

Joined-up Approach to Addressing Skills Issue

Industry body Subsea UK is calling for a radical overhaul of national training and competency bodies to create clearer career development pathways and ensure the UK retains a secure footing on the global engineering and manufacturing stage.

There are many organisations at both a national and regional level which deal with skills, training and associated certification. Each has its own access route and certification process, creating a lot of duplication and some incompatibility. Subsea UK believes that this approach has, over time, led to career development becoming confused and complicated with patchy, at best, guidance for individuals on what route to take.

Chief executive Alistair Birnie says while the current downturn has reduced the pressure on the skills shortage, there is a real danger the industry will lose focus on key issues such as providing long term career development in its strategic business sectors to retain personnel.

With planning already underway for the next wave of expansion in the subsea sector, Subsea UK says skills and training must continue to be top priority.

The subsea industry, which involves highly sophisticated technology operating under the world's oceans, will soon be responsible for recovering over 50% of the remaining oil and gas reserves in the North Sea and is worth billions to the UK economy. With much of the world's reserves lying in more marginal fields, extending to water depths of over 4,000 metres, subsea technology provides the only viable and safe way of recovering them and ensuring security of supply.

All of the main engineering disciplines are required in the subsea industry and with the projected growth, there are literally thousands of career opportunities that will be available in the near future with the oil majors to the main subsea contracting companies and the smaller companies at the cutting edge of new technology development.

Subsea UK's Skills Forum, which is open to all Subsea UK members, brings together companies operating across the sector with stakeholders like OPITO - The Oil & Gas Academy, Robert Gordon University, IMechE and Newcastle University to discuss industry skills issues and identify solutions.