



Media release

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Trailblazing Kent skills partnership ready to deliver on ambitious skills accelerator programme with new courses and learning centres launching in 2023.

Further education providers across Kent will come together early next year for the launch of four exciting and innovative business focused learning centres to support the region's transition to Net Zero.

Buildings that will be home to students studying for new courses focused on 'decarbonisation' will launch in January 2023, the latest part of a government backed Skills Accelerator project launched in October 2021 by EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College, in partnership with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.

New 'decarbonisation' learning zones will ensure businesses and their future employees can call upon the skills and best practice needed to support the transition to Net Zero and make a significant contribution to the UK's reputation as a global hub for the green economy.

Opening in January 2023, these important new centres will help to power the growth of sustainable skills and employment opportunities in Kent and Medway with a focus on three sectors key to the economy of this part of the South East of England: Construction, Manufacturing-Engineering and Horticulture.

They will include the following:

- A Green Engineering and Design centre at EKC Group's Ashford College, and a Green Engineering and Mechatronic lab with Electric and Assisted vehicle centres based at EKC Group's Canterbury College.

- A Green Construction and Design Centre based at MidKent College's Maidstone campus, providing young people and adult with the skills and training they will need to thrive in the modern workplace.
- A Green Horticulture Centre at Hadlow College, part of North Kent College and Kent's only rural, land-based college.

Business incubator spaces for start-up SMEs specialising in products or services related to decarbonisation are also being set up alongside each of the three learning zones.

Graham Razey, OBE, Chief Executive Office of EKC Group, said: "The COP27 Climate Summit highlighted the urgency with which the impact of Climate Change on the planet needs to be addressed. The importance of equipping adults and young people across Kent and Medway with the skills that employers will be looking for in the transition to Net Zero has never been more important.

"We are very excited to be launching our Green Construction and Design Centre in Ashford College, and our Green Engineering and Mechatronic lab at Canterbury College early next year to help businesses flourish and unlock these valuable new skills in the years ahead."

Simon Cook, Principal and Chief Executive, MidKent College and Chair of Kent Further Education (KFE, which champions the FE sector across Kent and Medway, said: "These new learning centres are a key component of our joint response as a FE sector to the transformation in skills demand that Kent is facing, and that our partnership is determined to tackle head on.

"In launching our new Green Construction and Design Centre we have considered key localised evidence of demand from the Local Skills Improvement Plan evidence base, including the roles and expertise employers will need in navigating the transition to a low carbon economy."

David Gleed, Chief Executive and Executive, North Kent College, said: "The £5.6 million secured from the Government's Skills Accelerator programme is not just about securing skills and training opportunities for adults and young people.

"As this project progresses, we will be looking to engage with as many businesses as we can and invite them to join us and our FE sector partners in devising new skills solutions that will support career opportunities now and in the future. The opening of our new Green Agriculture Centre at Hadlow College is just the start."

The innovative Kent-wide skills partnership launched in October 2021 is aimed at developing a world leading curriculum focused on creating jobs, opportunities, and a more sustainable future.

EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College, in partnership with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, secured £5.6m in funding from the Government's Skills Accelerator Programme to help support the region's transition to Net Zero.

The focus on decarbonisation will ensure the colleges drive efforts to equip the workforce with the knowledge, skills and technological innovation to reduce the environmental impact of industry and play a key role in the area's economic development.

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For media enquiries and interview requests, please contact Lee Winter or Emily Marmara at Pillory Barn on 01622 684407 or email: lee@pillorybarn.co.uk or emily@pillorybarn.co.uk

Editor's Notes

About North Kent College

North Kent College consists of four unique campuses at Dartford, Gravesend, Hadlow and Tonbridge, each with their own identity and offering a broad range of programmes, enrichment and progression opportunities. We are committed to providing our students with the best learning experience possible, working closely with employers and the local community, and welcome all students, - whether joining us from school or college or returning from a break in their studies. Hadlow College, is Kent's only rural and land-based college.

Website: www.northkent.ac.uk

About MidKent College

MidKent College is an Ofsted-rated 'Good' FE College serving the communities of Maidstone and Medway, and trains in excess of 6,000 students and 1,000 apprentices each year. The College

aims to equip local people (both young people and adults) with the skills, experience and work ethic that local businesses need to grow and thrive. It works with organisations spanning a vast range of business sectors to ensure that its training programmes remain up-to-date and deliver work ready candidates to make an immediate contribution to local employers.

Website: www.midkent.ac.uk

About EKC Group

EKC Group is the leading provider of technical and vocational education in East Kent, giving opportunities to more than 14,000 students. Building on the success of its six Colleges in Ashford, Broadstairs, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Sheppey, EKC Group offers learning opportunities from nursery age right through to Higher Education. The Group firmly believes in lifelong learning, providing adult education and skills training, as well as continuing professional development for companies. And, with more than 1,500 staff, it is also a key anchor organisation in East Kent, turning over circa £65m per annum.

Website: www.ekcgroup.ac.uk