About EDF Energy

1. EDF Energy is one of the UK’s largest energy companies with activities throughout the energy chain. Our interests include nuclear, coal and gas-fired electricity generation, renewables, and energy supply to end users. We have over five million electricity and gas customer accounts in the UK, including residential and business users.

2. We employ some thirteen thousand staff throughout the UK; around half of these are technical and professional engineering staff that support our power station development, construction and operation activities.

3. EDF Energy requires STEM skills in its workforce at all levels to run our existing business. We are also embarking on the construction of Hinkley Point C, the first new nuclear power station to be built in the UK for a generation. This £18 billion engineering construction project will create around 25,000 job opportunities at the site as well as further design and manufacturing jobs in the supply chain.

Developing STEM Skills in Schools

4. As a large company investing in UK infrastructure to generate affordable, reliable and low carbon energy, we recognise our responsibility to inspire and develop the next generation of engineers and scientists. As we rely on a variety of STEM skills this is also a pressing business need for us, and we are redoubling our efforts to address it.

5. EDF Energy has long recognised the importance of engaging with schools to foster interest in STEM subjects. Over 21,800 schools and community groups and more than 37,000 teachers are now registered to EDF Energy’s ‘The Pod’. This is a web-based resource on science, sustainability and the environment for pupils aged 4 to 14. Latest campaigns include Switch Off Fortnight (our national energy saving campaign) with around 2,000 schools signed up to take part.

6. EDF Energy is sponsoring the Maths Teacher/ Team of the Year Award in the Times Educational Supplement (TES) 2017 and 2018 Awards. This will recognise excellence in maths teaching with a view to encouraging and inspiring great teachers and highlighting the importance of numerical and analytical skills to our business. The awards will be promoted nationally by TES and through our Visitor Centres and wider education programmes.

7. EDF Energy’s Campus\(^1\) has launched the 2016/17 academic year ‘Inspire’ programme. This supports our new build business by engaging young people to help build the project workforce for Hinkley Point C across the South West. The programme will implement a series of assemblies, career fairs and STEM events to engage young people in STEM, raise aspiration and broker relationships that lead to eventual employment. EDF Energy is currently looking at how we can involve our supply chain partners in the construction of Hinkley Point C in this initiative.

8. Work has also been undertaken to strengthen existing education engagement and working with local authorities in Suffolk to scope an education and skills programme and related skills narrative for a potential follow-on new nuclear build project, Sizewell C, in Suffolk.

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\(^1\) EDF Energy’s ‘Campus’ is an integrated network of learning, development and knowledge sharing across the company.
Apprenticeship Programmes

9. EDF Energy runs a highly successful four-year engineering apprenticeship programme for maintenance technicians, with an annual intake of up to 50. Places on this programme are highly sought after. EDF Energy funds the programme, although some costs are currently offset by support from the Skills Funding Agency. We are concerned that the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy will increase the burden on employers that offer more expensive, high quality apprenticeship programmes.

10. We have also recently launched a commercial apprenticeship programme which includes a Construction and Quantity Surveying degree. This programme recognises the need to address a gap in commercial skills in the local area to support the Hinkley Point C construction activities. The first cohort of 15 apprentices started their training in September 2016.

Diversity

11. EDF Energy is committed to increasing diversity and inclusion in the workplace and encourages supporter networks for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) staff, as well as our Women’s Network. These networks are actively involved in workplace initiatives and support recruitment and outreach activities, including a focus on increasing awareness of STEM opportunities.

12. Only one in five people working in core science, technology, engineering and maths occupations is female. We hope to increase our intake of female STEM graduates and apprentices to 30% by 2018. This is an ambitious target that EDF Energy is determined to meet.

13. EDF Energy launched the Pretty Curious programme in 2015 to address the critical under-representation of women in STEM related careers, both now and in the future. The programme aims to inspire girls (primarily 12 and 13 year olds) to take up STEM subjects at school, and ultimately pursue STEM careers. Pretty Curious utilises a number of different channels to reach this audience including cinema advertising, hands-on STEM events for schools and digital activity. So far this year our events have reached over 1,000 girls. Alongside this, we have commissioned new research into ‘Jobs of the Future’ which further highlights the range of STEM opportunities on offer.

Potential Future STEM Skills Gap

14. Looking forward, it is unclear what the impact of exit from the European Union will be on the supply of STEM skills in the UK. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that if there are restrictions on movement of workers from the European Union, this has the potential to exacerbate any shortfalls in the UK. Continuing to be able to access these skills is important not just for EDF Energy, but for the economy as a whole. We would urge Government to take this issue seriously and do more to encourage STEM skills take up in UK schools.

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Core STEM occupations defined as those comprised of “science, engineering, and ICT professionals; science, engineering and ICT technicians and related occupations” (WISE, 2016; UKCES, 2015).
Inquiry Terms of reference:

The Committee therefore invites written evidence on measures that organisations, businesses, schools, colleges and individuals have taken to close the STEM skills gap. These could include, but are not limited to, apprenticeships, vocational courses, mentoring, teacher placements in industry and establishing links between business and schools/colleges.

Submissions should outline:

- The STEM skills that were needed but were found to be in short supply or missing;
- How this particular skills need has been addressed, including specific details of the measures introduced (eg whether the measures are focused on developing generic skills (such as management), sector-specific skills or raising awareness, how they have been implemented and delivered, and how many people have taken/are currently taking part).
- The cost of the measures and how they have been funded.
- The results of any evaluation of the measures / schemes introduced.

We would also like to hear from people who have participated in skills programmes and learn more about their experiences, both positive and negative.

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