SKILLS AND EXPERTISE WORKING GROUP

2nd May 2024

Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Attendees: Alison Turnbull (HES – interim chair), Catherine Cartmell (HES), Dougie Knox, Elaine Ellis (Skills Development Scotland), Frances Woodifield (South of Scotland Enterprise), Juliet Mallace (Energy Skills Partnership), Mar Roigé Oliver (HES – minutes).

Action Points

Action	Deadline	Name
Map the relationship between networks and groups that exist.	December 2025	All
Catherine to catch up with the rest of the group members to get a broader view of the sector data needs and key questions.	December 2025	Catherine

1. Welcome and introductions

This is not an official Skills and Expertise group; it is to decide group membership and action until the next official meeting in autumn. We will not have the full group until September/early October for the next official Skills and Expertise group meeting.

Catherine will catch up with colleagues who have not been able to make it today to get their thoughts and opinions.

2. Reflections on the Skills Investment Plan documents and launch

Elaine – We will be in a state of flux for a long time, so this is about starting to have the conversations in the right place. We need to be patient in getting our messages out because the wider skills review is ongoing and will take two years to be completed meaning that no major changes will take place in the next couple years. This does not mean we should not look for opportunities for action if there are things that we can address and move forward with.

Juliet – Based on the roundtables, we need a few quick win actions to show the SIP is active. We also need to emphasise the relation between traditional skills and the

journey to net zero to get people to think about traditional skills as the answer to a lot of net zero problems going forward. We need to show how we fit in that space. How can we get into that space?

Other quick wins could be pilot programmes to bring attention to the different sectors, not necessarily in construction. We could work with colleges and partners to deliver a pilot of apprenticeships.

Frances – There is an example in the south of Scotland where regional social landlords in Scottish Borders and Dumfries are looking at retrofit, including for pre 1919 buildings. They have partnered with Edinburgh University to create four profiles/archetypes, and these will be rolled out afterwards to the sector. There is an opportunity to tie in some of this work to that. The ambition is to ultimately learn from this pilot and replicate it widely.

There were a number of discussions about the collective ownership of the SIP; how to get that buy in from the sector? Pilot programmes could be a good way to pull different strands of activity across the sector.

How can the SIP act as a framework for collective action and shared ownership? We have a lot of partners that lead on different aspects. There is also a lot of activity going on, how can that be aligned and upscaled to make an impact?

3. **Paper 1 Remodeling the Skills & Expertise Group**

The group itself was created in 2017 and its purpose has changed to oversee the delivery of the SIP. Catherine has drafted new Terms and references based on the old ones (attached to the email).

There are three points to discuss relating to the group's structure:

- We need a new chair – Alex Patterson has left HES and a new chair is needed. It may be a good opportunity to have another organisation as chair of the group. Who may a good chair for the group be? Note that this could include individuals or organisations.

    Suggestions:

    - An organisation with overarching reach such as SDS or HES,

    - Neutral person with weight such as a Professor,

    - HES board member,

    - High profile person that can promote the SIP,

    - Rotating chair as long as it is manageable and works for the group.

    The chair and their profile, their relationship to the SIP and the SIP team are all critical. They should also be invested in the strategy.

Concerns highlighted: It's hard for an individual organisation to take on that role as they may only work on a specific area rather than having an overarching view of the sector. It was highlighted that the rotating chair can become problematic with different levels of investment.

Is it worth trialing the rotating chair for the moment? Is everyone happy to take on the rotating chair role?

- Group membership – what organisations need to be around the table to support the delivery of the SIP? The attached paper includes a list of potential new members for discussion based on organisations that have engaged with the SIP.

  We need to consider what we want the size of the group to be? An increased size will change the nature of the group. For this group to work we need it to be tight and small so working groups may be a better way to include all of these organisations.

  Do we need an employer group? Is there another mechanism that we should be creating to ensure that we have everything we need? There may be other mechanism such as those that enterprises already have. Can we have membership organisations represent the employers in the group?

  We can keep the group small, tight, overseeing and generalist. If we want to keep the group's size small, which organisations need to be included? We need to engage with Scottish Government as identified in the DC Research review. It would also be useful to link with higher education providers. We should include skills agencies, Scottish Government, etc.

  Could we have a group with the lead partners which includes BEFS and is closer to the delivery of the day-to-day activity of the SIP? We need to map any group delivering the SIP. Where do all groups exist and how do we establish a channel of communications between them?

  ACTION: Map the relationship between networks and groups that exist.

- Terms of reference

  Thoughts on provided suggested Terms of Reference? Comments can be sent to Catherine Cartmell if things are unclear or should be added, or if there are any fundamental disagreements.

  In terms of secretariat, if we are trialing new methods help may be needed from members. The Terms of Reference should mention that group members may be asked to do secretariat tasks if and when needed.

  An ambassadorial role should be added to the Terms of Reference.

  Reporting similarly to SDS' sectoral assessments. How can we report on the data so that people know what the state of the sector is? Given the nature of the sector it may be a good idea to focus on specific themes each time we report

4. Paper 2: Creating a data baseline

What data would be most useful for group members to have? What questions would you like to see answered data wise? What are the key areas we want to look at? All of the data available at the moment is cited in Paper 2 (attached).

The employers survey has been run twice but its reliability is uncertain. It may be better to establish a baseline by re-running the survey annually. This will allow us to track recruitment challenges and changes in employers' thoughts and needs more accurately.

We want to build a data baseline in collaboration with the National Strategy Data Analyst, Marjorie Perotto. Is there a data benchmark that we can use?

We also need to consider the ebbs and flows of data availability; data was bad in 2019 across all sectors, not ours.

There is a risk that skills gaps will increase in the future. It would be interesting to have a regional focus to skills gaps. This data would also be useful for colleges, especially from a regional lens. Regional skills gaps data can help inform how to make courses viable for colleges and to know what needs marketing.

What would regional data look like? Would it include number of employers and students? We also need to look for positive destinations for leavers in colleges.

Does the data we need depend on the sector that we are from? The group here today is not representative of the sector so we may need to go back to the wider group.

ACTION: Catherine to catch up with the rest of the group members to get a broader view of the sector data needs and key questions.

5. AOB

No AOB