

## **Aquaterra Energy calls for industry collaboration on graduate recruitment and retention**

Patrick Phelan, Managing Director of Aquaterra Energy, has called for employers to reach out to schools to inform teachers, career advisors, parents and students about the great career opportunities available in engineering, and the oil and gas industry in particular.

Talking at the East of England Energy Group's (EEEGR) Southern North Sea Conference 2014 <<http://www.eeegr.com/events/sns2014-the-sea-of-opportunity-1141.html>> , Phelan said: "The UK has the worst record in Europe for girls qualifying in engineering degrees, with only 10% of degrees in engineering and technical subjects are awarded to females. So there's a massive opportunity for the industry to showcase the diverse and exciting opportunities it has to offer to the many very capable female students who are currently choosing other career paths.

"Engineering isn't a school subject, so it's not widely understood in the school environment, and it's our role in industry to ensure that teachers and careers advisers have the knowledge to advise students appropriately. Encouraging capable students to study maths and physics at A Level is part of this.

"We also need to inspire school teachers and parents to be enthusiastic about engineering, and particularly the importance of the energy mix to future generations. Improving our image is part of this, and Oil & Gas UK's website, Proud to be in Oil and Gas, is a good example of how this might be achieved. Recognising that not all engineering graduates follow the path into an engineering career, there is a lot more that could and should be done to share with students the great opportunities that exist in engineering.

Phelan went on to say that the "imbalance between supply and demand of engineering graduates is stark". Commenting on the combined approach of government and industry, he pointed to the nationwide roll-out of the Tomorrows Engineers employer engagement programme as a "good example of one of the ways in which the issue can be tackled collaboratively".

Phelan continued: “But, in order to close the gap, we also need to be innovative and creative in our approach to graduate recruitment. For example, employers shouldn’t put engineers in non-technical roles; they should consider non-engineers for commercial roles and mathematicians for analytical roles; and they need to offer roles to non EU students within four months of their graduation, before they have to leave the country.

“It is also important for SMEs to focus attention on retention of their graduates. This partly comes down to implementing a robust recruitment strategy which considers, at its core, the best match between the graduate and the employers’ opportunities and needs, and doesn’t look just for best qualifications on a CV.

Phelan concluded with a call for industry to “promote the fact that engineering is cool” and to call on young people to “join Engineering Team GB!”.