



NET ZERO NORTH SKILLS ALLIANCE

Workshop Report



Summary

This workshop was held to explore and understand how a Skills Alliance in the North of England may help to create an opportunity to work together, across sectoral boundaries, to re-shape the skills landscape in the region.

The sessions explored questions of “why”: exploring the values and perspectives of attendees to determine what is important, the role and purpose of a Skills Alliance and what attendees would like to see it achieve; as well as questions of “how” and “what”: how can we work together and what should we focus on. Finally, the workshop focussed on how we might best engage employers in a larger-scale follow-on event.

There was a high degree of positive engagement by the attendees and the discussions generated several clear and tangible priorities that need to be addressed:

- Delivering agile, flexible up-to-date course content and qualifications
- Ensuring we build on existing partnerships and research work
- Understanding and sharing skills pathways
- Building new and enhancing existing relationships with industry
- Collaborating with industry to accurately determine the demand for skills
- Advocating and leading for the North of England.

There was a clear and shared ambition to be part of a solution-focussed discussion, leading to action, so that we can seize this moment to reshape the future skills landscape for the North.

Opening Address

Professor Anthony Hollander (University of Liverpool) and Liz Bromley (NCG)

Just prior to the start of the pandemic the N8 identified digital skills and communications to enhance collaboration – replacing face-to-face meetings didn't get much traction at the time; how quickly things changed for everyone.

The pandemic forced changed upon us, as a response to an emergency; just as the climate change emergency is requiring us to act. We need to react to the climate emergency with the same energy and organisational selflessness as the pandemic response.

What we have learnt from the pandemic is that we can really change the equation if we ignore boundaries.

For colleges, the impact of COVID and climate emergencies has led to a renewed focus on what the future of a relevant curriculum will be. There is a

need for all involved in delivering skills to learn quickly - how do we shift from the skills needed last year and this year to the skills needed far into the future?

The White Paper from January 2021 *Skills for Jobs* is predicated on the notion of collaboration between industry, FE and HE. Today is the first step in that journey; a journey that will lead to a place where, as learning organisations we understand from industry what skills are needed, from universities how they are preparing graduates for employability and from FE colleges how we should be preparing our young and re-skilling learners for the workforce and the workplace of the future.

This meeting is the first broad meeting of the NzN Skills Alliance and is bringing people together from different placed and backgrounds from across the North. It

The green agenda is one that could never be more relevant than it is now and working together through the Skills Alliance is an opportunity to do great things together and show the rest of this country, which is so often very fragmented and internally challenged, just what power there is in collaboration in the North

Liz Bromley

is about us getting on the same page together, both emotionally, and practically, because we know that green industries are going to be the industries of the future, we know there is going to be huge growth opportunities and if we don't skill up now, those industries won't come to the North.

