

News story: Powerhouse praise for Sellafield apprenticeships

The comment was made during the 'Northern Powerhouse Apprentice Summit', which gathered more than 150 apprentices and business leaders from the north, at MediaCity in Manchester.

Degree apprentices from Sellafield Ltd, Nicholas Mars and Simone Wilson, mixed with trainees from companies like Barclays, Co-op, Bentley Motors Ltd, Manchester Airports Group and Nissan.

Sellafield Ltd joined the Northern Powerhouse Partnership a year ago, to connect Cumbria and Warrington with other northern towns and cities helping to drive economic growth via investments in skills, innovation, transport and culture.

Former apprentice and now Director of Transformation for Sellafield Ltd, Angela Seeney, spoke at the event.

She said;

It was great to see Sellafield Ltd praised for our apprenticeship programme.

I was delighted to share the story of my own apprenticeship and career, and also what Sellafield Ltd is doing to help shape the UK's future workforce.

Sellafield has always been a powerhouse in its own right, but our greatest challenge is ensuring we leave a positive legacy not only for Cumbria, but the country.

From trailblazing new degree apprenticeships to creating a project academy and funding apprenticeships for small businesses in the community, we are proud to be driving skills for the north.

With 42% of apprentices at Sellafield being female, the company was also praised for driving gender balance in the nuclear industry.

Simone Wilson, Control, Electrical, and Instrumentation Degree Apprentice from Risley said:

I've really enjoyed the opportunity to speak to apprentices from other industries.

What I found most encouraging were the female role models, both business leaders and trainees, sharing their stories and discussing

how we can work together to encourage young people to pursue apprenticeships.

Earlier in the year, Northern Powerhouse Minister, Jake Berry, visited Cumbria to find out more about the region's contribution to economic growth in the north and was 'impressed by the range of high quality apprenticeships being developed in Cumbria'.

You can read the full story here [Minister powers up Cumbria's potential](#)

[News story: Post 16 funding arrangements published for 2019 to 2020](#)

We have published our first combined [post-16 funding letter](#), for the 2019 to 2020 academic year.

The letter brings together the 16 to 19 and 19+ funding in a single letter, rather than them being sent separately at different points of the year. This has been enabled by bringing together 16 to 19 and 19+ allocations, funding and contracting teams into a new post-16 funding centre to improve our service offer to customers.

Last academic year, we allocated a total of £8.6 billion to around 4000 institutions, which enabled 4.6 million students to participate in further education.

Building on this significant investment, in the 2019 to 2020 academic year, we have protected the national base rates for 16-19 learners at £4000 per full time student aged 16 to 17 and £3,300 per student for 18 year olds.

The government continues to invest in further education so that more people have a wide choice of high quality education and training. This includes:

- up to £20 million to March 2020 to help providers prepare for the delivery of new, gold-standard T Levels. This includes through the [Taking Teaching Further programme](#) and [T Level Continued Professional Development Offer](#) – to plan for September 2020 provision, we will provide funding information before the summer break in 2019 and will make firm allocations by the end of March 2020, in line with the usual 16 to 19 funding timetable
- up to £74 million in 2019 to 2020 financial year to build capacity to deliver industry placements for 16 to 19 students

- £50 million to improve post-16 basic maths through new [Centres for Excellence programme](#) and a basic maths premium pilot
- £16 million for an [Advanced Maths Support Programme](#) to raise the quality and take-up of Level 3 maths
- [£38 million in capital funding](#) for the first providers of T Levels to fund equipment and facilities, to be allocated in 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021
- funding of £170 million to support new [Institutes of Technology](#) from academic year 2019 to 2020 to deliver higher-level technical skills
- the [£15 million Strategic College Improvement Fund](#) to help weaker colleges improve
- access to the one-off funding from the [Restructuring Facility](#) until end-March 2019 (for those who submitted an application prior the deadline of 28 September 2018) to enable colleges to make the structural changes required to put them on a sustainable financial footing

The letter also sets out information on how we funded AEB allocations will change as a result of devolution from 2019 to 2020. AEB providers will be given more information about this through illustrative allocation letters being released this month.

