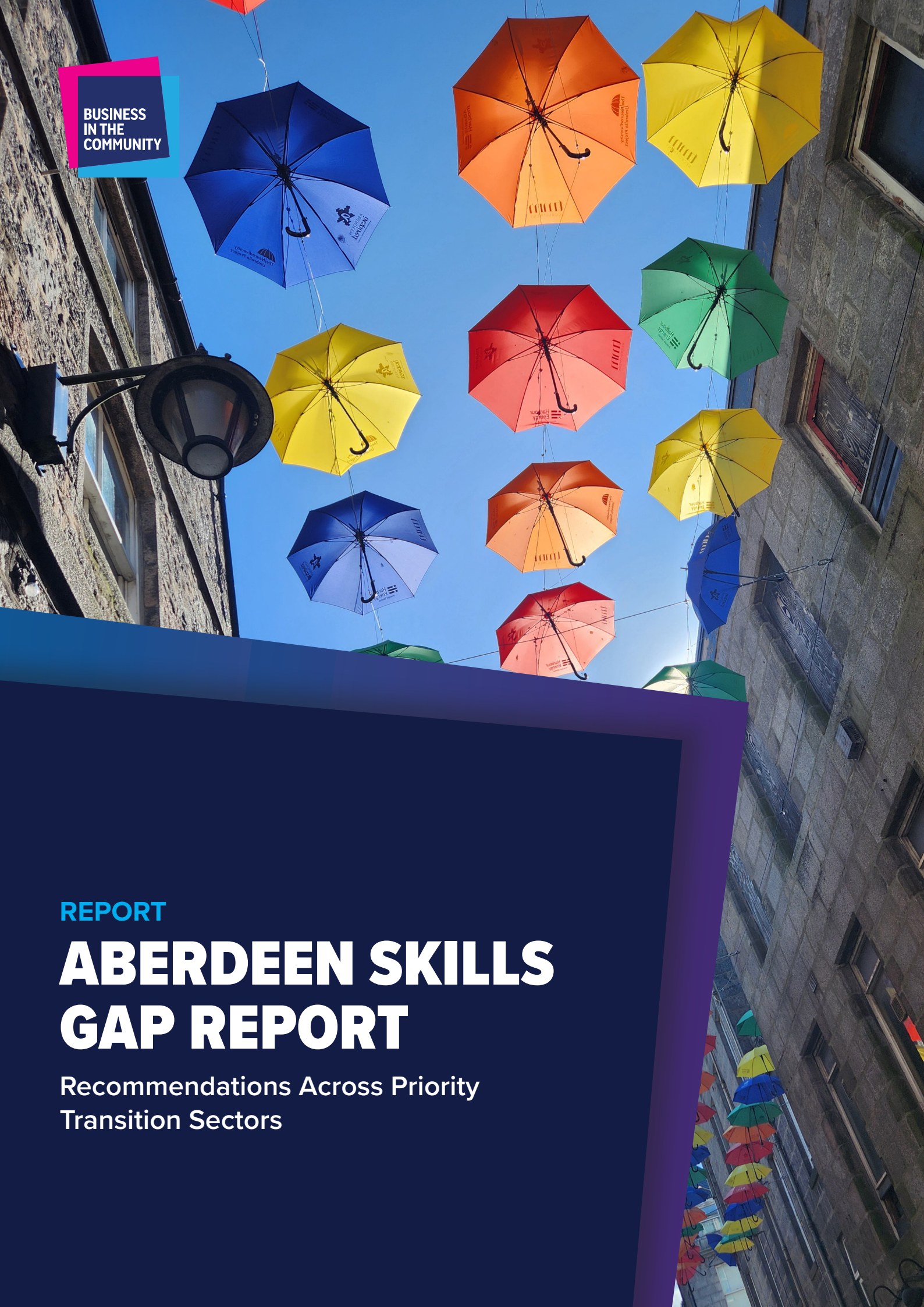

BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

REPORT

ABERDEEN SKILLS GAP REPORT

Recommendations Across Priority Transition Sectors

INTRODUCTION

Skills Development Scotland has identified manufacturing, energy and waste treatment, transport, agriculture, and construction as integral to the net zero transition in Aberdeen. This skills gap report builds on that and summarises Aberdeen-specific priority skills gaps and practical pathways.