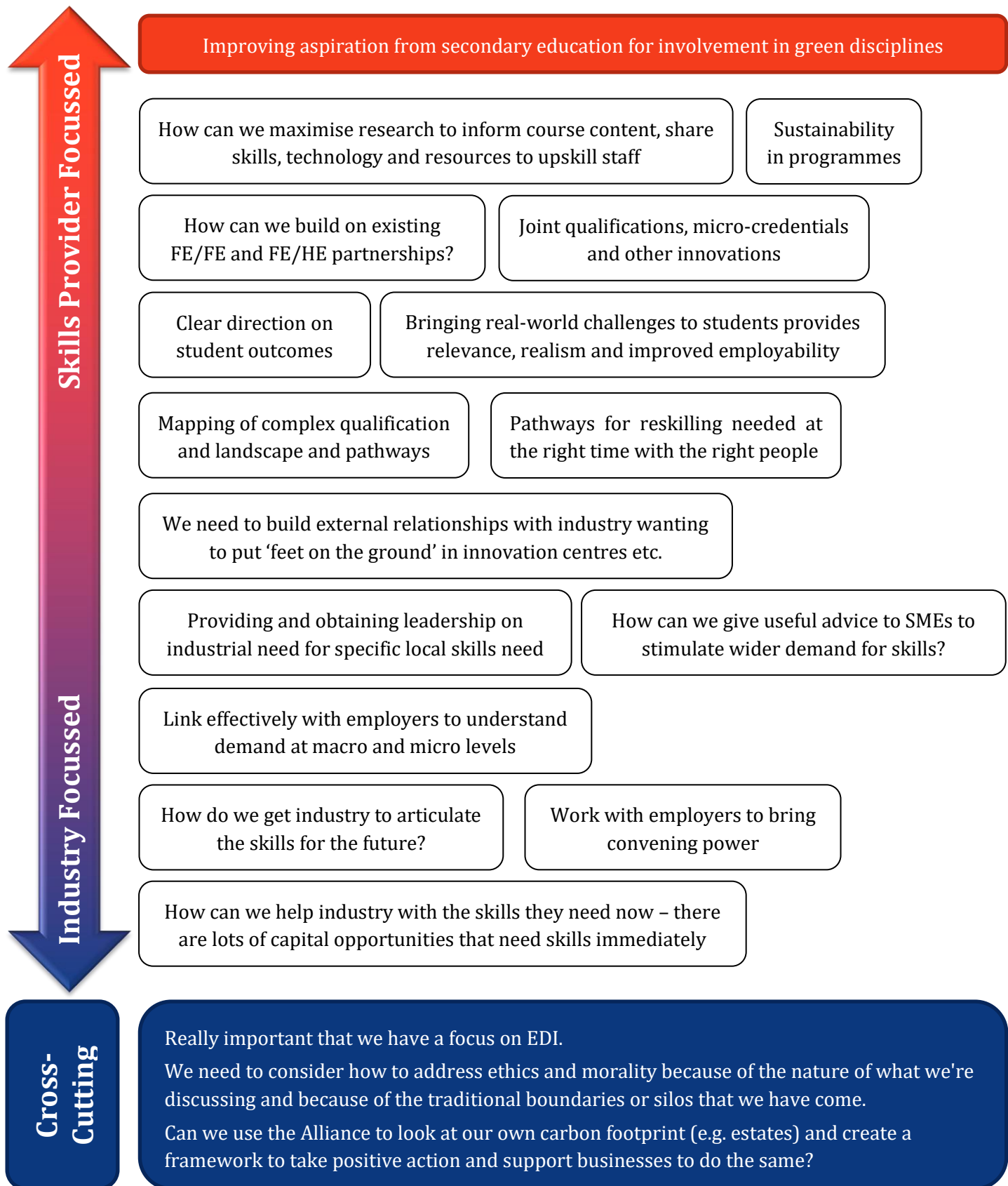
If, between us, we can ensure young people in the North get skills now for the jobs of five years' time there's a good chance we can get industry to build up in the north and that's what this is all about.

I hope together with our passion to pick away at this problem, that is going to be there for all our lifetimes, we can really make a difference.

Anthony Hollander

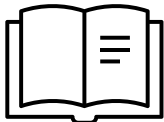


Session 1


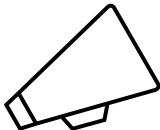

- *What is important to you and what are you bringing to this meeting?*
- *What might you contribute to the alliance?*
- *What might you hope to get from it?*



Session 2

- *What would you like to see the Skills Alliance achieve?*
- *What might the Skills Alliance help to facilitate?*

