

## Regional Network Development (SOS Project)

### Target Group

During the course of researching the lack of skilled workers and skills gaps in the UK, many regional contacts have been made and fostered. These have been with local Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs), who have participated in the project by providing case study material. By having discussions with the companies directly Coleg Morgannwg has strengthened and fostered a network link with them.

### Aim

An outcome of this would be that the companies have a direct route into Coleg Morgannwg if they need advice on education and training issues. Companies like Cottam and Brooks regularly contact staff within the Curriculum Area of Technology to discuss training issues and staffs also visit the company in question to verify and advice on training activities.

During the course of the project Coleg Morgannwg has also worked closely with the UKs leading training network the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (Semta).

Advisors from the network have worked closely on project activities and directly contribute in researching information and presenting at SOS project meetings.

What has emerged therefore, is an informal network of companies, training institutions and national and regional government sponsored bodies working together to bridge the formal with the informal network (see Fig 1).

This description as already pointed out aligns well with the definition of what a Network is in general terms.

‘An informal network may be described as a coming together of like minded people to help develop and/or provide solutions to particular problems encountered by a number of different

people or organisations. These networks may become more formal if that is the desire of the people/organisations to derive benefit from working together and sharing best practice.'

To place into context the network which has emerged from the SOS project a brief overview of the regional organisations involved follows:

### **Semta**

Semta is the Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.

It works to raise workforce skills and qualification levels across the eight industry sectors it represents in a bid to boost the productivity and competitiveness of the two million employees and 75,000 businesses within its scope.

They cover every part of the skills agenda including technical skills, process improvement and leadership capability at all levels from operators, craftworkers, technicians and professional employees through to senior managers.

Their remit includes the education and training of young entrants and existing adult employees, whether it relates to part-time or full time learning at college, in a training centre or workplace.

### **Cyrus Engineering**

The company has considerable experience in design and manufacture of a wide range of equipment ranging from complete Turn-Key projects, including process refurbishment and upgrading, mechanically and electrically of existing equipment, to fabrication and matching of such components and batch work. The company has made a substantial investment in modern machine tools including CNC milling and boring machines.

Cyrus currently employs 65 full time personnel, who are valued as a valuable resource. However, many of their skilled workers are approaching retirement age and there will be an acute shortage in the areas of experienced machinists over the next five years.

## **Waldon Ltd Precision**

As the British arm of the Soehner Group, Waldons was established in 1993, and are part of a major organisation with proven history as an automotive supplier to a worldwide customer base. The Company manufacture high precision technical thermoplastic injection mouldings, and in particular, specialising in the manufacture and overmoulding of metal inserts. This technology produces parts of both metal and plastic in which they are able to integrate a variety of electrical, structural and mechanical features.

Applications are typically found in the automotive, electromechanical, electrics and semiconductor markets.

The company directly employs over 450 staff and several hundred sub-contractors in Cardiff.

## **Company x**

The Company uses the most up-to-date steel making and rolling technology for the manufacture of its products. From the scrap steel feedstock to the final product, the company's knowledge of steel processing, combined with state-of-the art control, ensure that they produce products of reliable, consistent quality at all times.

There is a combined workforce of approximately 900 people that includes those directly employed by Company X (+450 employees) and Contractors (400 employees) employed under sub-contracting agreements. Working in areas from Design to Manufacture, the range of employee skills, required by the company, are highly specialised. They range from using the latest technology in steel production with an investment of over £200 million since 2003. £150 million (220 million Euro) has been invested in new equipment and tooling and approximately £50 million (73 million Euro) in training and manpower.

## **South Wales Forgemasters**

They are primarily involved in the production of gears, shafts, rings and hubs for the automotive industry. The company is firmly focused on satisfying the

needs of customers and of the market place through the expertise and commitment of employees.

The adoption of lean methodologies and best practices allows the company to minimise waste, improve efficiencies and to always deliver a quality product at a competitive cost.

## **Cottam and Brooks**

Is an Engineering Company specialising in the manufacture of mould for rubber, plastics, jigs, fixtures, press tools, precision machine components and light fabrication for a variety of industries. The company also specialises in the manufacture of high quality tooling for the aerospace industry.

The company employs approximately 30 people. Working in areas from design to manufacture, the range of employee skills is highly specialised.

The majority of the workforces are skilled machinists covering all aspects of the company's requirements. They range from using the latest technology in Computer Aided Draughting (CAD), Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM), Design, Toolmaking, Assembly and Welding.

## **Networking Activities**

### **Case Study Interviews**

12/09/07 Cottam and Brooks	13/09/07 South Wales Forgemasters
15/09/07 Company X	18/09/07 Waldon Ltd
20/09/07 Cyrus Engineering	

### **17th March 2008 Fforwm Annual Engineering Conference (Wales)**

Networking opportunities to disseminate outcomes from the work of the SOS project

### **26<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008**

The project was also discussed informally at a Semta regional meeting for education and training provider delegates from throughout Wales.

