Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2012 requesting more information on the recommendation below contained in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, 7th Report 2012 (Session 4).

Paragraph 34: Whilst there are a range of vocational courses and apprenticeship opportunities, we are also concerned at the evidence we heard that some in industry are less than supportive of some of the education and training schemes currently on offer. We recommend that the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council should engage with the Energy Skills Partnership and the Energy Technology Partnership to ensure that the range of opportunities on offer is relevant and has the confidence of the industry.

This response is made jointly by the Energy Skills Partnership and the Energy Technology Partnership.

Background

Scotland’s transition to a low carbon economy will deliver reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increase economic impact and generate many thousands of new jobs.

Understanding the future recruitment needs and then matching the supply side to this demand is a significant challenge. To address this need the Scottish Energy Advisory Board (SEAB) established the Energy Skills Action Group (ESAG) to lead on the delivery of Scotland’s Energy Skills Investment Plan. The membership of ESAG includes representatives from relevant government agencies and industry working together with Scotland’s colleges and universities through the Energy Skills Partnership (ESP) and Energy Technology Partnership (ETP).

This has already resulted in unprecedented collaboration between Scotland’s colleges and universities and significant improvements in the coordination of this supply side with industry demand.

Response to Recommendation

In summary, we welcome the recommendation contained in the report that the Scottish Government and Scottish Funding Council should engage with ESP and ETP.

ESP and ETP already work closely with our partners on ESAG and colleagues in Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council to identify ‘Industry Demand’ and respond accordingly. We would also suggest that Skills Development Scotland is part of this process and furthermore that the Energy Skills Action Group (ESAG) is the most appropriate (and pre-existing) forum for these engagement discussions to take place.
ESAG is enhancing its linkages to the four energy Industry Leadership Groups to help define industry demand and has also recently developed templates for identifying industry skills requirements in a more consistent and quantitative format.

Existing ESP/ETP Skills Activities

The following provides some examples of the ongoing work of ESP and ETP, related to energy skills.

Skills Provision

As high level indicators, there has been a significant increase in the number of university engineering graduates (under- and post-grad) up 19% from 2007/8 to 2010/11. Scottish Government has increased its support to training in the college sector through for example the funding of 2,000 Modern Apprentices in energy/low carbon through to 2015.

Consistent feedback from industry (directly and through Government agencies) is that industry seeks new employees with both good vocational and academics skills and also with work experience and other (e.g. project management, planning, sales) expertise. In many cases this results in a decision to employ a more mature person with these other attributes and then provide transition training into the required energy specialism. The Energy Skills Investment Plan similarly highlighted that the majority of new employees into the energy sector will be sourced from the existing labour market with appropriate transition training.

In addition, many qualified college and university students choose careers outside of the energy sector and there is an ongoing role for industry and the public sector to communicate a compelling case for a career in this industry.

A key focus of ESP and ETP activities has therefore been to; (1) support transition training through the delivery of Continuing Professional Develop (CPD) and (2) support university and college students with 'industry readiness' programmes.
Continuing Professional Development

During 2012, ESP and ETP have, for the first time, compiled and marketed an overall offering of CPD courses across all institutions and have offered a discount on course fees to further encourage uptake. This trial has been extremely successful and has resulted in unprecedented industry demand for training to such an extent that many courses have for the first time been at capacity. Scottish Government has subsequently funded ESP and ETP to deliver a wide range of energy related CPD training, primarily aimed at Scottish SMEs and other seeking transition training into the energy sector. Deliverables;

- Joint (ESP/ETP) promotion of available CPD courses
- Target >50 CPD courses delivered by ESP/ETP in 2012/2013.
- Target >750 attendees on courses delivered by ESP/ETP in 2012/2013.

Industry Readiness Programmes

Many of the ESP/ETP existing skills work involves active industry participation and in many cases funding, the rationale being that industry engagement is in itself an indicator that the college or university offer is relevant and of value. Examples of this approach are;

- ETP’s Industry Doctorate Programme has ca. 65 ongoing PhD students where industry partners co-define the topic area and typically fund one third of costs
- ETP’s Industry Masters Programme where industry partners co-define a 2-3 month masters student project
- Power Academy (involving University of Strathclyde) training future power engineers and with very strong industry engagement
- The University of Strathclyde hosts the UK’s only Doctoral Training Centre in Wind Energy Systems (£6m investment) that has strong links to industry and will train 60 students
- The Universities of Edinburgh and Strathclyde lead the UK’s Industrial Doctoral Centre in Offshore Renewable Energy (£6m) training a further 60 students

The Energy Skills Partnership through Scotland’s colleges already have significant industry collaboration and it is the close relationships that colleges and ESP have with industry that allow us to develop and modify our programmes to meet their requirements. Examples include:

- ESP is currently working with ScottishPower Renewables to establish wind turbine technician training in the south west of Scotland based on the apprenticeship model established at Carnegie College.
- ESP and ETP are working with EU Skills led employer group to establish a power networks academy including Inverness, Carnegie, Forth Valley and Dumfries and Galloway colleges and the PNDC.
- ESP is working with colleges and the National Skills Academy for Power to establish a number of transition programmes in partnership with industry.
• Working with Asset Skills to establish Energy Efficiency Learning Hubs to support Green Deal.
• Engineers of the Future delivered by Forth Valley College in partnership with Ineos for the downstream oil and gas sector
• Anniesland College working with SSE to development of a bespoke hydro Modern Apprenticeship and an accelerated Wind Turbine Modern Apprenticeship pathway.
• The Oil and Gas Academy of Scotland is a consortium of the four higher and further education institutions in the North East. Working together the institutions will publicise their offer to the sector and liaise with organisations and businesses. In doing so the institutions will also link into the wider networks that exist in Scotland, including the ETP and the ESP

ESP and ETP continue to reach out to industry to engage them in relevant skills related programmes and to support efforts to increase the industry readiness of our students. This relationship is evolving and growing and more active engagement from industry in defining and supporting the required skills needs of the sector would be beneficial.