To support the process of shaping the Skills Strategy a network of over 100 organisations including over 30 businesses was identified. The attendance for the two workshops was drawn from this network. 40 representatives took part. About one third were from businesses, one third from providers, one third from stakeholders. The sessions were facilitated and involved presentations of evidence and table top discussions to test veracity and suggest actions.

Below is a summary of the discussions.

**Notes from January 29 Workshop**

Table 1

- Recognise current picture? Yes but…..
- Is the employer/provider link as bad as made out?
- Job readiness criticism–University of Northampton (UoN) find this disappointing -?is this a fact – graduate retention issue?
- Work experience – Wolf report v health and safety
- On -going problem of devaluing of vocational
- Nuffield Bursaries – lack of employers
- Course design initiatives quite encouraging – EOS etc

**Current project**

- Foundation degree (Norbett D) Logistics – 30 people through each year- designed over 4 months, repeated with Masters, flexible where/when deliver, very different from normal degree, highly embedded
- MISSING LINK IS THAT UoN CAN DO THIS FOR MORE COMPANIES – NOT KNOWN ABOUT – CAN Small and Medium Enterprises COME TOGETHER TO DELIVER/PURCHASE – REF Sector Skills Councils. More that local partners could do to roll out?
- Funding?
- Ideas could include: using EZ as a focus/location for bringing people together; making the learning journey explicit (progression, transition, employment routes)
- EZ all sectors
- Facilitation of networks/comms – SEMLEP/NEP
- Collaborate rather than threaten/compete
- ‘Regroup’ following structural change
Skills Workshops – Summary of Table Notes from Both Workshops

- Use Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership Skills Portal
- Use national Science Technology Engineering Maths ambassadors programme
- A ‘Local Training Fund’ – bid writing

Table 2

- Hubs……………..connectivity…………………networks
- More info needed eg Nexus
- Look at level of interdependency needed and collaboration
- Importance of sectors
- Voice of business first – not chasing funding first
- EZ catalyst for aspiration to bring that voice out and using networks that exist
- About Northamptonshire businesses, EZ part of whole economy of area
- Inspiring younger generation
- Need for entity?
- Employer commitment?
  - More locally distinctive
  - Know what si being developed/is possible locally
  - Accessible for SMEs – suitable HE, information etc
  - For all – build and accelerate the good stuff going on
  - Careers issues – knowledge, advice, opportunity, progression etc
  - Making all better known – all part of business/growth support
  - Linking in private providers

Table 3

One thing not to happen: Don’t just become a talking shop. No action/follow up

One thing to happen: Central resource of all the initiatives – maybe a meeting every couple of months – website – circulars or such.

Mahle cannot get enough degree and higher qualified staff. They have a national recruitment drive round all the major universities.

ACS They are trying to recruit locally to improve the local area.
PART 1

Reaction to Ecorys presentation – Pretty much spot on

Nital – Their numbers undertaking training have grown year on year since 2008. They try to tailor apprenticeships etc to the employers requirements.

Not enough good careers advice to older students in school so they can be aware of different opportunities and plan for any requirements.

Mahle disagreed that they didn’t know what they wanted.

Nital – Employers may know what they what but needed some guidance in the best ways to achieve it.

Nital – private providers can provide more niche/specialist training as they don’t need the high numbers to fill courses. But he felt they didn’t get the support they needed from agencies eg SFA

Colleges turned out too many graduates without the high end skills required by employers?

PART 2

Poor presentation – not enough basic information to understand the bones of the initiatives.

Nexus sounded much like any college but after more discussion with Peter they felt this might be useful.

There used to be one stop shop type project NDTP but this faded once funding was withdrawn.

