

## Optimising Skills for our Nuclear Future

### Case Study

Coal staff find new roles: skilled power generation teams move into nuclear sector



Industry Sector  
Nuclear New Build –  
Power Generation

#### About the NSSG

The NSSG is the UK's lead strategic skills forum for the sector, and represents the Nuclear Industry Council's Skills Workstream. Its members represent both the civil and defence nuclear sectors and it is accountable for developing a nuclear skills strategy, addressing the skills infrastructure, processes and the training provision needed to secure the required supply of qualified and competent personnel.

#### About the Programme

An ECITB Accelerated Experience and Learning Programme (AELP) is providing a route to the nuclear industry from the wider engineering sector. The programme helps to relaunch individuals' careers into a rapidly expanding industry with many years of new build, operations and decommissioning activity ahead while also addressing known skills shortages. This case study profiles the story of EDF Energy Cottam coal power station's employees, into its nuclear business, using the AELP programme.

EDF Energy, a key Nuclear Skills Strategy Group member, is supporting the group's priority to support the transfer of skills from within the sector and other related industries. This priority is aligned to the Nuclear Sector Deal (NSD) and also allows EDF Energy to address its skills needs.

The Nuclear Sector deal states: "The government will work with the sector to enable bespoke programmes that support the transitioning between sectors...and establish a pilot scheme that enables the transfer of skills between sectors..."

As the UK's coal stations close, linked with government's commitment to decarbonisation, trained staff in that sector are looking for roles in similar safety critical and regulated environments.

*"ECITB have been incredibly pro-active in increasing the retention of trained and qualified staff, ensuring that these vital skills, attitudes and behaviours are not lost to our industry. People are highly valued within EDF and the ECITB have supported our commitment to our staff and ensured that they have a bright future. The latest ECITB strategic plan will build on this desire to serve the industry in the most cost effective way possible. Skills training in the nuclear sector is long, arduous and expensive. To be given the opportunity to reskill these individuals is invaluable and will both sustain the existing generation platform, and will seed the skills required for the Nuclear New Build Programme in the UK."*

Jamie White, External Funding Partner, People Development, EDF Energy





## From coal to nuclear

Cottam Power Station\*, owned by EDF Energy, recognised the importance of retaining these skills and has been preparing for its planned site closure by proactively working closely with employees. This allowed the company to fully understand everyone's individual future aspirations and mobility.

And so far 20 Cottam operations staff have moved from the station to other roles within EDF Energy's new nuclear fleet.

EDF Energy is working with ECITB to develop and support a development programme that will help these individuals into their new roles within the nuclear business which include Operator Technicians, Maintenance Technicians and desk engineers.

ECITB is funding the Accelerated Experience and Learning Programme (AELP) which builds upon existing operational and generic knowledge and skills.

Those on the programme are experienced individuals who are technically competent, and the course recognises these skills and tops them up with the elements required to ensure they meet the suitably, qualified and experienced personnel (SQEP) criteria required by the nuclear sector.

In addition, there are skills and competencies that the staff from the Cottam Power Station bring to the nuclear environment including agility, innovation and commercial acumen.

The scheme also delivers reduced training time, accelerated speed to competence, and cost savings, as well as diversity of thought.

Although sad to see Cottam close, those joining the programme are pleased with the opportunity to remain within EDF Energy and with the support that the ECITB has provided to help make this happen.

\* In February 2019 EDF Energy announced it had decided to end generation at its Cottam coal-fired power station in North Nottinghamshire; the company proposes to cease generation on 30 September 2019. Coal-fired power will be phased out altogether by 2025 under Government policy.

The NSSG is committed to playing a role in ensuring the sector shares best practice, useful resources and expertise around skills and people development. This learning from each other includes case studies from across the sector. We are encouraging nuclear employers to contribute by submitting such case studies which we will make available on the NSSG website. Thank you to all our contributors.

*"There are many benefits in the ECITB supporting the training of individuals transferring from one of EDF Energy's coal power stations to one of its nuclear sites. From EDF Energy's perspective the accelerated programme has, in several cases, reduced the training commitment by approximately one third, which for an 18 month training programme; means that the individual is 'suitably qualified and experienced person' (SQEP) in 12 rather than 18 months, thus being a core 'worker' in their respective role much quicker. This utilises the individual's prior knowledge & skills and is used to baseline the huge training commitment required for individuals to become SQEP within the nuclear sector. This links the technical and behavioural aspects required in a highly safety critical working environment."*

Ian Williams, Quality Improvement & Workstream Lead, Nuclear Skills Alliance, EDF Energy Generation

## Next Steps

This initiative is developing a number of core principals and key value measures, it is already clear that there is real value added to the individual, to EDF Energy and also to the wider nuclear sector by such a programme.

This pilot programme could pave the way for similar moves from other energy operators into the nuclear sector, at different points in the lifecycle of the plants. The key is to develop a programme that is open and accessible and transferable for all those that would benefit from it.



l-r: Lesley Cox, Cottam Power Station; Ian Williams, EDF Energy; Mike Preston, ECITB; Beccy Pleasant, NSSG and Jamie White, EDF Energy met in late 2018 to explore the transfer scheme which is now live.

