

HyNet - 'NW is leading the skills agenda' - 'Decarbonising the North West'

"HyNet is a ground-breaking clean energy project that will unlock a low carbon future for the North West and North Wales" - *Rachel Perry, HyNet Project Manager.*

The recent insightful and well-attended **CNW 'Decarbonising the NW' webinar held on January 27th**, showed the diversity of interested cross-parties in the HyNet agenda, project leaders, consortia companies, suppliers, skills providers and rightly so, with the exciting challenge and opportunity it offers both the North West and wider UK.

Most importantly, the need for local 'skills' and having 'the right people' (and suppliers) in place was emphasised by all the speakers, a point which I fully support.

'HyNet needs companies and people' – Richard Stevenson, INOVYN

The comments about 'needing everyone on board' by **Joe Howe, of the NW Hydrogen Alliance and University of Chester**, ring true, and the awareness that the 'world is watching', with the future longer-term export opportunity of our North West front-running skills too.

The potential of HyNet delivering nearly 6000 jobs in this region is certainly game-changing.

But from my perspective, working in the world of specialist headhunting, I think we need to step up a gear really quickly. There is already a shortage of Engineering, Technical, Scientific, Regulatory and Procurement candidates, these are all specialist 'skills in demand'.

The market is highly competitive, and the full extent of the skills shortage is not appreciated by many. More needs to be done to secure a supply chain of relevant skills for the future and finding more creative ways of acquiring 'the right' experienced people now. Many companies are looking to acquire the same style of skills (and calibre of person), which cross a multitude of functions and levels of seniority.

Besides all the work which is underway to ensure a future 'next generation' pipeline of relevant trained skills being developed for HyNet and our sector in general, it is clear that essential professional management expertise, and specific skills are needed now. To succeed every company needs the ability to be able to find, attract and retain these exceptional people, or otherwise their competitors will secure them. I am increasingly finding that exceptional people in the Chemical and Process Manufacturing sectors are very interested to have potential conversations about opportunities in the Hydrogen and Carbon-Capture arena, and in other 'clean' developments that are contributing to improving our environment for our future.

To echo what **Rachel Perry, HyNet Project Manager said at the event**, "Skills are needed to drive the **'Momentum and Delivery'**"

Companies need to value their internal talent and improve their retention of good people, challenging and investing in their people with the right attitudes, potential, loyalty and practical,

functional experience to adapt their skills into different arenas.

Businesses also need to keep reinvesting in apprenticeship and graduate schemes, tactically and strategically upskilling all levels of staff and considering their best internally 'mobile' talent. Besides actioning external recruitment well in advance to secure growth, timely succession-planning and fill those ever-increasing expertise 'gaps'. Know when external recruitment will realistically be needed, at all levels of your business, to inject 'drive', experience, zest or creativity into your team and act early.

My tips to companies, are consider:

- Experienced, retained, specialist search experts (headhunters) who can offer you the 'knowledge' to secure **'in-demand' skills in this highly competitive market. By championing your company only** to search for these skills on a dedicated basis for you (rather than take an approach where 'everyone is fishing in the same pond'). You will then be able to access candidates in relevant arenas, or in an associated arena to find potentially transferable skills for you (where you may not have thought of considering). By retaining a recruitment partner, it allows them to give the appropriate time and necessary focus and attention to deliver your project.
- Work with a specialist recruiter who warrants being your advocate in this busy market, to sell the advantage of your individual opportunity, company and culture, and give you market feedback.
- Do compete to retain your people, before a 'counter-offer' is the only resort left to you, or when attracting new talent. Candidates want to be valued by their old or new employers, obviously by paying them an attractive salary and benefits package, relevant to the role and market (but without contributing to this skyrocketing in the NW!) But also, by communication, knowing their motivations, by challenging them, giving them scope, valuing their skills and potential, discussing their involvement in future plans. People like open communication and working hard in a happy and progressive environment, one they can see is of benefit to the wider world.
- A tailored search often leads to a referral to a 'perfect' person, and these are often not 'active' in the market and sector specialist recruiters, such as RMG, do become aware of unique, exceptional candidates, who seek confidential help to approach companies in this way. Allow your search supplier to know your 'watching brief', whether you are always interested in seeing a certain style of individual with specific functional expertise, for a 'first heads-up' in the market.
- Attracting talent. RMG is keenly on board at this early HyNet development stage and offer relevant search expertise to recruit key people. We're a proven Search (Headhunting) Consultancy, sector-specialist in the Chemicals & Process Manufacturing sector with more than 30 years' experience based in Preston Brook, Cheshire.

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