Actions

Information meetings – Mahle willing to contribute as long as things are fresh and relevant

Try to establish similar organisation to NDTP

Table 4

Part A:

- There was a general feeling that this represented a familiar picture
- Flybrid Automotive recruited graduates and recognised that they came to them lacking certain key skills, one of which was noted was the ability to work across departments to understand the needs of other disciplines, ie Designers not talking to engineers. They also take the opportunity to move graduates between departments to develop this understanding. So although they know some of the drawbacks with graduates they recognise the ability to mould them into the people they want to be as part of the business.
- The was mention of the issue of STEM graduates being lost to the City for greater salaries offered in the Finance sector of the City of London meaning the skills are not only los to the County but also to the sector.
Part B:

- Flybrid Automotive are involved as part of the UTC at Silverstone
  - Curriculum steering
  - Lecturing
- Mentions of the issues of an ageing workforce and the opportunity of Apprentices to fill that gap.
- Mention of funding driving behaviour so it is more difficult to engage older workers 25+ who have now worked out where their career lies but there is still a need to develop skills without the same funding subsidies.
- Skills for Logistic are working on Management Development Programmes with employers as an alternative to University and to be able to upskill higher levels on the job.
- The Apprenticeship brand is still seen as lower level skills for younger workers so on occasions employers are using Apprenticeship frameworks for training but they are not using the brand so as not to disengage older and higher level employees.  
  (Logistics)
- Yorkshire Water is working with Castleton on a “Water University” to put in place a full set of quals for the industry.

Session 2

Part A:

- It was felt that delivery had always been funding led but there is need for it to be needs led – this will be driven by things such as employer contribution and Employer Ownership of Skills pilots.
- There is a need to create networks of support and advice for business rather than the proliferation of free services that hold little value and is not always understood, such as the Business link products.
- A need to create a real employer voice for Northampton so the business community carries impact and is able to articulate its need and deliver strategic vision rather than just chase one off funding opportunities.  This employer voice could use the EZ as a catalyst and it is more likely to be heard because of the priority of the EZ but that shouldn’t be at the exclusion of the wider town and county needs.
- Skills for Logistics are working with the military as a source for the skills within the sector, some people leaving the military already have a lot of the requisite skills whilst training programmes are being delivered to augment the skills and fill the gaps where they exist.
- The need for an enterprise centre for clustering of likeminded businesses, this could happen for the wider EZ but that would take time to develop and to deliver impact.

Part B:

- The Borough Council are meeting with the Top 10 local employers to listen to their views and see where opportunities exist.
- NBC are holding a Business breakfast for the EZ employers at the end of February.
- Brackmills BID and other such representative business groups exist and there might be an opportunity to develop a wider/Strategic group to represent the wider views of the town or county on the back of this existing engagement.
- There is still a need for real ownership of this agenda and who is going to pull it together and really drive it forward – the enthusiasm and good will for it to happen is all in place what is required now is the drive to make it succeed.
**Notes from February 11 2013 Workshop**

**Table 1**

**Feedback on Questions A and B**

- Employers appear to have identified training needs in leadership and management skills
- New recruits appear not to be ‘job ready’ - they appear to lack employability skills
- Employees/new recruits need to develop their business skills e.g. team working, people management, interpersonal skills, confidence building skills
- Often organisations don’t realise what their training needs are. An analysis of these needs was therefore required.
- In addition to the above, there was a lack of understanding as to where information, advice and training can be readily obtained from i.e. courses/training etc. Employers tend to do their own research to find this information, this is time consuming
- Concerns raised over the reduction in funding streams and the general lack of funding that was available
- The Group believed that a number of skills could be developed via work experience/work trials. It was noted that a number of local schools were now reducing work experience opportunities.
- A suggestion was made that local educational institutions should work together to provide information for employers—a ‘One Stop Shop’ for Information and guidance might be developed
- The Group felt partnership working and collaboration should be encouraged—this would help develop business skills.

**Group Work Feedback on Questions A and B**

- The idea of establishing a Business Growth Hub—a type of ‘One Stop Shop’ for obtaining information and advice appealed to Group members.
- The Business Growth Hub appears to be similar to the ‘Skills Brokerage’ scheme that was in existence in Northampton about 2 years ago.
- The information given by the ‘Hub’ needed to be simple and understandable and there was a need to reduce the amount of bureaucracy.
- A lengthy discussion took place over how such a centre could be promoted/marketed.
- The cost implications of setting up such a centre were discussed.
- There was a lack of understanding of the current support systems that were available to local businesses. Large organisations seemed to know what existed, whereas smaller businesses were unaware of what was available.
- How to raise the awareness for these organisations was discussed.
- The Group felt that a co-ordinated, collaborative approach, building on the existing networks was necessary if the Enterprise Zone was to succeed.
Table 2

Encouraging signs on recruitment.

