



A Briefing Paper for Businesses

Greening the Workforce for a North Tyneside Net Zero Future



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North Tyneside Climate Board

North Tyneside Council has a policy priority to “publish an action plan of the steps we will take and the national investment we will seek to make North Tyneside carbon net-zero by 2030.” The council understands that this is a great challenge and wishes to work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, including residents, businesses and the voluntary and community sector in developing plans and projects.

The Borough Climate Board has a focus on commercial and industrial related emissions and brings together senior representatives from the public and private sector, who have a shared goal of decarbonising their operations and the borough. Each representative organisation has embarked on a pathway to reduce carbon emissions and has agreed to work collaboratively where possible to:-

- Mobilise individuals and organisations to work towards actions which will contribute to the council's borough wide Action Plan. This can include working with staff members, customers and the supply chain
- Support the development of projects which will contribute to the 2030 Action Plan
- Strategically monitor the progress of projects and emissions in the borough
- Support the updating process of the Council's 2030 Action Plan

This Briefing Note is the latest in a series of themed actions which the Borough Board has developed and published to support the Commercial, Community and Voluntary sectors in North Tyneside.



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1. Introduction

North Tyneside Council declared a carbon emergency in 2019 recognising the significant effect economic activities can have and the importance of a Net Zero action plan. As a result, the Authority's Carbon Net Zero 2030 Board (internal body) and the Borough Climate Board (external body) were created to govern and develop the climate emergency policy. The Borough Climate Board takes a collaborative approach bringing together both businesses and the public sector to work together towards the shared goal of tackling the climate emergency. The Board meets on a regular basis to discuss different topics. Importantly, in November 2024 the theme of focus is on green skills and workforce transition.

Increased importance of reaching net zero targets, alongside rapid urbanisation and enhanced economic activity in the region, has created the need for a transition to a green economy. The green transition is a new, sustainable pathway that aims to create a thriving economy that not only works towards net zero targets but does so in a fair and just way for society.

This Briefing Note aims to enhance awareness of the transition and opportunities for businesses in the borough to access the resources to develop the 'green skills' of their workforce and help aid them in this transition towards a new, sustainable economy.



2. Context on Net Zero and Scale of Opportunity

As the effects of climate change worsen, the need for a green transition is crucial. Climate change is no longer recognised as a far-off, intangible concern, that is happening out of reach, but instead a local issue that can be tackled by shifting to environmentally positive activities. With industry, commerce and transport making up a total of 62% of the borough's carbon footprint in 2022 an increased focus on environmentally sustainable activities is essential for North Tyneside.

A climate transition and the opportunities for economic growth work simultaneously. Over this decade the low carbon sector is predicted to grow four times faster than the rest of the economy. The challenge remains for businesses in North Tyneside to get involved. Increased investment from the government in support of the green transition includes the initiation of a Green Jobs Taskforce to try and reach their ambitious target of having 2 million green jobs in the UK by 2030. Additionally, alongside the government, studies have found that employees in high-carbon sectors also tend to support green policies. Therefore, there are significant opportunities for businesses to take advantage of the positivity surrounding this. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in this, making up 99% of the UK's enterprises and generating 40% of business-sector greenhouse gas emissions, they are essential in the advancement of the green transition.

The green transition provides significant opportunities for North Tyneside. Whilst it has previously lagged behind London for economic development, the North East is leading the way in the green transition having the highest concentration of green businesses nationwide, making up 1.14% of the regional economy.

North Tyneside SMEs, public sector and community organisations have access to funding, via initiatives including the North of Tyne Combined Authority's (NTCA) Green New Deal Fund for low carbon projects and the creation of new green jobs. The transition to a sustainable green economy is, therefore, important not only due to environmental benefits, but also for businesses competitive advantage.

Businesses in North Tyneside are in a particularly unique position to benefit economically from the green transition due to a multitude of factors. These include its coastal location and major port providing consequent offshore potential, the significant international investment opportunities that exist in sectors such as hydrogen energy generation, the regions history of long-established manufacturing sectors and its close proximity to Newcastle and Northumbria Universities which have the highest proportion of STEM students in the UK.

