

# Filling the Oil and Gas Skills Gap

Any concerns about the long-term health of the oil and gas industry in the UK continental shelf should be alleviated by recent commitments by major players to create more jobs and a secure future in the sector.

Talisman Sinopec Energy UK's £1.6 billion plan to extend the life of North Sea oil fields was approved by the UK government at the end of 2012. The Montrose/Arbroath redevelopment project is predicted to lead to the production of a further 100 million barrels of oil, along with creating 2,000 new jobs.

GDF Suez has announced a £1.4 billion investment in the Cygnus gas development project, off the North Norfolk coast, creating 1,200 new jobs. And Statoil's £4.3 billion investment in the heavy oil Mariner project is expected to produce 55,000 barrels of oil a day for the next 30 years, as well as creating 700 new jobs – including 200 onshore in Aberdeen.

No other sector in the UK is developing more opportunities than oil and gas, which currently supports around 440,000 jobs, with an estimated 15,000 additional workers required in the next five years.

That's all good news for the industry's future. But it also amounts to a huge challenge in terms of finding the thousands of skilled workers needed to fill those positions.

Operators are under pressure to move their projects forward, but the growing gap between the supply and demand of staff with experience in the oil and gas industry is having an impact on project schedules. Escalating costs are also creating a serious threat to the sector's competitiveness.

Workers with experience in the oil and gas sector are seeing new opportunities in emerging fields such as renewables, carbon

capture or hydraulic fracturing, and are able to transfer their skill sets to these markets. There is also an increase in demand for existing workers in the UK continental shelf to take their experience overseas, for example to Australia which has a strong demand for engineering personnel.

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The challenge is to change the perception of the oil and gas sector, to make sure people appreciate its long-term potential and the variety of opportunities on offer. Potential employees can come from a range of backgrounds or with experience from different industries that can be adapted to oil and gas. Only around 10 per cent of the opportunities are actually offshore. The industry needs to recruit more women, who currently represent only 10 per cent of the workforce, with only 4 per cent of the offshore total. Staff can expect excellent remuneration within the sector.



George Murray, Currie & Brown

Currie & Brown has worked in the oil and gas industry for several decades and we have now developed into one of the major professional cost management and quantity surveying companies in the international oil and gas industry.

We are working closely with Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, which runs sector-specific courses such as its MSc in Commercial Practice for the Energy Sectors, to develop talent for the oil and gas industry.

Currie & Brown also plays a key role in the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Energy Forum Working Group, which aims to move chartered surveyors from other sectors into oil and gas, by providing comprehensive conversion course training. We are helping to recruit new graduates and place them directly into oil and gas projects, and mentoring fresh talent with experienced professionals to develop their skills.

As a leader in the industry we have been supporting leading energy companies for more than 50 years, overcoming business challenges in both their capital and asset management programmes.

Now we're looking ahead to the next 50 years, and the outstanding opportunities within the UK oil and gas sector.

George Murray is director and industry leader for oil and gas at Currie & Brown, and vice chair for the RICS Energy Forum Working Group.

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