Graduate attitude rings true.

- High end graduate skills into motorsports
- Different to recruit into manufacturing
- Knock on effect from Jaguar/Land Rover – 200 jobs
- Cosworth apprenticeships (20) – in house recruitment

Centralised offer

Logistics – high end skills and management

Apprenticeships – positive view

Centralised offer

Logistics – high end skills and Management

Apprenticeships – positive view with employees and allow progression to degree level.

- Growing recognition of apprentice route
- Build on experience and knowledge in the workplace

Apprenticeships

Potential for Centre of Excellence – Engineering

- Centrally
- Cost effective
- Promotion of the industry – link to schools
- Re-entry to labour market

Apprenticeships are now an alternative to University

Supply chain training – possible opportunity as some employers were not trainers.

Work Programme: 1800 on books

TNT
Barclaycard

Under employment – part-time who wish to work more

Working tax credits

Specialism – job search, interview and support in work
Skills – re-entry’s to work – BT Open Reach

Employment legislation barrier to work
Education links between Businesses and schools

- Young Chamber
- Challenges for schools to embed in curriculum
Skills Workshops – Summary of Table Notes from Both Workshops

- UTCs (JCB UTC) curriculum is key – industry challenges – buy in
- Some GAPS – filled by RGF funding though NEP – NEP would fill this need

Build on existing practice rather than re-invent the wheel.

University runs Entrepreneurship clubs

Format not important
Does it add value?
How is it targeted?
EZ could be used to ID need
Leading to specialist not generalist

Flybrid – moving to small scale production from prototype

Diversification of traditional motorsport - info
certification

I.T.

Shortage in manufacturing/ machine shop skills etc.

Like to See

- Matching industry and any requirements in Education provision
- Schools – inspiring next generation
- Apprenticeships!
- Uni – matching offer to Industry requirements (ie bridge gap BA to Masters)

Very difficult otherwise would be done before

Sharing best practice from Mercedes who would be keen to share in supply chain

Schools – difficult to engage with

DHL – Kettering (Logistics)

Lift Tower

Table 3

Part A

- General agreement that the description in the presentation reflected the perspective from around the table.
- There appeared to be a lack of business acumen, in terms of being prepared for interviews and what working life actually entails, ie, protocols, etc
- It would be good to see more evidence of work experience either in Saturday jobs or in placements, etc – though it was recognised that casual job opportunities were not as easy to obtain as a few decades ago
- Need to manage expectations, graduates joining organisations often expect to be fast-tracked into management roles and will leave within 18 months if that expectation is not realised.
Skills Workshops – Summary of Table Notes from Both Workshops

- Industry knowledge is important but so are the soft skills – the table felt there was a 50:50 split between the need for relevant technical knowledge and things like enthusiasm, personality, team work, etc.
- Need to recognise the value of transferable skills
- It would be good to see more engagement between training providers/HE and employers to provide work experience opportunities. UoN noted that all students now needed to complete a 20-credit employability module, which previously had been optional
- There was some share surprise around the table that there had been some growth in staff numbers, and expected there to be higher levels of redundancy
- In terms of what they would like to add, the table agreed that it would be useful to increase employer awareness of support available for training and staff development

Part B

- The Employability Programme at UoN (see above)
- UTC at Silverstone (and Daventry)
- A negative development was seen as the changes around work experience in schools (and also the changes to IAG provision)
- Centurion mentioned that they use simulated work experience to support learners on their programmes (with real work experience too)
- It would be good to see funding in schools ring-fenced to ensure liaison with employers and relevant IAG around careers in the area
- Apprenticeship frameworks can be restricting from an employer perspective and it would be good to see more creativity and flexibility
- Need to start early – liaison with primary schools too – it is essential for young people to understand the purpose behind the learning, ie, to get job