North Tyneside needs to be at the heart of the green transition to capture the opportunities presented by it and encourage the continued development and retention of a highly skilled workforce. Therefore, knowing the resources available and understanding how to prepare your business is of extreme importance.





3. What do we mean by Green Skills?

At the forefront of this transition are businesses that are working to overcome many unknown challenges as they move to more sustainable activities. Having a workforce with green skills is a particularly growing concern. There is not one agreed definition of what a green skill is, however, it is important that we have an empowered workforce in North Tyneside that can support our local economy to adapt to a low carbon, economic future. There are many opinions on what green skills entail and how far the definition extends into tangible and intangible skills. These can be seen in the References section. It is important to recognise that whilst upskilling the workforce is often required, it is not always essential. Instead, a change of direction in the training provided is important.

The Challenges Involved

There are considerable challenges in skills shortages with the required urgent transition to a green economy. Whilst there is expected to be an increase of four times the workforce between 2023–2035, an estimated 8,000 jobs in North Tyneside will require upskilling to accommodate this transition. Whilst a green transition is of extreme importance, it is imperative that this is achieved through a just transition by ensuring the workforce is equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to adapt to the change. There is a high risk of exclusion and increased unemployment for employees in energy intensive industries such as manufacturing and primary energy sectors if the workforce is not supported.

Furthermore, the borough and region face further challenges with an ageing workforce, lack of environmental awareness and the continued risk of brain drain with STEM students leaving the North East after they have completed their studies. North Tyneside, therefore, needs to be at the heart of the green transition with businesses promoting environmental awareness and transitioning to low carbon systems, whilst both supporting the upskilling of current employees and encouraging STEM students to remain in the area.

There are many different industries and sectors involved in the net zero transition but the most important in North Tyneside include:



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Construction

Nationally 20% of workers are in sectors that will be significantly affected by the green transition including power supply, construction and waste management. Construction will likely see the biggest change over the next decade, having already seen a 3.6% increase in jobs advertised since 2021 and experiencing a projected 0.1% reduction in 'sunset jobs'.

The construction industry is changing as a result of the green transition adapting the way land is used, the type of land being built on and the methods of construction. North Tyneside Council has worked to promote more environmentally friendly travel via the Seafront Sustainable Route in Tynemouth whereby a dedicated safe, two-way space has been constructed for pedestrians and cyclists to use. This is currently on the second phase extending to St Mary's Lighthouse in Whitley Bay. This is just one of many ways the construction industry is being adapted during the green transition as employees in the sector learn about the importance of a net-zero transition and promote this through the different work they do. North Tyneside Council has made efforts to move to more environmentally friendly energy efficient methods when building new social housing. The construction method HUSK requires very little fossil fuel use and has put the borough at the forefront of the Net Zero transition. Central government have also pledged to invest an extra £6.6 billion for energy efficiency upgrades; this will require substantial future expansion in green skills in this area.

Heating and Energy Efficiency

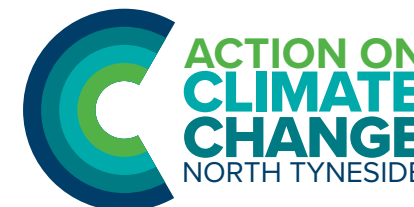
Additionally, up to 35% of North Tyneside's carbon footprint is created from domestic sources (2022). This is being tackled throughout the UK by the replacement of gas boilers with more environmentally friendly heat source pumps. There is a target of 600,000 heat source pump installations per year nationally by 2028. However, in 2022 there were only 3,000 heat pump engineers. To reach the 2028 target, another 24,000 heat pump engineers would be required. Therefore, if this target is to be reached, rapid re-training of workers needs to be conducted. SMEs are essential in the delivery of this, with a large proportion of housing stock being fitted with low-carbon heating by small businesses.

