

Newcastle College Group (NCG) has acquired a key development site on the North Bank of the Tyne for the creation of a unique centre dedicated to developing higher level skills training for the renewables sector.

The Renewable Energies Academy, a hub for offshore wind and wind technologies, is being developed in partnership with Shepherd Offshore Group as part of their continued investment to create a world-class manufacturing, training and R&D centre on the North Bank of the Tyne.

The North Bank of the Tyne has already attracted world-class manufacturing organisations in the offshore energy sectors and the addition of a dedicated facility to meet the training needs of the renewable market will enhance the chances of further major job creation in the area.

Building works are due to begin in March with courses expected to start from September 2011. The main project finances have been provided by Newcastle College with an additional contribution from One North East and support for the centre gained from Newcastle and North Tyneside Councils

The site, which currently houses a disused cold store, will be demolished and redeveloped by Shepherd Offshore and Elliott Associates into a state-of-the-art facility. The project comprises a multi-partner, cross-regional collaboration between Newcastle College, major employers, local authorities, Sector Skills Councils and strategic stakeholders in the sector and the evolving industry.

Once complete, the 20,000 sq ft centre, designed by Ryder Architecture, will provide employer facing skills training to the renewable energies sector, helping to bridge the national skills gap and providing a hub of expertise for young people developing a career and employers wishing to up-skill their current workforce in one of the major growing priority sectors in the country.

The centre plans were developed with support and involvement of major employers in the renewables sector, including, Shepherd Offshore, Duco Ltd, Wellstream and Clipper Windpower.

Facilities will include equipment, such as a computed numerically controlled (CNC) machine and autoclave pressurising apparatus related to manufacture, assembly and maintenance of offshore wind turbines

This technology will enable Newcastle College to use its expertise to establish comprehensive pathways, which incorporate engineering, computing technology and vocational science at levels up to and incorporating Foundation Degrees

Learners will have access to a wide range of provision from Specialist Diploma through to Foundation Degree. Honours and Masters Degrees relevant to offshore wind and wind technologies will also be developed to provide a clear progression route and to develop higher level skills.

The college, within its School of Applied Science & Technology, already has a number of specific pathways, including a Subsea sector route and a Renewable Energy Technologies Foundation Degree. The centre will allow the school to build upon and grow these existing and new pathways to provide an extensive demand led curriculum in offshore wind and wind technologies.

Dame Jackie Fisher, Chief Executive of NCG, said: “This is a major development for the college and the result of the productive partnerships that we have built with employers in the renewable energies sector.

“The academy has been developed in direct response to the national skills gap and the need for higher level skills and training. For the first time employers will have dedicated facilities in the region to enable them to up-skill and cross-skill their workforce. The centre will also help to meet the future needs of industry as the curriculum is developed to provide sector specific training up to Masters Degree.

“There is a huge amount of UK expertise, a significant proportion of which is already situated in

the region. Our aim is to tap into this expertise and work with employers to deliver huge benefits to the local economy through enhanced employment and training opportunities.”

Bruce Shepherd, Managing Director of Shepherd Offshore said: “We are delighted to continue our support for Newcastle College’s endeavours and see real benefit in providing first-class facilities for the college, existing companies and those looking to locate new capacity on the North Bank of the river”