	<p><u>Commissioned Research and Improving Understanding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the Alliance commission research into understanding the overall skills needs in the labour market and pathways to achieve them? • How do we improve understanding of volumes and numbers in the green skill space right now to better identify pathways? • Can we develop a careers roadmap that identifies skills that employees need at different careers stages – need to involve employers in this? • Need to remain agile and flexible in terms of delivery of specific skills – is there a case for a more modular approach? • Can we Improve consistency in the curriculum and the mapping of skills? • How do we manage the transition between FE and HE when it comes to changes in the qualification landscape e.g. T-Levels – what is the impact for HE when dealing with students who have been doing competency-based qualifications?
	<p><u>Identify existing initiatives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we identify appropriate adult education and wider participation initiatives that support transition into sustainable jobs? • Can we identify and create pathways that help people to help skill or reskill? • We need to establish a clear pipeline and framework that align skills qualifications, providers, employers, learners and other stakeholders • Can we develop a framework that recognises, in reality, every job is going to be a 'green' job?
	<p><u>Stakeholder Engagement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we facilitate interactions between FE/HE and external stakeholders to understand the micro-economic needs of the labour market?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we utilise the Alliance to access industry and industrial networks? • We need to promote career pathways and broker relationships with RTOs and catapult network. • How can we effectively broker partnerships – workshops to build roadmaps, and help influence and lobby government? • Qualifications is a really important area – we need to work with government and DfE to make sure they are fit for purpose - potentially reforming apprenticeships. • How do we develop existing partnerships? • Can we encourage best practice in SMEs/spinouts to foster and grow the low-carbon jobs market?
	<p><u>Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to deliver CPD opportunities for delivery staff?
	<p><u>Advocacy and Awareness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective and connected advocacy for the North to be the place people come to for best practice. • Demonstrating leadership and being an exemplar. • Identify some things that we can deliver and demonstrate that we are achieving. • We need some successful activity without funding and then it becomes an easier sell when we do need funding. • Using the convening power of the Skills Alliance to promote collaborative working.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we build social mobility in the North? • Can we have an MoU that all agree to?

Open Floor

Who will train the trainer?
How can world-leading research translate to inform the training provision across the whole of the North of England.

We need to understand what has already been done to understand green skills needs for employers, and how green jobs are defined as they are likely to be an evolution of existing roles rather than whole new jobs and skills.

We need to do what we can do without funding and inform people about the objectives.
How can NzN influence investment decisions and people with the message that this is a solution for you?

How can we better link land-based industries and skills providers to benefit from the real opportunity that exists in reducing the impact of agriculture and food production?

We need to get students involved in shaping our agenda—a partnership with students and learners would be really key.

Companies are rethinking how they manage partnerships. EDI is vital. A collaborative offer would be attractive as we are not an exclusive type of institution but a collective.

Work is ongoing with Skills to Growth plans and the big obstacle is translating that into demand - any work that creates a clearer picture of demand would be really important.

Mid-Morning Address

Grant Glendinning (NCG) and Anthony Hollander (University of Liverpool)

There has been a lot of focus on partnership and collaboration and as we start to focus on what our collective vision for the Alliance is we wanted to provide some real-world examples of collaboration in action.

The North of England has 64 FE colleges, a National College for Nuclear and 2 Institutes for Technology; there are over 200,000 young people being trained in relevant disciplines.

NCG have been looking at collaborative models that will span levels 1-3.

One example, working with educational charities and industry in the North East will see the creation of a cutting-edge facility in Sunderland to deliver training in retrofitting and modern methods of construction, but will also enable dual-qualified industry practitioners to tailor the skills training of existing cohorts at Sunderland College.

A second example sees NCG working with Newcastle University and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult at Blyth; the university is designing the future skills needs based on its world-class research and helping industry and skills providers to really understand what future skills requirements will be. Partnership with the Catapult provides fore-sighting into industry need and help to unpick some of the headline skills data to a more local resolution. The FE colleges then design skills training programmes and shape and mould the training already in progress to address changing need; many programmes need evolution not revolution. For example, wind turbine engineers need electromechanical qualifications, but also things like survival at sea and working at height, which would not normally be delivered alongside the technical training.

As we move forwards there are three important principles:

- 1) We need to forget about 'I' and think about the institutional 'we'; come to the discussions and the Alliance as public servants working to solve a global crisis.
- 2) What are the hard-nosed delivery mechanisms that can deliver change?
- 3) How can we experiment with the way we do things? How do we move out of our everyday thinking and find new ways for practical delivery?

Session 3 including Open Floor Feedback

What might the Skills Alliance work together on now to make progress?

Creating skills pathways - the thematic focus is often on industry and digital technology; the North is every bit as much that as creative and cultural arts and visitor economy. We need to avoid focussing solely on 'tech'. Should also medicine and health - need to circle the whole of society.

- Is there an existing thematic framework? e.g. SDGs/COP26.