Within North Tyneside Council, PSDS funding was granted to support heat decarbonization projects in four of its leisure centres and the Authority is continuing to apply for more funding to install more air source heat pumps in the borough. Additionally, studies have been conducted into the potential future project of a Heat Network in Killingworth from an energy centre located in North Tyneside Council's Killingworth Depot which could save 80,000 tonnes of CO2 and highlights the potential for future green jobs in the area.



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Electric Vehicles (EV)

Transport is one of the largest contributors to UK greenhouse gas emissions. Within the borough, transport made up 35% of carbon emissions in 2022. Therefore, the move to zero carbon transport alternatives is a high priority for North Tyneside. The market for electric vehicles is growing rapidly, doubling its registration every year. The government is aiming to install 300,000 public charging stations by 2030. Within the region, The North Tyneside Zero Emissions Vehicles (ZEV) strategy was approved in 2021 and supports the move to zero-emissions vehicles. It is forecasted that by 2030 there could be over 35,000 fully electric vehicles in the borough. This will require the charging infrastructure available to also increase drastically. It is expected that this would create a need for 1,000 publicly accessible and 30,000 private EV chargers, where there were only 59 chargers in February 2024. Therefore, there will be a growing demand in the borough for skilled labour with specific knowledge on EV repairs and EV charger installations.

Offshore

As a result of North Tyneside bordering the North Sea and having a major port facility, it has a particular benefit in being able to take advantage of offshore wind technology. Within the UK the construction of 300 wind turbine generators is required annually to reach energy demand by 2030. It is estimated that by 2050 £8,000 billion will be spent on global offshore wind projects, highlighting the growing importance and demand for the industry. North Tyneside is a prime location for businesses to transition to green economic activity and encourage international investment. The Port of Tyne provides easy access to the North Sea and thereby is in the ideal location for businesses operating in the wind and decommissioning of oil and gas industry.

There are two enterprise zone sites in North Tyneside including Swans Offshore Energy Park for offshore energy, subsea and marine industries and also Royal Quays Enterprise Park. Royal Quays provides excellent connectivity via multiple forms of transport encourages substantial international business investment through its enhanced capital allowances and simplified planning regulations. Therefore, North Tyneside is in an ideal location to take advantage of the offshore wind sector and work with international businesses to develop the region's green economy further.

Service Sector

Furthermore, 20% of people are employed in service sector jobs that are essential in enabling other sectors to successfully complete their jobs, supporting the green transition. Whilst they may not directly change the operations of sectors, such as construction and offshore, they play a vital role acting as the backbone supporting these frontline employees, therefore enabling this work to be done. These include sectors such as education, finance and research and it is important that they understand and are knowledgeable about the Net Zero Transition so this can be embedded in their service delivery. Green skills can be further seen in peripheral sectors such as advertising and employment advisors whereby they can influence consumer thinking, enhance awareness and direct them to environmentally positive opportunities. These are all essential in North Tyneside as we have a large service sector supporting the front line staff.



4. What routes or ways could businesses take to 'future proof' ?

This inevitable transition, while it possesses unknown challenges, means it is essential for businesses to 'future proof' themselves to be in the best position to benefit and develop from the move to a new green economy.

In North Tyneside there are many platforms available to businesses (both larger businesses and SMEs), which help support the development of green skills. Existing training resources and programmes to support the development of their current employees and also to enhance the skills of potential future employees include:

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

The North of Tyne LSIP aims to enhance the skills of the North of Tyne workforce, and the future generations, to mismatch the skill supply and the demand required by businesses operating in the green economy. It connects local stakeholders, providers and employers with the aim of creating collaborative partnerships to create the necessary, specific change that is needed for all parties to thrive. The Local Skills Improvement Fund provides £85 million capital (24/25) to invest in new facilities, equipment and courses to address local skills needs at levels 3 to 5. Recognising that businesses are at the forefront of this transition the LSIP is working with 1,700 businesses conducting shorter, more flexible courses to accommodate employees' work schedule.

