East of England Polymer Composites Research Project

NCN, TWI, Granta Park

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cogent

EEDA East of England Development Agency

SEMTA Technology Skills For Productivity & Performance

ncn National Composites Network

Introduction and Background

- Sponsored by EEDA
- Partnership Project (Cogent, SEMTA, NCN)
- Project Steering Group chaired by EEF
- Methodology

Objectives

- map and benchmark current provision for the composites sector to include colleges, universities and private provision
- identify skills, training and qualification issues to be addressed
- identify gaps in provision and explore the potential for a centre of excellence to serve all sectors of the `composites' industry
- make recommendations for future action
- gain an up to date understanding of the skills, qualifications and training needs of employers in the 'composites' sector in the East of England

Main Findings

- Workforce profile
- Recruitment and Skills Shortages
- Skills Gaps (Current workforce)
- Qualifications
- Company Training
- Training Provision

Workforce Profile

- Predominantly male workforce ie few women, few people from ethnic minorities
- Workforce mainly in middle age range but many older workers with high value skills
- Majority of employers forecast growth
- High turnover in some areas
- Use of contractors for workload peaks

Recruitment and Skills Shortages

- All companies experiencing recruitment difficulties – skilled operators, laminators
- Recruits mainly from non-sector companies, also Eastern Europe
- Little recruitment of school/college leavers
- No composite-related apprentices
- Sector image

Skills Gaps

- Workforce mostly proficient? However:
  - Craft and operative not yet fully proficient
  - Lack of underpinning knowledge
  - Supervisory skills often weak
  - Changing skills needs
- Mgt Teams fully or mostly proficient?
- Impact on business of skills gaps

Qualifications

- Production operatives – qualifications not needed?
- Technical and craft occupations – quals. needed to demonstrate competence
- General manufacturing qualifications used eg PMO, C & G, HNC/HND
- Companies not aware of qualifications for Composite manufacture
- NVQs not fit for purpose

Company Training and Development

- For small companies – issues of time and cost
- Mismatch between companies' requirements and public sector offer
- Lack of relevant provision within the region
- Signposting and location of provision
- Impact of lack of provision
- Delivery systems
- External funding
- Targeted on the job training

Composite Centre of Excellence?

- Normal production training – some support
- Equipment – would it be used?
- Technology demonstration + technical help – some support
- Short/bespoke courses – some support
- Recruitment, initial training, placement of young entrants – some support
- Peripatetic composites trainer - yes

Training Provision in the E of E

- Universities – first degree level and above
- Colleges – BTec, HNC/HND
- Private Providers – on/off-site short and bespoke courses

University Provision in the E of E

- Interviews requested with 3 universities – 2 given
- No composite specific courses at university level in the region – course viability
- Aerospace Foundation Degree – no take up
- Shortfall in companies offering sandwich placements
- No information on student destinations

FE Provision in the East of England

- 3 interviews but only 1 FE College currently offering courses with composite content
- All 3 considering future provision for composites
- Importance of marketing
- Flexibility and pick and mix
- Good completion rates for courses with composite content
- Peripatetic instructor?
- Need for apprenticeship structure + FD

Private Provision in the East of England

- 3 private providers interviewed, 2 with their own premises
- Mix of off and on-site delivery
- Training + process trouble-shooting valued
- Driver for employer training was upskilling not qualifications
- Issue of gaining recognition for delivery of LSC funded training

Where Next?

- Conclusions – are they correct?
- Recommendations – are they fit for future purpose?
- Where next?