Understanding employment needs - explore current examples of effectively working with key employers

- SME engagement needed to understand specific needs
- Can large corporates lead SME skills development?
- Can an industry survey inform the next workshop?

Understanding best practice - develop and share examples of best practice from, within the Skills Alliance, and from other relevant countries (Germany/France)

Developing ideas around the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and Sustainability programmes

Developing the Skills Alliance - who is involved, what are their contact details, what areas are of interest for collaboration, which spaces are members working in to facilitate strategic identification of potential collaborators

- Working Groups to explore key issues

New Courses - identify opportunities to identify new courses at different levels recognising that different sectors will progress at a different pace; models of delivery need to be able to flex to that.

- Develop and piloting new skills modules which can be shared with partners and collaborators
- Explore new models of delivery - modular or joint approaches that support geographical mobility within the North

Staff Development - upskilling technically, and in designing, updating and delivering curriculum - CPD in cutting edge research, building on existing activity.

Advocacy - Can the alliance influence/lobby government on new structural replacement funds to deliver SME support as above

What might the Skills Alliance work on with a little more time and money?

Developing the Skills Alliance - Need to think big with a formalised alliance that plugs different gaps for industry, through agile plug and play delivery.

- Need to create a structure, strong identity, purpose and clear message
- Potentially need an MoU or Terms of Reference
- Need a clear point of access for partners; where is the front door?
- Communication tools for use within institutions and with employers and learners.

Regional connectivity – can we use the climate emergency as the catalyst to overcome regional political challenges – the convening power of the Alliance could ‘bypass’ some of the issues.

- Can we bypass ‘institutional politics’ to avoid the competitive elements – would an MoU outline areas where we are looking to collaborate?

Advocacy

- Can we take some of the great ideas from today and present them to government as a blueprint for a northern skills system?
- Can we use MPs or other regional political institutions to avoid the focus on national government?
- Talk to the professional institutions on how we might integrate sustainability into career progression.
- Engage with LEPs/mayors/employer representative groups on sustainable practice

Programme Development - developing a labelled programme with a sustainable theme but regional difference (e.g. maritime in Liverpool)

Stakeholder Engagement - Can we design a process to elicit information from industry on what they need? Can we combine with existing intelligence from the group?

How might the Skills Alliance collaborate with industry and employers?

Create links with employers that are already working with green skills

What about **SMEs** – companies that don't have people resource to 'sit and ponder'? Engagement with SMEs needs to have a clear offer with a clear benefit and incentives.

Advocate for the development, pick-up, and integration of skills. We need to advocate with employers, LEPS, city regions to drive home why we need sustainable skills in everything we do

- Can we support the LEPs as they pull together their local skills improvement plans – these will be seen as bidding documents to government?

Consultancy services e.g. a skills brokerage services/workforce planning that we can offer to industry?

Student-led projects through Living Lab's working collaboratively with HE and FE students and SMEs.

Develop and share **case studies** of programmes that have engaged well with industry.

Shared horizon-scanning with industry to help them understand what they want and to understand areas where sustainability may not always be obvious (e.g. visitor economy)

Share industrial contacts and skills needs identified by industry. Can we share information about existing employer engagement forums so that we understand what is going on around the North?

Need to **identify the demand** for skills, and employer commitment. We need to do a piece of work to predict macro-level market needs.

Getting business buy-in and engagement in curriculum development & delivery

How can we **support industry and LEPs** to help them to leverage value from the levies they are paying for skills; maybe micro-modules/programmes.

Session 4

Thinking of the next workshop with employers – what do you think the focus should be on?

Key Features

Define from the outset – what is in there for the employer?

A two-way conversation – need to listen to employers wants and needs

Who should be there?

- Employer representative groups (CoC, CBI)
- Sectors with Early Adopters
- SMEs as well as big business
- Local governance
- LEPs

What should we talk about?