Employers in low carbon sectors have access to difference programmes such as NTCA's Green Skills Programme which has a £2m fund.

This brings together skills providers with businesses enabling employers to get support that is tailored to their business needs enabling them to build on their existing skills and experience a smooth green transition.

Adult Skills Fund (ASF)

The ASF was formed with a £64 million budget, with £1.96m allocated specifically to North Tyneside Council. The fund enables local training providers to deliver programmes to upskill residents in English, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), digital skills and Mathematics, alongside Level 2 and 3 vocational programmes. It is available to all local residents, both employed and unemployed, who are wanting to enhance their skillset. Matching the available skills training with available jobs is essential for businesses needing to expand their future workforce. Digital and construction programmes are a few of the key areas of vocational training available through specialist independent providers. Therefore, this is a key programme for businesses in sectors such as construction to access people with hands-on training and specialised skills in the industry. Within North Tyneside there is a total of 2,498 planned starts in 2024-25 creating future opportunities for skills enhancement for people of all ages. The NTCA has also acknowledged the need for a shift in emphasis towards low carbon, green technologies learning recognising the importance of upskilling employees in the green transition.



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Courses

Alongside the ASF, the North East Combined Authority have devolved Free Courses for Jobs funding to provide access to those who are 19 years old and over to a range of Level 3 qualifications. Level 3 qualifications typically take 2 years to complete and involve a wide range of industries including engineering, environmental conservation and manufacturing technologies. These courses are used to upskill the workforce to match the skills on offer to current and future potential jobs in the region. North Tyneside received £43,500 of funding for 2024-25, double that of the allocation in 2023-24, making this more readily available for residents and employees to benefit from enhanced skill levels in the area.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-courses-for-jobs>

Additionally, NTCA works in partnerships with North Tyneside Council, specialist training providers and local businesses to create courses specifically suited to support the recruitment needs of local business. This includes topics such as employability skills and specific business awareness as well as technical skills. This enables businesses to employ local talent who have an interest in a future in a specific sector and enables people to gain an insight into the business before they join to ensure it is a right fit for them. Businesses can use this resource strongly to their advantage by co-designing a training programme to enhance local skills that match the specific skills that their business requires, creating potential skilled employees to fill vacancies. This is an important resource for businesses that conduct specialised work and require people with prior knowledge of the industry that go beyond mainstream academic learning.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills bootcamps also operate in the region as a form of life long learning for residents and are readily accessible to both SMEs (10% of cost) and larger employers (30% of cost). These bootcamps are short, intensive programmes open to adults that can be completed in up to 16 weeks to enhance the learners' knowledge and experience and build up sector-specific, technical skills in the field. They offer the opportunity to fast-track to an interview connecting skilled potential employees to local employers. The NTCA secured a £5m government bid to expand the range of Skills Bootcamps to offer more courses including green skills in construction and retrofit. In North Tyneside specifically, since delivery began 279 residents have enrolled in a bootcamp and importantly, 65% of current skills bootcamps provide training in a green skill with a high concentration in wind technology. Whilst this has already been used by many businesses in the area with a vested interest, North Tyneside is only responsible for 8% of participation in the North East. Therefore, whilst this is a valuable resource, it is not being exploited by many businesses in the region that could possibly benefit.

<https://www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/training-choice/skills-bootcamp>



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Apprenticeship Levy

Another programme available to businesses is the Apprenticeship Levy. This Levy was created to ensure a sustainable way of raising long term funding as businesses contribute towards the programme to fund the apprenticeships. Businesses earning over £3m contribute a rate of 0.5% of their annual pay bill towards the Levy and those that do not, are still able to benefit by contributing just 5% of the costs of training and assessments. As a result of this programme being heavily influenced by businesses it allows them more control in choosing the apprenticeships they offer that suits their needs, for how long and when, enabling them to provide a range of targeted opportunities. This enables businesses to invest in their future, offering apprenticeships and both on and off the job training that ensures the skills developed match their companies' future needs, both enhancing the skills of their current and the future generation of employees.