A detailed skills mapping spreadsheet preceded this narrative analysis, to clearly illustrate the types of roles within each priority sector, the skills gaps, and existing pathways to reduce these gaps. The research includes sources from organisations such as Skills Development Scotland, the Energy Skills Intelligence Hub, and Food and Drink Federation Scotland. This research is followed by an analysis of what the skills gaps mean for Aberdeen's just transition, considering the latest policy announcements and advancements by local stakeholders. The sources vary from professional bodies to Government public statements.

BITC has recommended several skills programmes in the renewable energy (1), advanced manufacturing (2), and transport decarbonisation (3) sectors.

The rationale for the selection of these recommendations is highlighted in this analysis.

Food and beverage and retrofit are also priority sectors in Aberdeen, specific programme recommendations are not identified, however, existing training pathways are.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Term / Meaning
AFBE	Association for Black & Minority Ethnic Engineers
BITC	Business in the Community
CIPS	Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply
CITB	Construction Industry Training Board
ECITB	Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
ECO	Energy Company Obligation
ETZ	Energy Transition Zone
EV	Electric Vehicle
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
IMI	Institute for the Motor Industry
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NESCol	North East Scotland College
NESFIT	North East Scotland Retrofit Hub
NMIS	National Manufacturing Institute Scotland
PAS 2035	Publicly Available Specification 2035, the UK domestic retrofit standard referenced in relation to retrofit roles
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SECTT	Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SRUC	Scotland's Rural College

SUMMARY TABLE

To make the report easier to navigate, this summary table draws out the main skills gaps, existing pathways and recommended actions across Aberdeen's priority transition sectors. It distinguishes between the three areas where programme recommendations have been developed i.e. renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and transport decarbonisation, and other strategically important sectors where pathways exist but require further development.

Priority sector	Main skills gap	Existing or emerging pathways	Recommended action / status
Renewable energy	Accessible routes are needed into operational and technical roles linked to offshore wind and the wider energy transition, including Trainee Maintenance Operative roles. There is also strong potential for skilled oil and gas workers to transfer into renewable energy.	Renewable energy is an economically attractive alternative to individuals working in oil and gas. New Transitional Energy Certificates have been made available for individuals in the oil and gas industry. The commitment to support North Sea workers has been reinforced by the UK Government. In 2025, the North Sea Jobs Service was announced, in addition to the previously operational Energy Transition Zone.	**Recommended**: ECITB New Entrants Work Ready programme in Aberdeen. Funding has been secured for at least one cohort of 12 learners, anticipated for the 2026/27 academic year.
Advanced manufacturing, including hydrogen	High-skilled technical, engineering and digital roles are needed across decarbonisation supply chains, including research engineers, test engineers, data scientists, machinists, specialists, field service technicians and research engineers linked to hydrogen. Formal hydrogen qualifications remain limited in the UK.	NMIS Manufacturing Skills Academy; NMIS presence in Aberdeen's ETZ; limited UK hydrogen energy systems modules and Level 2/3 Hydrogen Technology and Applications qualifications.	**Recommended**: NMIS 12-week Manufacturing Skills Academy internship programme, with potential to target underrepresented groups through Equate Scotland and AFBE. Funding still required.
Transport decarbonisation	Mechanics and technicians need upskilling for hybrid and electric vehicle maintenance and repair. Hydrogen vehicle training exists, but local hydrogen transport progress has been affected by refuelling infrastructure challenges.	IMI hydrogen vehicle courses from Level 1 awareness to Level 3 repair and maintenance; revised IMI Level 2 and 3 hybrid/electric vehicle qualifications; NESCol maritime training routes.	**Recommended**: IMI Level 2 and 3 EV/hybrid upskilling, reflecting the growth of electric vehicles and the presence of motor companies in South Aberdeen. Funding still required.