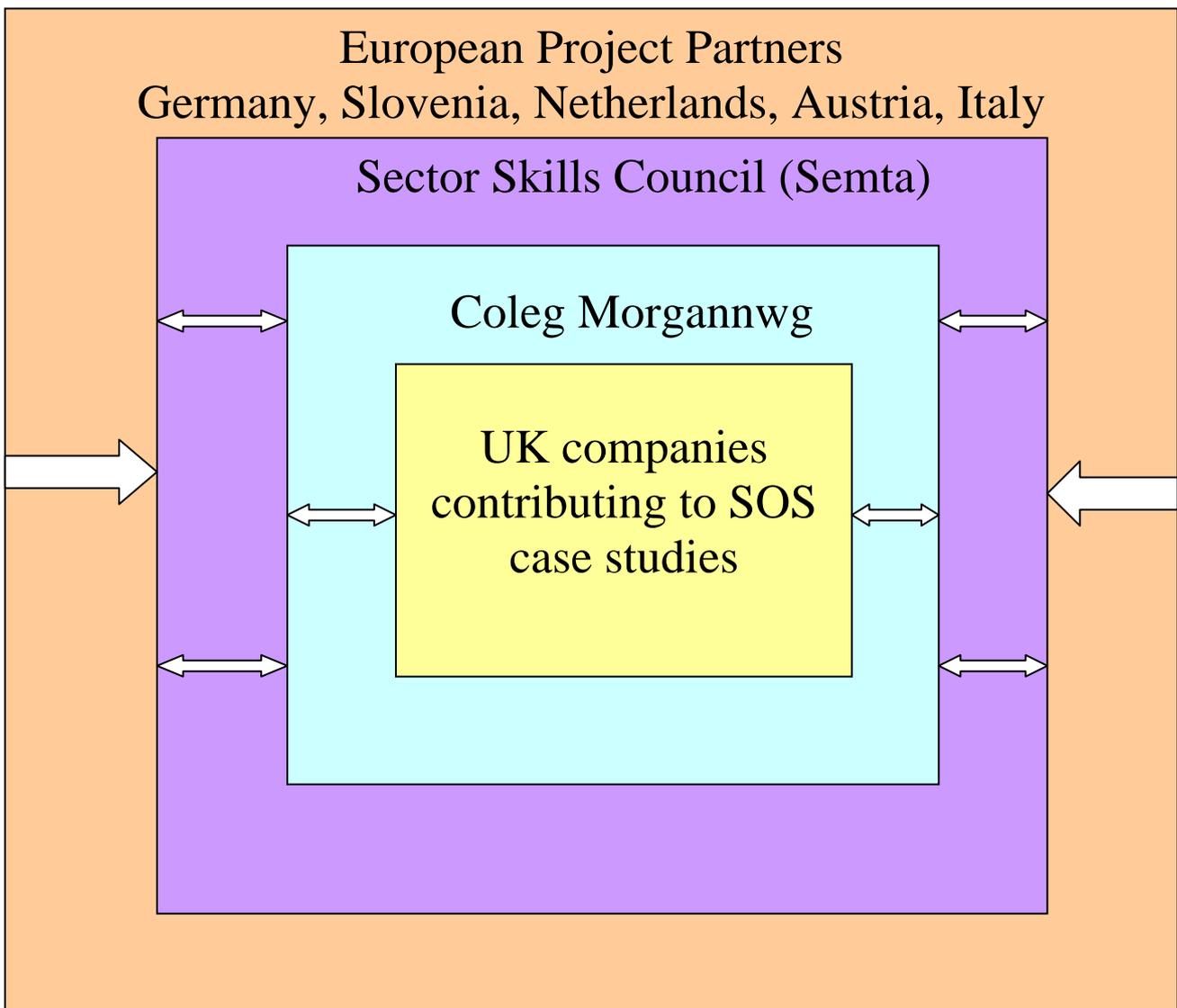
**16<sup>th</sup> December 2008**

Project issues have been discussed at meetings with SEMTA staff on many occasions. On the above date a Semta lead advisor Mr Ken Toop, Mr Dave Flower (Senior Curriculum Leader Technology) and Mr John Phelps (Assistant Principal for Performance and Quality) from Coleg Morgannwg met to discuss issues emerging from the project namely networks and a shared apprenticeship scheme being piloted in Wales. The meeting was to form the contribution/presentation at the Cardiff SOS Project meeting.

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2009 Fforwm Annual Engineering Conference (Wales)**

Networking opportunities to disseminate outcomes from the work of the SOS project

### **SOS Project Network Linking the UK to European Partners (Figure 1)**



## **Result of Networking Activities**

Since Semta are the main training advisory service for the UKs science, engineering and manufacturing sector, their formal and informal work will benefit from the work of the project. It is likely advisors will continue to relate outcomes and experiences from participating in the project, both internally and externally in the future.

Companies also will have benefited from networking activities and links that will allow them to obtain advice on training issues relating to skill shortages and skill gaps on a continuing basis from the training bodies involved in the SOS project activities.

It is envisaged therefore, that the participants who have been brought together by the project activities will continue to work together in the interests of providing guidance and support through the regional network that has emerged from the initiatives emanating from the Leonardo project.