- Understanding barriers to R&D activity
- Pathways to skills - mapping demand (include non-traditional qualifications)
- Agile, student-focussed skills packages
- How to involve employers in staff CPD
- Matching employer need to HE/FE strengths
- Improving internships and student interaction with employers
- What are the longer terms needs for employers?
- How to make FE/HE courses more embedded in real companies

Potential outcomes

- Development of case studies for advocacy
- Traditional bodies think in traditional ways; this is new and we need to have new rules - what are employers going to recognize as being the desirable package?

Make it obvious, make it attractive, make it easy, make it beneficial

Closing Address

Liz Bromley (NCG) and Professor Anthony Hollander (University of Liverpool)

The energy brought to the workshop today has really helped to open our eyes to what is possible if we are prepared to think with greater fluidity and across boundaries.

The discussions have generated some clear and tangible outcomes, building on existing assets and experiences that we can use as the basis for next steps.

We will contact all attendees of the meeting, as well as those who were unable to be with us today, to gauge levels of interest in continuing to work with us in this group, and as has been mooted explore setting up working groups focussing on the key issues. We will explore mechanisms for maintaining building on the relationships that have started to form today,

With a clear and shared ambition to be part of a solution-focussed discussion leading to action we can seize this moment to reshape the future skills landscape for the North.

As noted at one of the Open Floor sessions, we need to present our approach to government as the unified FE-HE-industry green skills solution for the North of England

APPENDIX 1 – ATTENDEES

Association of Colleges	Richard Caulfield	Area Director (NW) and National Lead Mental Health
Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges	John Clarke	Executive Officer
Carlisle College	Grant Glendining	Executive Principal
East Durham College	Paul Flynn	Director of Farm and Commercial Activity
Lancaster University	Sue Black	Professor, PVC for Engagement
Liverpool John Moores University	Jason Kirby	School Director, Biological and Environmental Sciences
Manchester Metropolitan University	Amer Gaffar	Director of Manchester Fuel Cell Innovation Centre
Manchester Metropolitan University	Liz Price	Professor of Environmental Education & Academic Institutional Lead for the Environment
MPI	Alan Scholes	Chief Technology Officer at Materials Processing Institute
Myerscough College	John Wherry	Deputy Principal of Resources
Myerscough College	Alison Robinson	Chief Executive & Principal
N8 Research Partnership	Annette Bramley	Director
N8 Research Partnership	Nick Goldspink	Senior Research Partnership Manager
N8 Research Partnership	Anthony Hollander	Chair of N8 Strategic Executive Group
National Technician Development Centre	Mel Leitch	Deputy Head of Infrastructure
NCG	Liz Bromley	Chief Executive Officer
Newcastle University	Rene Koglbauer	Dean of Lifelong Learning & Professional Practice & Professor of Professional Learning and Leadership
Redcar College	Jason Faulkner	Principal of Redcar and Cleveland
Riverside College	Jayne Smith	Head of Skills and Enterprise
Runshaw College	Barbara Pilkington	Adult Education Curriculum Design and Quality Manager
Teesside University	Steph Bales	Director of Research and Innovation
Teesside Valley Combined Authority	Chris Beck	Director Business and Skills
TWI	Abbas Mohimi	Business Development, Innovation, R&D and Programme Management
University of Chester	Joe Howe	Executive Director Of Energy Research Institute
University of Cumbria	Helen Manns	Director, Institute of Science and Environment
University of Hull	Adam Greenwood	Director of Apprenticeships and Skills
University of Hull	John Weir	Research Associate in Talent and Skills, Energy & Environment Institute
University of Hull	Louise Smith	AURA
University of Leeds	Louise Banahene	Director of Educational Engagement
University of Liverpool	James Coe	Head of Sustainability, Policy, and Civic Engagement
University of Manchester	Judith Williams	Associate VP for Teach, Learn and Students
University of Sheffield	Helen Smith	Head of Careers & Deputy Director of Academic Programmes
University of York	Claire Hughes	Director of Learning and Teaching and Deputy Head of the Department of Environment and Geography
Warrington & Vale Royal College	Cath Brierley	Principal
Warrington & Vale Royal College	Amanda Mackinnon	Director of Quality and Curriculum
West Yorkshire Go Higher	Clare Jackson	Strategic Programme and Project lead