SUMMARY TABLE CONTINUED

Priority sector	Main skills gap	Existing or emerging pathways	Recommended action / status
Retrofit and built environment	Skills are needed across craft occupations and professional retrofit roles, including electricians, joiners, plumbers, plasterers, bricklayers, architects, surveyors, retrofit assessors, coordinators, designers, installers and evaluators.	NESCol/Retrofit Scotland Building Physics Dynamics course; NESFIT and mwclubb Retrofit Fundamentals training; Generation UK Level 3 Domestic Retrofit Advice; CITB-funded retrofit qualifications at Levels 2, 4 and 5.	No specific programme recommendation, but retrofit remains a strategic priority. Existing pathways should be developed progressively, particularly through introductory, CPD and demonstrator-linked training.
Food, beverage and hospitality	The sector provides employment in Aberdeen but faces challenges attracting and retaining young people. Automation and digitalisation may create some higher-skilled roles, while many roles remain entry-level or lower-skilled.	CIPS Level 4 procurement and supply-chain routes; food technology and engineering apprenticeships; food science and nutrition degrees; hospitality pathways.	No immediate programme recommendation. Stronger attraction, retention and progression routes are needed.
Agriculture, land-based sectors and aquaculture	Gaps exist in farm worker and manager roles, livestock specialisms, machinery operation, soil science, ecology and aquaculture. Specific regenerative agriculture qualifications were not identified in the analysis.	SRUC SCQF Level 5 agriculture; Lantra qualifications; soil science apprenticeships; Scottish Government land-based pre-apprenticeships and Next Generation Practical Training Fund.	No immediate programme recommendation. Further pathway development may be needed, especially around climate- and nature-friendly farming and regenerative agriculture.

This document has been supported by the collaboration between Barclays, bp, Shell UK, SSE, and Aberdeen City Council.

Renewable Energy

Roles vary from those directly involved in the day-to-day maintenance of wind turbines with various competency levels. The higher-skilled engineering roles for those currently in employment and with skills, could find training provisions through the Energy Skills Passport scheme by UK and Scottish Government. For those at the beginning of their career, SECTT apprenticeships also provide on the job training with academic study, in partnership with contractors and employers and undergraduate degrees such as Electronic and Electrical Engineering at the University of Aberdeen, are available.

Out of all the priority sectors analysed, renewable energy is an economically attractive alternative to individuals currently working in oil and gas. New Transitional Energy Certificates have been made available for individuals in the oil and gas industry. The commitment to support North Sea workers was reinforced by the UK Government in the 2025 Autumn Budget. Rachel Reeves announced the North Sea Jobs Service, which will offer employment programmes in growth sectors including clean energy and advanced manufacturing. This builds on the further £17.3 million the UK Government allocated to Aberdeen's Energy Transition Zone. Transferable skills from oil and gas can be utilised in the scaling of offshore wind energy. Both sectors engage in underwater construction to build pipelines that are essential for energy extraction and production.

The Trainee Maintenance Operative role provides generalist skills to work in Aberdeen's growing renewable energy sector and offers transferable skills to several other sectors. E-CITB's New Entrants Work Ready programme is targeted at unemployed individuals over 18 years old, or those looking for a career change. This is BITC's first skills programme recommendation. The programme will be delivered in partnership with the North East Scotland College (NESCol), who opened the Energy Transition Skills Hub training facilities in 2025. Funding has been secured for at least one cohort of 12 individuals, anticipated to start in 2026/7 academic year.

Manufacturing

Scottish manufacturing capabilities are central to the just transition, comprising the supply chains of key decarbonisation sectors, namely renewable energy, including hydrogen, and transport electrification. Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Warm Home Plan connects the retrofit sector, with a 70% of heat pumps installed in Britain to be manufactured domestically. Roles in the advanced manufacturing sector all require high skill sets and include research and test engineers, data scientists, machinists, and specialists.

