

Plans to develop a new Institute of Productivity and an engineering centre at the University of East Anglia to help tackle skills shortages are to be outlined at an energy conference in Norwich later this month. The new engineering centre would be developed with pump prime funding, and would train engineers and provide high-end equipment and technology to be shared with FE colleges and employers to train apprentices and raise the profile of the sector in the region. Andy Whilding, UEA business relationship manager for engineering, said: “There is a big problem in the UK with productivity.

When we had an event to discuss this issue, more than 60 employers came. This is the first time the LEP, UEA, further education colleges and civic organisations have all come together to look at how to address it.” The two-day East of England Energy Group (EEEGR) SNS2018 conference and exhibition will be in Norwich on February 28 and March 1, on the theme *Collaboration, Innovation and Rejuvenation* and will focus on the energy industry in the southern North Sea and the growing oil & gas, renewables and nuclear industries on the east coast.

In a special skills-focused session, a plan to set up an Institute of Productivity at the UEA in partnership with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) working with employers across the region will be outlined.

Andy Whilding added: “There are issues like accidental managers - those people made managers with no training or preparation - health and wellbeing and worries about employment, especially with the rise of automation. We are getting lots of expressions of interest and support but there is a lot of work to do and for employers and the industry to get involved in.”.

The UEA has been working with New Anglia LEP Advanced Manufacturing sector group to look at multiple streams to help address the skills gap in the engineering sector, he said. “UEA is already in a position to meet some of industry’s needs through CPD and Degree Apprenticeships, but we need to ensure our offer is both accessible and relevant to industry. A new engineering centre was needed at the UEA to create a leading engineering hub for a region with a growing energy sector that needed the latest skills and innovation to develop.

“Apart from Cambridge University, the nearest engineering centre covering all disciplines is Loughborough. Essex does electronics and Chelmsford does civil engineering but there is

New institute at UEA planned to boost productivity

Written by editor

Thursday, 08 February 2018 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 08 February 2018 09:57

nothing until Loughborough. We need a centre here for the New Anglia region.” The drive to create a regional engineering centre of excellence fits with the Government making 2018 the Year of Engineering.

At the session, two UEA energy engineering undergraduates, Nick Proctor and Jasmine Habacon, will launch a Young Professionals Network.

“It is aimed at anyone under 35, undergraduates, graduates, trainees and apprentices. They are looking to build a network to try to share ideas, have guest lecturers and try to build an opportunity for CPD,” Mr Whilding said. ENDSDelegates will be able to send their questions for an on-stage panel discussion via their smartphones and SLIDO.