The letter also outlines our continued work to increase scrutiny to protect learners and public funds and how it is supporting colleges ahead of the launch of the new insolvency regime, early next year.

[News story: Strengthening vocational and technical qualifications](#)

Ofqual is today (Wednesday 12 December) publishing [research](#) that identifies evidence of grade inflation associated with internal assessment in some 'older style' Applied General qualifications.

The research shows that over time, there has been a significant increase in the number of students securing the top grades in some qualifications, which has not been matched by students' prior attainment or their subsequent degree or employment outcomes.

As such, Ofqual is calling on awarding organisations to act on the findings of today's report to address the risk of grade inflation in these legacy qualifications.

More generally, and recognising the important role that this group of qualifications plays in both widening participation in higher education and as a route into employment, Ofqual believes there is a need for awarding organisations to consider how best to strengthen their controls around internal assessment across a wide range of technical and vocational

qualifications.

Phil Beach, Executive Director for Vocational and Technical Qualifications, said:

As the regulator, our primary role is to maintain the integrity of standards in qualifications, and wherever we find evidence that this may be threatened, it's important that we step in. This research shows that there are unwarranted increases in results in some of the 'older style' Applied General qualifications, and this has the potential to undermine public confidence and devalue the achievements of students. Although the Department for Education has indicated its intention to review these qualifications, we must take appropriate steps to manage the potential for grade inflation while they remain in use.

We are therefore calling on awarding organisations to strengthen their controls on internal assessment in any qualification where there are potential risks to standards. We will also be considering whether additional bespoke guidance or additional regulatory requirements are required to ensure qualification standards are maintained.

Bill Watkin, CEO, Sixth Form Colleges Association, said:

This report makes clear that there are great differences between the old and new versions of the Applied General qualifications.

The new version is more rigorous and demanding, and, like A level, it has an examination component. It is considerably harder for students to get the top grades in them, but it is quite right that more and more sixth forms – in schools and colleges – are choosing them. They prepare young people for the workplace and for university, they represent an essential pathway for students to acquire skills that our economy and society desperately need, and they provide the kind of stretch and challenge that are needed to engage and motivate young people to be aspirational and successful. The new version should ensure the continued opportunity to study applied general qualifications which are critical for students, for the acquisition of skills essential for the workplace and higher education, and for social mobility and widening participation. If the old version is to be discontinued after the government's review, as seems likely, students, colleges and schools will need reassurances that their remaining concerns about the new version have been addressed.

Speech: British Ambassador to DRC delivers speech to mark International Anti-Corruption Day

Ambassador Murton said:

“I would like to welcome and to sincerely thank you all for coming here today, to attend this event, to mark the recent International Anti-corruption Day that took place on Sunday.”

“I would like to sincerely thank the DRC Private Sector Anti-corruption Initiative, led by Ms Marie-Chantal Kaninda, and Global Compact, represented by Mr Célestin Mukeba, Vice-president and Ms Nadine Longo, Secretary General, for their tremendous and valuable contribution in the organisation of this event.”

“I am delighted to see such a large number of distinguished people keenly interested in the anti-corruption agenda. I hope we will be able to work together to tackle this scourge.”

“As we all know, corruption is one of the main obstacles to sustainable economic, political, and social advancement, affecting developed and developing economies alike. As the UN Secretary General has highlighted in a recent meeting of the Security Council, the World Economic Forum estimates that the cost of corruption amounts to at least US\$2.6 trillion – or 5% of global GDP – while evidence from the World Bank indicates that over US\$ 1 trillion is paid in bribes each year.”

“As well as this huge overall cost, corruption: • Impedes the conduct of business; • Leads to waste or to inefficient use of public resources; • Excludes poor people from public services and perpetuates poverty; • It also corrodes public trust, undermines the rule of law, and ultimately breeds political dysfunction and social disunity.”

