

THE LAST WORD:

Skills are an East of England asset

Steve Beel, CEO of Freeport East, says skills are the key to unlocking economic growth in the region.

For Freeport East, now one of the government's priority Industrial Strategy Zones, skills are critical to enabling sustainable growth of the clean energy sector in the East of England.

The region is blessed with a hugely valuable and highly skilled workforce. Businesses and investors see unique value in our workforce, which is critical to delivering the complex energy projects and innovations that the East of England has in abundance.

Meanwhile, our world-class universities continue to produce cutting edge knowledge in areas as diverse as artificial intelligence, robotics, insurance, materials engineering and environmental science.

Fundamentally, skills are an East of England asset and one that needs to be put at the heart of how we deliver economic growth in the region.

At the same time, we recognise there are current and future demands for which businesses struggle to find the right skills locally, and a proportion of our local workforce struggle to participate in the employment opportunities available in the energy sector.

In seeking to address this, Freeport East places emphasis on working through existing organisations that have the reach and experience to help us deliver on our objectives.

Our brand-new programme, The Freeport East Clean Growth Pre-Accelerator, is designed to fast-track bold ideas into scalable, investable businesses, delivered by the University of Suffolk and backed by the Freeport East Clean Growth Fund.

Through our Skills & Innovation Fund we have been working with a range of colleges, universities and other partners to support skills developments in the region.

The Freeport East Skills Escalator programme, led by Suffolk New College and involving others such as Colchester Institute, is supporting a range of learners to access new employment opportunities and develop the skills to match.

A workshop hosted by
STEMPOINT at the
University of Essex
introduced clean energy
concepts and careers to
more than 600 children.
IMAGE: STEMPOINT



LEFT: Steve Beel, CEO of Freeport East. IMAGE: STEVE BRADING

In Tendring, Aspire Educational Mentoring is helping disadvantaged students access professional careers. More than 40 Year 13 students are receiving one-to-one and small group mentoring to identify career goals and build confidence that better prepare them for the world of work.

Meanwhile, STEMPOINT hosted a renewable energy workshop at the University of Essex, which introduced clean energy concepts and careers to more than 600 children from 12 primary schools.

And in Felixstowe, we support Road to Logistics to tackle critical skills shortages in the transport sector. Its

programme supports individuals who face barriers to employment, helping rebuild confidence and independence – successful candidates have gone on to work with leading local businesses such as Maritime Transport and the Port of Felixstowe.

Skills are key to supporting our region to grow and attract investment from domestic and international sources. It is also the route through which we broaden the benefits of the energy sector. We will continue to actively work with all partners to address the opportunities these present for our regional energy sector. ●

For information, visit freeporteast.com