Second Session

Part A

- North West business model is a good idea, but partnership working in Northamptonshire does not have a strong track record to date
- To a great extent the North West case study is already happening in Northamptonshire – although perhaps not so well packaged or promoted and maybe not with the same level of resource behind it.
- More collaborative working between training providers would be valuable

Part B

- Improved employer-schools liaison co-ordination – increase the pool of employers willing to get involved so it’s not the “usual suspects” always giving up their time
- Create a network of learning and training providers to improve co-ordination
- Central hub for advice, with marketing to promote its existence – this could be a source of direct advice or simply signposting to other sources

Table 4

- Highly skilled recruitment improving
- Heavy industry struggling. Manufacturing
Skills Workshops – Summary of Table Notes from Both Workshops

- Mercedes 20 apprentices, Carlsberg 6
- Vast majority of above picked straight from uni- not JCP customers
- Primarily focussed on high tec industries and their processes and trends
- No real overview for general needs ie without specific skills sets
- Who are atking on apps?
- Engineering/high tec apps are quite prescriptive/diverse in their needs
- Much talk about graduates – what is in place beyonf the normal pracrice for the unemployed in the town (WP etc)
- Northampton UTCs – how do we get onto one of these?

We need to deliver a presentation at one of these to get our message across to as large an audience as possible

Chamber of Commerce etc

Use the above to sow seeds and then go out to individual businesses and deliver employer specific presentations highlightng routeways. JSM to support. Talk to Sally.

Table 5

**Ecorys Presentation**

- General recognition of the picture painted.
- Jobcentreplus (JC+) focusing on the younger unemployed which can leave older people less well supported.
- FESTO have adopted apprenticeships as a good way of recruiting. They have two apprentices at present. Competition for the places was strong and they had a good field to choose from.
- JC+ find that they still have people drop out of apprenticeships.
- Knights of Old have an HGV apprenticeship scheme which seems to work well.
- Tresham felt that UTC’s could be in danger of attracting some people who like the glamorous image but are not that willing to put in the work.

**Part B**

- Silverstone & Daventry UTCs – links with employers, longer term - starts in Sept
- From Nov FE colleges will be able to accept 14 year olds as full time students. Could this be used as an opportunity to roll out the UTC model in other sectors/areas?
- JC+ - Engaged with schools to show what is available mainly 14 – 24 year olds eg road show this week at Rushden. They offer business mentoring through contracted agencies.

**NEEDED**

- Need to develop work values in younger people
- Need better facilities/opportunities for older people to retrain.
- Because of increased competition we need to provide better support – CV skills, interview skills, work values etc
Skills Workshops – Summary of Table Notes from Both Workshops

- Central recruitment service to avoid the need to log on to hundreds of company websites.
- Transport issues can be a barrier for rural areas. Old “Wheels” scheme has closed – some companies run mini buses eg Silverstone hotel had a bus for their apprentices
- There is a lack of schools putting apprenticeships forward as an option. This could because of the funding regime – schools need to keep students to get funding but after age 19 available funding is reduced.

ICF GHK
- Need to establish the real/actual local skills gaps and then put in place mechanisms to meet them. Must be job orientated – no use in training people with no real chance of a job at the end eg JC+ trained security people but only 3 of 12 have gone into jobs.
- Need an end employer
- Use planned developments such as he rail station to insist on new apprenticeships being created. UTC did this?
- The uni innovation centre has a support package for occupants.
- The Growth Hub model could be used in a public/private basis so the public sector does the admin/bureaucracy etc which private sector is not really interested in.

Part B
- Use current developments to create local opportunities/apprenticeships etc
- Need a mechanism to bring employers providers and stakeholders together
- UK Skills competition could be used in marketing etc to attract entrants
- Need better involvement with schools – providing unbiased generic advice not from those with a vested interest

Table 6

Education, learning, training, jobs ........ collaboration v competition ........ jobs, careers, business support and economic growth... jobs, careers

Bringing it all together, making the most of any investment, information services/use

Central info/support service; co-ordination of provision/signposting/capacity = one stop shop?

Support to find resources

Simple language

Employment legislation?

Education and Industry match; employers and co-ordination/increase amount, number

Good Manufacturing Advisory Service practice

Generic advice for learners