Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2012 requesting a response to the Committee’s recommendation that ‘the Scottish Government and the 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’. I have set out my response below.

The Council recognised, some time ago, the need to ensure that industry had a clearer and simpler means to engage with Scotland’s universities and colleges. We funded the establishment of the Colleges’ Energy Skills Partnership in 2011 and part of the rationale behind that initiative was to bring together the Colleges’ Energy Skills Partnership with the Universities’ Energy Technology Partnership, which was already in existence, to ensure that, by working together, there would be one forum covering the full range of supply of further and higher education provision for energy skills.

Since then SFC and SDS have been engaged, jointly with the ESP and ETP, in a programme of activity all of which is designed to ensure that what is offered by our colleges and universities is relevant to industry. Key examples include:

- The joint ETP/ESP programme of CPD courses across all institutions, primarily aimed at institutional staff and Scottish SME’s but also for transition training from other sectors into the energy sector;
- ETP’s Industry Doctorate programme which has around 65 PhD students jointly funded with industry;
- The Council has been working with ESP on a proposal to develop wind turbine training through the colleges in the South West. This will be a partnership with Scottish Power renewables;
- We have also been in discussions with the four institutions in the North East who have developed a proposal aimed at simplifying their combined offer to the oil and gas industry and also to increase training capacity ahead of predicted growth in volume of activity.

Looking ahead the Council will continue to work in partnership with both ETP and ESP on these and other programmes. SFC is also represented on the Energy Skills Action Group which is chaired by Frank Mitchell, CEO of Scottish Power Renewables. ESAG is currently engaged in mapping engineering provision and is also working with industry to look at what provision will be required to meet industry demand in future.

In summary, therefore, SFC is very active, both with ESP and ETP and with SDS, in working to ensure that the university and college offer to the Energy sector is highly relevant.