

Workshop Panel session 6: ›Skills.shortage.in.Global.Trade

Hosts:

- Murdo Fraser MSP, Economy & Fair Work Committee (EFWC) Member
- Charandeep Singh, Deputy Chief Exec, Scottish Chambers of Commerce
- Stuart Hamilton, Scottish Chambers of Commerce

Panel Members:

- Christina MacLeod - SpaceScotland
- Peter Adam - ABL Group
- Stuart Hamilton, Scottish Chambers of Commerce

WELCOME & CONTEXT

Welcome and opening provided by Murdo Fraser, MSP who then introduced Charandeep Singh, Deputy CEO SCC. Charandeep provided opening remarks summarising session focus and emphasising the importance of continued collaboration across the Business community especially given ongoing difficulties navigating the current international trading landscape.

Charandeep offered apologies for Minister McKee's and for WarDog studios Panel Member. Charandeep introduced the panel and invited Stuart Hamilton to provide the opening presentation

PANEL PRESENTATIONS

- Stuart Hamilton – delivered a presentation outlining the key session focus points and specific challenges businesses face within the specific sectors. SH noted the partnership between Scottish Government & Scottish Chambers of Commerce to deliver trade missions and international support to SMEs.
- Peter Adam – provided an overview of his business who focus mainly on Software Development, Healthcare, Defence, Energy and Manufacturing Sectors and setting out the key skills deficits impacting the specific industries they represent.
- Christina MacLeod – provided a presentation on her role in SpaceScotland and setting out key skills challenges in the Sector and potential solutions.

Key Discussion points & Challenges:

- Several recurring themes - Aging Population; Educational deficits against business needs; Post Brexit migration constraints; Costs of employing domestic HQ workforce against outsourcing
- Maintaining churn of employees due to retirements and inability to bring in skilled replacements. Lifelong learning & upskilling were raised as areas that required consistent funding to support existing workforce.
- Solving educational system mismatch between the skills learned aligned to industry demand is a key issue. Automation & AI raised as examples of impacting on learners and pace of change within workplaces.
- Particular issues in skilled female representation across tech sectors

- Skills Agenda is a key focus area for the Economy and Fair Work Committee on and how to address/resolve issues with the current funding models
- Need to focus on building a future ready workforce, especially in the Space Sector including employing more females in tech sectors generally
- Travel Sector does not sit easily within existing skills training, educational and financial support offers – they have to do most of their skills training “in house”
- More rural based employers face issues around securing workforce due to availability of local secure accommodation rather than purely skills aspects
- There needs to be a change in the language and messaging around promoting skills and opportunities as this reflects how they are viewed by both employers and the young people/parents themselves

Mitigations / Opportunities

- Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships can offer the right opportunities
- Offshoring of employment and implementation of AI to software development
- Flexible employment and educational pathways and responsive training focus
- More strategic collaboration and forward thinking to support Space sector, including marketing focus to make it more attractive to potential female employees
- Understanding where the Travel sector sits in the skills landscape would help solve some of the issues
- H&I work ongoing on co-production model between schools and employers to bring all of the relevant connected issues together to understand and resolve
- Ensuring messaging is inclusive is also key in ensuring we’re not excluding young people who might be interested in specific sectors – inclusivity and diversity are key aspects in how we promote

Panel Concluding Observations

- Focus on prioritising skills levels to suit the needs of specific sectors as well as where these skills are delivered and ensuring funding is routed accordingly
- Murdo Fraser: Three key points raised today which are key to focus on:
 - Housing / Accommodation - huge issue across Scotland and a key element of support for rural based employers/employees – Govt need to develop a planning framework that better supports this – current process is too long and too complicated
 - Apprenticeship Levy – difference in funding levels between UK and Scotland is a significant issue and needs addressed
 - Graduate Apprenticeships – narrative and messaging around this needs addressed to make them more attractive/relevant to both employers, young people and HE establishments

ACTIONS:

1. SCC to share slide presentations to workshop attendees
2. SCC to seek permission from WarDogs on sharing slide presentations
3. Confirmation from Scottish Government (Fran Pacitti?) on feedback to Minister following the workshop discussion