The Scottish Government published the Manufacturing Recovery Plan in 2021, which outlines the importance of advanced manufacturing. The National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) is the leading training body and is opening a facility in the Energy Transition Zone in Aberdeen. This provides a unique opportunity to explore the NMIS's Manufacturing Skills Academy internship programme and is BITC's second recommendation. The 12-week programme provides those earlier in their professional journey with practical experience, with opportunities to target underrepresented groups partnering with Equate Scotland and Association for Black & Minority Ethnic Engineers.

The emerging job opportunities within hydrogen are included within the advanced manufacturing sector. There are three Scottish Government-funded hydrogen projects in Aberdeen led by SSE Hydrogen Developments, Glacier Energy, and Hydrasun. This provides a level of confidence to Aberdeen to invest in roles to support these developments, such as field service technicians and research engineers. Currently, only a couple of universities provide modules in hydrogen energy systems, specifically engineering and manufacturing degrees at the University of Birmingham and Queen's University Belfast. There are fewer than a handful of Level 2 and 3 qualifications in Hydrogen Technology and Applications in the UK.

Transport

There are instances where hydrogen has been relevant to the transport sector, specifically road transport, with pilots with heavy vehicles such as buses indicating potential opportunities with HGVs. The Aberdeen Hydrogen Hub, a collaboration between Aberdeen City Council and bp, developed a flagship fleet of 15 hydrogen double-deckers. However, there have been technical complications for over a year with the refuelling stations, which limit hydrogen supply. Hydrogen transport training is limited, there are several courses, such as the Institute for the Motor Industry (IMI) Level 1 Hydrogen Vehicle Awareness to Level 3 Repair and Maintenance.

In contrast, electric vehicles are a successfully evidenced advancement in road transport decarbonisation; the requirement for traditional internal combustion engine mechanics to upskill to new technologies is critical. In 2025, the IMI revised the Level 2 and 3 qualifications for technical specialists relating to the maintenance and repair of hybrid and electric vehicles. There is a large presence of motor companies in South Aberdeen, and we anticipate high demand for future skills. Investing in the delivery of these two levels of electric vehicle qualifications is BITC's third recommendation. There are also future employment opportunities in maritime, air, and rail transport. Considering Aberdeen's location, the maritime sector is reliable and NESCol has several training offers. The Port of Aberdeen's South Harbour, completed in August 2023 was the largest marine infrastructure project in its history, costing £420 million. The increased activity supports local jobs, attracts local supply chain spend and investment. However, young people either are not attracted to or lack awareness of the sector. The public sector commitment to rail and air travel provides confidence to invest in decarbonisation skills. Specifically, The Scottish Government supports investment into low-carbon aerospace, such as Sustainable Aviation Fuels, and improvements to Aberdeen rail connectivity to the rest of Scotland.

Beverage & Agriculture

The food and beverage sector in Aberdeen provides employment to residents. However, like maritime, food and beverage and hospitality businesses face challenges with retaining and attracting young people into jobs. There are instances in food and beverage production roles where automation and other digital advancements will create a few high-skilled roles such as new product research and development. However, the food, beverage, and agriculture sector generally targets individuals with lower skill sets. The roles in food and beverage production include supply chain logistics, production operations and new product research and development. With hospitality roles as the traditional restaurant manager, chefs and waiter/waitresses. Pathways vary from CIPS Level 4 in procurement and supply chain, with specialisms in food and beverage, apprenticeships in food technology and engineering or degrees in food science and nutrition.

