

# The latest in Skills & Talent across Southeast Wales

2022 is already proving to be a significant year in skills development across all sectors, with last week's news underlining the importance of developing talent for diverse areas of the skills economy - including our world-leading **Compound Semiconductor** cluster, booming **Food & Drinks** industry, fast-emerging **Green Jobs** revolution and the wider world of **STEM**.

## Skills Development critical to growth of the Compound Semiconductor Cluster

One of the key headlines of the past week highlighted the importance of Skills Development to the Compound Semiconductor cluster - the world-leading ecosystem that's placing Southeast Wales at the epicentre of the global connectivity, electrification and net-zero revolution.

Skills is a key focus of the *CScnnected Strength in Places Fund* (SIPF) - a £43 million 55-month project part-funded through UK Research and Innovation, focused on maximising the full potential of the world-first cluster that's emerging in advanced semiconductor materials, research and manufacturing, all within a 50 mile radius of Newport.

The skills element of this groundbreaking project includes key deliverables in both Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and in the coordination of education and outreach initiatives - two critical dimensions in helping overcome the skills barriers that are currently limiting the growth of the CS cluster.

**"The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) scoping report - CScnnected Strength in Places Fund"** has been made available by Cardiff University's CPD unit after consultations with the CScnnected industry partners to better understand how to support the growth of this remarkable cluster - identifying the short-to-mid-term CPD needs and demand from the compound semiconductor industry in our region, detailing the current gaps in provision and making a series of recommendations about which CPD activities should now be prioritised for development.

With the number of compound semiconductor jobs expected to more than double over the next three years, the CPD activities aim to reach more than 1,000 semiconductor professionals by 2025 - including employees from supply chain organisations - with delivery of the CScnnected SIPF skills package further supported by a range of outreach activities undertaken over the next four years to increase interest in STEM-related subjects and careers.

## Wide variety of opportunities across Wales' booming Food & Drinks industry

The end of January also saw the launch of a high-profile and government supported campaign to encourage people to consider a new career in Wales' fast-growing food and drink industry.

The new **Food Workforce Wales campaign**, delivered by **Food Skills Cymru**, showcases the exciting and varied careers in the industry - and highlights the vast range of opportunities available to anyone looking to either start a new career or transfer their skills and progress.

Wales' food and drink industry is growing at an unprecedented rate - not only putting food on the nation's table, but also firmly placing Wales on the global stage with its world leading produce. The Welsh Government aims to both grow the sector's value to £8.5bn as well as **increase the number of employees in the sector who receive the Welsh Living Wage to 80%**, by 2025.

With the pursuit to create one of the most environmentally and socially responsible supply chains in the world, there's been a huge uptake in Welsh food and drink in both the UK and further afield, with manufacturers and businesses across Wales quickly responding to the increasing demand.

The campaign website details a number of ways to join this rewarding industry; from apprenticeships and learning programmes to operational and customer facing roles, as well as leadership and management opportunities - supported by the recently launched **Food Workforce Wales jobs board**, which is filled with opportunities for those seeking a new or different career.

## Regional inequalities in Wales' Green Jobs revolution

In other news, **PwC's Green Jobs Barometer** showed that while the transition to a green economy may be in its early stages, regional inequalities are already arising across the UK - with Wales in particular need of support from policymakers and businesses, to both accelerate the creation of green jobs and minimise the carbon intensity of employment.

The Barometer is a first of its kind analysis tracking movements in green jobs creation, job loss, carbon intensity of employment and worker sentiment, across UK regions and sectors. As such, it shows where Wales sits at the start of the transition to net-zero - revealing both the fantastic opportunities for Wales to reshape and renew its economy; and the work that needs to be done to make sure that we aren't left behind in the green jobs market.

Wales' reliance on carbon-intensive fuels is reflected in the data, with the country producing 12.3 tonnes of CO2 emissions per employee, 20% above the UK average. On the positive side, the use of these fuels - such as coal, burning oil and gas oil - suggests that there is likely to be more potential for green energy sectors to grow in Wales, in comparison with other regions.

Rather strikingly, **only 1.1% of total job advertisements are described as 'Green'**, and Welsh employee's sentiment about the environmental friendliness of their jobs and workplaces is lower than average. The Barometer suggests that this can be tackled by identifying and developing green industries which complement Wales' existing clusters and skills - and creating career pathways and educational opportunities which drive young people into green jobs.

## New STEM Jobs Scheme for Engineers looking to return to work

Last week also brought news of an ingenious programme being embraced by **Dow** - the global materials science company with a long-established major facility in Barry.

The company has recently formed a pioneering partnership with **STEM Returners** to help engineers return to work after a career break - with STEM Returners sourcing candidates for the 12-week programme, which aims to return or transfer experienced engineers back into industry following a career break.

Roles include mechanical and instrument engineers, with the Dow jobs scheme offering fully paid placements that act as a 'returnship', allowing candidates to be re-integrated into an inclusive environment upon their return to STEM.

While the scheme is aimed at helping solve the challenge of sourcing talent in scarce-skill sectors, it also brings the added benefit of increasing diversity in the employer organisation. STEM Returners' population of experienced professionals looking to return to work are 51% female and 38% from black and minority ethnic groups, compared with 10% female and 6% ethnic minorities working in STEM as a whole.

The value of this inspired new programme is clear: with STEM Returners' annual survey - **The STEM Returners Index** - revealing that 61% of STEM professionals on a career break find the process of attempting to return to work either difficult or very difficult, and 36% of returners saying they have experienced bias in the recruitment process, presenting a barrier to them returning to their career.

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