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/#>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/key-facts-you-should-know-about-the-apprenticeship-levy>

Examples of existing apprenticeship standards available for businesses to explore that support green career pathways:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001919/GAAP_endorsed_apprenticeship_standards.pdf

Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP)

Also, the SWAP aids the recruitment of new, skilled employees. The programme runs for up to 6 weeks at a time and involves pre-employment training and work experience. Businesses' involvement ensures a tailored and flexible training approach to meet business needs. Businesses' involved in the programme have the opportunity to provide work experience placements for potential future employees to enable them to see if they are suited to the position and would work well in the company, thereby reducing the risk factor when recruiting new employees. Additionally, this has no direct cost to an employer as it is a government funded programme.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide/sector-based-work-academies-employer-guide>

T-Levels

Additionally, T Levels are a 2-year qualification for 16 to 19-year olds to give young people the technical and practical skills needed in the workplace. These qualifications are developed in collaboration with employers with a minimum of 315 hours of industry placement to get young people work-ready. Training new, younger people to gain the knowledge needed to be successful in a specific industry enhances business resilience to both a skills shortage and an ageing workforce. Alongside this, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are available for jobs to enhance a workforce's skill set and free courses for those who are currently earning below £25,000.

<https://employers.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb>





5. Local case study example

Northumbria Healthcare

Northumbria Healthcare has over 10,000 staff providing services to people in North Tyneside and Northumberland. Environmental sustainability is of increasing importance to the organisation as they acknowledge the significant impact of their activities. Consequently, Northumbria Healthcare implemented a Net Zero Northumbria Action Plan 2024-2026. This organisation recognises that the engagement of employees and the creation of a green workforce is essential in this.

In 2023 the 'Net Zero Heroes' was formed with over 65 members of staff. These attendees are known as the trust's Green Champions pushing for the sustainability agenda in their areas of work. This group attend quarterly 'lunch and learn' sessions where sustainable initiatives and opportunities are discussed. The organisation encourages widening participation to ensure sustainability is a priority and is embedded in their key values both now and in the future.



Additionally, by collaboration with different teams in the organisation, they have developed an e-learning module 'Building a Net Zero NHS' to educate their workforce. In order to spread awareness and promote this available resource, they attend organisational conferences where they engage with team leaders and ask them to encourage their team members to complete the e-learning. Alongside this, the Trust's Net Zero targets and aims are communicated during new staff induction and this is being expanded further to include new apprentices on the training programme. Educating employees about climate change, the organisation's environmental impact and Net Zero targets encourages them to take action of their own, giving them the green skills and knowledge to help reduce carbon emissions.





6. Signposting and contacts

Contacts:

Businesses who wish to further their knowledge on other training and support opportunities, please contact the following:

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Additional Green Business Support Opportunities:

- TIGGOR – Technology Innovation & Green Growth for Offshore Renewables tiggorg@ore.catapult.org.uk Tel.07776 599 117
<https://ore.catapult.org.uk/what-we-do/supply-chain-growth/tiggorg/>
- Green New Deal Fund <https://www.amberinfrastructure.com/funds/the-green-new-deal-fund/>
- Funding to help your business become greener <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-funding-to-help-your-business-become-greener>
- Technology Developer Accelerator Programme (TDAP)
<https://www.apcuk.co.uk/get-involved/funding/technology-developer-accelerator-programme/>
- <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/>



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- <https://pcancities.org.uk/tracking-local-employment-green-economy-pcan-just-transition-jobs-tracker>
- <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0711/POST-PN-0711.pdf>
- https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_732214.pdf
- <https://www.renewableuk.com/media/rqvlqzu0/offshore-wind-industrial-growth-plan.pdf>
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- North East Investment Zone: Offshore and Renewables Skills Paper
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- Report: Local Green Jobs Report | Local Government Association
- STB EV Charging Infrastructure Framework
- The North of Tyne Combined Authority launches skills bootcamps across the region – Dynamo North East