Agriculture and aquaculture roles include farmer workers, livestock specialists, soil scientists, and fish farm managers. In 2025, the Scottish Government recognised the significance of farming in the region and announced the Land-Based Pre-apprenticeship Programmes and the Next Generation Practical Training Fund. Members of Parliament have indicated the over £2 million commitment should be increased for agricultural education and training or risk stalling the shift to climate and nature friendly. This correlates with the findings in the in the skills gap analysis with no specific regenerative agriculture qualifications. The skills gap is found in farm worker and manager roles and vocational qualifications are available at The Scottish Rural College (SRUC) SCQF Level 5 in agriculture. Other roles include livestock specialists, agriculture machinery operator, horticultural technician, soil scientists and ecologist. The latter qualifications can be found at Lantra Level 2 in the safe use of pesticides, hand-held and stem injection equipment or apprenticeships in soil science.

Retrofit

In Section Three of BITC's Retrofitting in Aberdeen Report, our analysis reveals that there are two levels of occupations involved in delivering retrofit works. Craft occupations, such as electricians, joiners, plumbers, plasterers and bricklayers and registered professionals such as architects and surveyors. Since 2019, five retrofit roles have become mandatory for works funded under ECO schemes. These are assessor, coordinator, designer, installer and evaluator.
This aligns to project assessment specification PAS 2035.

There are several introductory training programmes available in Aberdeen. NESCol partnered with Retrofit Scotland in December 2025 to bring an introductory course (Level 1 to 3) to Aberdeen: Building Physics Dynamics – a practical introduction to insulation, airtightness and membranes. In 2024, Scottish Gas funded the North East Scotland Retrofit Hub (NESFIT), in collaboration with local MWclubb Architects, delivered Retrofit Fundamentals to 24 industry professionals and local contractors on the key skills and knowledge required to undertake Whole House Retrofit. Lastly, Generation UK offers a 10-week fully funded Level 3 Award in Domestic Retrofit Advice for new entrants aged 18+ who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Following successful completion, students get access to Generation's employer network for post-programme interviews.

Level 4 and 5 qualifications are not appropriate for individuals with no prior experience. The Retrofit Assessor qualification (Level 4) is suitable for individuals who already have experience or a qualification in the built environment, energy assessment or housing sectors. Level 5 qualifications for the roles of Retrofit Coordinator, Designer and Evaluator are available as CPD training courses by several colleges, universities and private training providers. CITB registered employers can access CITB funding towards a range of retrofit qualifications. These include Level 2 Award in Understanding Domestic Retrofit, Level 4 in Domestic Retrofit Assessment, and Level 5 Diploma in Retrofit Coordination and Risk Management.

Skills Pathways Examples

Aberdeen has two polarised audiences for the labour market. Those who are highly skilled in the oil and gas industry who need an economically attractive alternative, and those who have been traditionally excluded from the labour market and have lower skill sets. Hypothetical personas will illustrate the pathways into some of the five emerging sectors. Below are examples of how these illustrative personas would find employment in Aberdeen.

Danni is 46 and currently works in oil and gas as a qualified electrical engineer. She would like to move into offshore wind to prepare for the decline of the industry in Aberdeen. With the help of her employer, she has been able to work through her pathway options. Danni was part of the Energy Skills Passport scheme by the Scottish and UK Government, and Renewables UK. The scheme mapped Danni's skills and verified qualifications and tailored guidance and recommendations to enhance skills and advance careers through training courses.

Danni's cousin, Ethan, has been out of work for the past year. Ethan left college with a handful of limited formal qualifications and cannot decide on a career direction. However, he knows that he wants to stay close to his family in Aberdeen and, like many young people, has climate anxiety and wants a purposeful career. Aberdeen City Council's employment and skills service recommended ECITB's Work Ready programme, which provides Ethan with Level 2 or 3 qualifications and, in future, could enable him to work as a Wind Turbine Technician.

CONCLUSION

The ECITB Work Ready programme in Aberdeen has been funded; Funding is still required for the Electric Vehicle and Hybrid upskilling and NMIS's internship programmes. The Just Transition Fund or another funding mechanism could be explored to implement programmes and fill skills gaps in growth sectors in Aberdeen.

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