

“Skills Councils are Failing the Nation” declares Lord Jenkin at Environmental Industry Conference

“Many sector skills councils are failing, to the point where industry says that if they were abolished they would not be missed.”

This was said by Tory back-bench Peer, Lord Jenkin of Roding, a former Secretary of State for Industry. He was speaking during his keynote address at the IEMA Lean and Green Conference in London on Tuesday 22nd September. Lean and Green was held to establish how environmental practitioners can help business survive and thrive throughout the recession and in the future. Over 300 environmental professionals and business leaders were present to hear Lord Jenkin's damning appraisal of the various industry skills councils, responsible for the development of skills relevant to business and policy demand.

“The real problem facing the skills agenda is the failure of the Authorities to distinguish between the proper role for the Government and the proper role of the industry. The SSCs are supposed to be employer-led and most of them claim to be just that.

“But if you speak to the better ones in private, and off the record, they say something very different. They say that their biggest problem is that, along with the substantial public funding they receive, come an agenda that is very much Government driven, an agenda moreover that in many cases bears little or no correlation with what employers say they actually need.

“This hugely important factor lies at the heart of what are seen by many as the failures of the SSCs – and it is surprising that none of the Reviews commissioned by Government has picked up this very serious but very obvious point.”

Lord Jenkin went on *“Let me give you just one current example very relevant to IEMA – the need to train thousands of technicians to install the 26 million smart meters needed to achieve Government's 10 year target.*

“Sadly, it seems that this does not fit neatly into the current system of funding for skills training. Because the training modules do not lead either to a full NVQ or to a component part of an NVQ, the relevant Skills Council has been told that the funding agencies cannot help! God help us! Is this really a joined-up government?”

“What is needed is a system genuinely led by employers, which sets out key priorities. There should then be autonomous organisations to deliver what the employers need, not chase around delivering policy and funding-driven initiatives from various agencies such as Learning and Skills Councils, Regional Development Agencies and Government Departments.”

IEMA (Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment) is the premier body for environmental professionals worldwide. For more information on IEMA and Lean and Green, including the theme, speakers and for comment on environmental skills in the low carbon and resource efficient economy, simply contact Katrina Pierce at k.pierce@iema.net or visit www.iema.net.

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1. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) is a leading not-for-profit membership organisation established to promote best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment.
2. The Institute offers support to environmental professionals and aims to promote sustainability through improved environmental practice and performance.
3. With over 14,500 individual and corporate members, the IEMA is now a leading international membership-based organisation, dedicated to the promotion of sustainable development and to the professional development of individuals involved in the environmental sectors across many industrial sectors.
4. For more information on the IEMA, its events, services, membership, training and publications, please visit www.iema.net.

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