

Don't sit on the fence ... it's time to train

More than a third of Northern Ireland's fencing businesses report that employees don't have the appropriate technical skills needed to do their job, according to new research, published today (30 April) by Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries. One fifth of the businesses surveyed reported that not all their staff are fully proficient in their current job roles, with 35% of businesses reporting staff to lack technical/job specific proficiency.

David Seffen, Lantra's Partnership Manager said: Whilst there is a willingness to train staff, this is often tempered by a lack of funding and a lack of provision. In addition, staff time is a precious commodity that businesses cannot afford to give up lightly.

With the support of the Department for Employment and Learning, and in conjunction with the Fencing Contractors Association, Lantra undertook comprehensive research with the fencing industry to ascertain its size and structure, gain an understanding of the current skills levels in the industry, and identify the development and training requirements of the workforce.

Additional points in the research show that there are around 50 businesses* in the fencing industry (the majority of which are micro-businesses) and 300 employees across three key job roles: managers/supervisors, fence installers and general labourers. Employment vacancies in this industry are low; however half of those identified vacancies were deemed hard-to-fill due to a lack of interest from prospective applicants.

David Seffen said: Fencing businesses need training provision which responds to their practical and work-based skills; by engaging with a number of fencing businesses across Northern Ireland Lantra was able to gather a full picture of the fencing industry with regards to skills and training.

Tim Drew, National Training Manager for the Fencing Contractors Association said: Interviews carried out with members of the fencing industry showed that businesses were prepared to undertake training to improve the current skills levels in order to sustain and build on their current market position. Subsequent to this, a number of short training courses were organised which correlated with the demands identified in the research in order to meet the immediate training needs of the businesses engaged.

For further information, or to obtain a copy of the DEL Northern Ireland Fencing Analysis report contact the office on 028 7963 1304 or email ni@lantra.co.uk. Information on additional research being carried out by Lantra can be viewed at www.lantra.co.uk.

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ISSUED BY:

Lantra Press Office – Paula Smyth, Marketing, Communications and Project Co-ordinator – tel: 028 7963 1304 or e-mail ni.media@lantra.co.uk

CREDIT FOR PHOTO:

Fencers at work

EDITORS NOTES:

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries represents the interests of approximately 19,000 businesses which employ around 63,000 employees (approximately 9% of the workforce) in Northern Ireland.

" Lantra is an employer-led organisation, which is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the skills, training and business development agenda for the 17 industries in the sector. The industries represented are: agricultural crops; agricultural livestock; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; horticulture, landscape and sports turf; land-based engineering; production horticulture; trees and timber; and veterinary nursing.

" *DEL Northern Ireland Fencing Analysis Final Report March 2010

Paula Smyth, Marketing, Communications and Project Co-ordinator – Tel: 028 79631304 or email: ni@lantra.co.uk