“Since 2010, the UK has arguably done more than any country in the world to fight corruption. We have a strong legislative framework through the Bribery Act and now the Criminal Finances Act. “

“We are the first G20 country to establish a public register of domestic company beneficial ownership. And we are the first G7 country to undergo an IMF fiscal transparency evaluation. In 2017 the OECD review of the UK’s anti-bribery regime welcomed the UK’s “strong anti-corruption drive” concluding that the UK had made significant progress in fighting foreign bribery. Transparency International has stated that the UK is one of only four countries worldwide that actively enforces foreign bribery legislation. It also ranks us in the top ten least corrupt countries in the world. “

“In 2016 we hosted the world’s first leaders’ Anti-Corruption Summit a successful event that sought to galvanise a global response. In December 2017 we and the US co-hosted the first meeting of the Global Forum on Asset Recovery, focused on accelerating international asset recovery efforts. We continue to champion international action.”

“We are committed to continuing these efforts – in particular to ensuring that the UK’s financial sector, and those in our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, tackle illicit finances.”

“While there are many effective measures in place the UK is not immune from the effects of corruption. Stories of corruption can undermine confidence in our institutions and our business reputation more widely. Meanwhile, corruption overseas threatens our security and makes it harder for UK companies to compete for business. To secure our future prosperity, we must do all that we can to make sure that Britain remains one of the safest and transparent places in the world to do business. Our security and prosperity are inextricably linked. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, we have an opportunity to leverage our reputation for integrity and transparency and strong corporate governance as we establish new trading relationships.”

“For Her Majesty’s Government, promoting Britain as a trustworthy business partner ties in with our strategic objective to deliver increased prosperity. By providing practical information and advice, our Embassies abroad will be more able to support British companies overseas to protect and strengthen their brand reputation, enjoy more sustainable commercial success, and minimise the risk of prosecution.”

“The damaging influence of corruption cannot be stopped overnight. We recognise that tackling corruption requires collective international action by governments, business, and civil society. Corruption takes many forms and is often deeply rooted.. Criminal activity is often strongly linked to corruption such as: ; serious and organised crime, modern slavery and terrorism. We are all here today to exchange ideas and learn how we can combine our efforts to help tackle the corruption that prevents countries, including the DRC from realising its full potential.”

“I hope we will come away from this event today with a deeper understanding of what actions we can all take to combat corruption in all its forms. Thank you.”

[Press release: Public urged to have their say on National Parks and AONBs](#)

The public have days left to have their say on what the future of England’s cherished designated landscapes will look like.

In October, Environment Secretary Michael Gove and writer Julian Glover invited the public to respond to a [Call for Evidence](#), which forms part of the government's [Designated Landscapes Review](#).

The Call for Evidence, ending on December 18, gives businesses, visitors, residents and community groups invested in our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) the opportunity to make their voices heard.

The public can input on whether England's 10 National Parks and 34 AONBs meet the nation's needs, and whether there is scope for the current network to expand.

The Call for Evidence also focuses on whether housing and transport in protected landscapes could be improved, the role they play in our cultural heritage, and how these iconic areas can boost habitats for wildlife.

The responses will form part of the ongoing review into protected landscapes – led by Julian Glover – which is ensuring our National Parks and AONBs can be fit for the 21st century.

Lead Reviewer Julian Glover said:

This is a fantastic opportunity for the public to help shape the very lay of the land when it comes to the future of our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

By sharing your thoughts on what is and isn't working in these cherished landscapes you are ensuring that they can be best enjoyed by us, and by generations to come.

AONBs and National Parks are some of our most cherished sites, spanning the country from the shores of Dorset to the rolling hills of Dartmoor.

The nation's designated landscapes cover a quarter of England's land and generate over £20 billion for the rural economy, whilst supporting 75,000 jobs.

The designated landscapes review will report back next year with recommendations.