.org.uk](http://www.southwestrda.org.uk)
2. For more information on Bridgwater Challenge, go to <http://www.bridgwaterchallenge.org.uk/>