

## **APPRENTICES HOLD KEY TO FUTURE FOR MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY IN TEES VALLEY.**

A group of apprentices taken on by some of Teesside's biggest chemical, oil and power companies is starting training this week.

30 youngsters, aged between 16 and 20, have been attracted to the four-year Tees Valley Production Technician studentship course - run by TTE on behalf of 10 major companies in the area.

The apprenticeship - which has now in its third year of operation - is aimed at equipping talented young people to be able to run Teesside plants in the future.

It provides youngsters with flexible and transferrable skills - combining practical and technical training in process technology with a range of engineering and process skills including mechanical, electrical, and instrumentation.

"It is gaining a big reputation as a practical route into industry," said George Ritchie, representing the sponsoring companies and the North East Process Industries Cluster (NEPIC) which supports the programme..

He added: "It is ideal for those young people who perhaps don't want to go the traditional A-level and university route, but want to continue their learning, gain real practical qualifications and earn at the same time."

John Billington, of NEPIC, said: "This is a pioneering programme which sets the standards for industrial apprentice training throughout the country. It is also a wonderful example of collaboration between major companies in the region and is spawning similar programmes elsewhere."

Companies sponsoring the programme include chemical companies Huntsman, Dow, BASF, Lucite International, ADVANSA, INVISTA, and Uniqema, plus power companies SembCorp Utilities UK and plimited and the oil company Petroplus.

It is anticipated that between them the ten will take on around 300 trained apprentices as full time employees to meet their needs over the next ten years.

The first two years of the course are delivered at TTE South Bank as part of a collaborative Centre of Vocational Excellence (COVE) with Redcar & Cleveland College, with the third and fourth years being spent on site with sponsoring companies.

Students also have the chance to begin studying for an honours degree or chartered engineer status at the University of Teesside in their fourth year.

The first two years that the course was run attracted 14 and 17 students respectively.

A special presentation ceremony for the class of 2004 who have completed the classroom based stage of their training takes place at the Middlesbrough Teaching and Learning Centre at Tranmere Avenue, Cargo Fleet on Friday 8th September at 11am. Stockton South MP Dari Taylor will present the prizes to the student of the year and runner up students of the year.

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