

## Innovative Training Programme To Support Utilities Sector

THE Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland (CITB NI), in partnership with Department for the Economy (DfE), NIE Networks and Kier, has announced the Joint Utilities Entry Level Programme.

This innovative training programme, aimed at providing entry level training to the utilities sector, will support the industry to develop the workforce required to deliver the infrastructure to drive a net zero economy.

The Joint Utilities Entry Level Programme will ensure Northern Ireland has a sufficient pool of trained and competent asset installation operatives for those subcontractors who provide asset installation services to Electricity, Gas, Water and Telecoms providers.

The 22-week programme will cover practical and theoretical training recommended by the utility employers with both 'on site' (80 days) and 'off site' (30 days) aspects included. It will also equip programme participants with the skills and knowledge to enable them to work across all four main utility sectors as well as industry recognised certification and registration cards (CSR).

The programme is free to paid employees of relevant businesses and is most suited to either new recruits or existing operatives who do not have formal training and certification.

Barry Neilson OBE, CITB NI Chief Executive said: "The aim of the programme is to develop a

flexible workforce that is competent and confident to deliver asset installation across all utility providers, which will further help the industry build the skills of the workforce necessary to create the infrastructure crucial for advancing a net zero economy."

Gordon Parkes, Executive Director People and Culture NIE Networks, who has been a primary driver of this initiative said: "Achieving Net Zero by 2050 and green energy skills requirements presents both a significant challenge and opportunity that no one employer in the sector can deal with on their own. Labour market demographics for Northern Ireland over the next 10 years highlight a reducing labour pool at the very time when 28,000 new jobs will be created in this important growth sector. We need strong collaboration by all employers in the sector supported by DfE, CITB NI and the Education Sector to develop more exciting programmes like this in addition to a range of apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships which will lead to interesting, secure, well paid and highly skilled jobs."

Cormac O'Donnell, Operations Director for Kier Natural Resources, Nuclear & Networks added: "We are proud to be involved in this innovative approach to deliver practical training and create opportunities for those wanting to work in our sector."