

Skills shortage sparks dedicated welding and pipefitting hub launch on Humber Bank

A welding and pipefitting hub is being launched by industry training provider Catch, with designs on taking 60 new apprentices a year.

It is a direct response to an identified shortage in skills with huge infrastructure projects emerging on top of the existing need across the Humber Bank and beyond.

A large workshop at the Stallingborough base is to be repurposed as tenant and fellow operator Heta makes a move to a [£5.5 million new standalone site](#) at neighbouring Pioneer Business Park. The vacated building will immediately be put to work for the vital Humber Bank trade, with anecdotal evidence suggesting welders can earn more than doctors in the region, such is the need.

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James McIntosh, chief operating officer and director of skills at Catch, said: “We will be expanding our apprenticeship provision in 2023 with the introduction of premium welding and pipefitting pathways to complement our offer in process operations, mechanical, electrical and instrumentation standards.

“The main reason for doing it is we see demand. Demand from employers, our members in the supply chain, and the data coming out of reports like the Humber Industrial Cluster Plan and ECITB papers, which shows this region has a huge void in

welding and pipefitting skills and also a huge demand. We have tens of thousands of jobs needed to meet current projects, then more on the mega infrastructure projects that are coming.”

A £15 billion investment portfolio in process industry operations is well documented as part of the [Humber 2030 Vision](#), leading the transition from the most carbon intensive industry cluster to a Net Zero leader. Not only are individual sites pipeline intensive, but they depend on region-spanning links to hydrogen production and carbon capture sites.

Mr McIntosh said: “This is about how we can support the region as a whole. We want to retain and grow these skills and allow the companies that are in the area to benefit from that.



The workshop at Catch that is set to become the facility's Welding and Pipefitting Hub.

(Image: Catch)

“It is not just about us, we need all providers to work collaboratively. We all need to play a part.”

A delivery team has already been recruited, with three new members of staff joining in the coming months to design the delivery ahead of a September start, with an initial cohort of 30. It will [take the apprentices on site to more than 100](#), and could then double, with Mr McIntosh revealing how courses are already over-subscribed for the next academic year. More than 350 applications have already been received.

“It shows a fantastic level of interest from young people wanting to come into industry,” he said. “A concern is we can’t accommodate all of them due to capacity restrictions.”

Catch is now working with industry to ensure the right fit-out. “Companies are investing financially, through sponsorship, to help us upgrade and invest in new, industry-standard equipment,” he said.

Alongside apprenticeships, there will be a focus on engagement with pupils, underlining the importance of STEM skills and the career opportunities. Upskilling existing employees – seen as a vital element by employers with willing workforces – and new entrants from different sectors will also be facilitated.

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