

Audio transcription

## Apprenticeship Podcast: Episode 1 - Overview

Host

Hi, this is Skills for Life, a podcast series where we hear from current and past apprentices at Scottish Power to find out why an apprenticeship is such a great career choice. In this episode I'm joined by Natalie Murphy, who is Social Projects and Sector Education Consultant at Scottish Power and Michelle Kelly, who's a Year in Industry student at Scottish Power. Hello.

Natalie Murphy and Michelle Kelly

Hi.

Host

I'll start with you, Natalie. Can you just give us an outline of your role?

I've given you a good introduction there, sounds really important and professional. Tell us what it is that you do.

Natalie Murphy

Yeah, the main part of the role that I have within the team is delivering the STEM agenda for the company. So we have a responsibility to try and, you know, increase the number of young people who are taking STEM subjects at school. We also have a vested interest in establishing that into their kind of curriculum at an early age so that they can then go on and choose subjects at school which will help them get a career in STEM.

So we do a lot of work with external partners like Glasgow Science Centre and we also work with a number of schools and other external STEM partners to help us deliver that message. In addition to that, we also do a lot of work with charities. So we do a lot of volunteering within our team.

Michelle Kelly

We do charity projects. So we go out and volunteer ourselves even as well. There's lots involved in our small team. We do lots.

Host

And you're part of Natalie's team as a Year in Industry student and you've been working with Natalie and on your own projects as well. Tell us a wee bit about the work that you've been doing since you started three months ago.

Michelle Kelly



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Yeah, I've been here for so long. Since I started, I've been able to work on so many different projects already, whether that be, you know, going to careers events and helping out, which was something that maybe I was a bit nervous about speaking before. But now, you know, I'm used to that now.

And I've been able to go and help with charities and make donations. It is a really rewarding job. So I'm quite lucky that I'm in this team.

We also look at pre-employment programmes. So that's like what I'm on just now, A Year in Industry. And there's loads of different work involved with that as well.

But I've been able to do so many different things in the space of three months, which is amazing.

#### Host

And Natalie, you and I spoke earlier, and you said that some of your outreach work is with children as young as primary three in age. So tell us about that. I've got a vested interest in this.

My daughter's in primary three and is already talking about STEM, which is science, technology, engineering and maths.

#### Natalie Murphy

And you know what, I have a young son who's actually getting registered for school, which is unbelievable. But he's also really interested in like wind turbines and renewable energy. So there is definitely a shift in schools and colleges and nurseries, you know, even to that younger age, that age group where there's more awareness around renewable energy, around fossil fuels, around climate change.

So we as a company, you know, made a decision a number of years ago that we had to get in there quite early. So what we do is we run workshops through like the Glasgow Science Centre, for instance, just in Glasgow, but we do have others. And they invite schools to come in.

So they partner with young kind of local schools, young people, maybe primary three to primary seven, and they come in and they can learn about science and technology and they can do renewable type workshops and things like that. So we let the experts run those sessions, but we help by financially funding those sorts of programmes. And you're facilitating that whole experience.

And often what we'll do is we'll get employees, you know, maybe senior, you know, engineers or former trainees in many cases to go out and actually deliver maybe talks or lesson plans in school as well. And we've got a really exciting challenge that's coming up this year, actually, where we're going to get our graduates involved in a lot of STEM activity and delivering some of those in local schools. So, so, yeah, we really love getting and the young kids are so like...



Host

So interested, aren't they?

Michelle Kelly

Always asking questions, stuff that even sometimes I'm like, do I even know the answer? They're so, so smart. And it's good to know that they're interested and you find that as the younger ones actually that are coming up to you with all these questions, it's not as if they've pre-prepared, they're genuinely interested, which is, it's really nice to see.

And it's fun for us as well.

Host

And it's getting in there at that early age and stage and planting those seeds of a world of possibility and their career that they might not have even known about these certain roles or, you know, areas of businesses that they could go into. But even for a primary three age person, that's planting that seed, isn't it? And getting them thinking or playing around with some of the, you know, the workshop materials and stuff, it's a really brilliant, it's a brilliant thing to do.

One of the things that struck me was when you were talking about apprenticeships is that, so you're talking about, you know, young people, but you've also mentioned graduate apprenticeships and stuff as well. And I think to my, showing my age here, but when I think of apprenticeships or how they used to be viewed, you would typically think of, well, the first 16 year olds want to go into a trade.

Natalie Murphy

Yeah.

Host

But it's so much more than that now, isn't it? And just looking at the number and the breadth of apprenticeship programmes that Scottish Power run, can you run us through a couple of those and tell us a bit about them?

Natalie Murphy

About the programmes? Yeah, so we've got a number of different apprenticeship programmes that are available for all ages and stages, really. The main or the kind of classic apprenticeship programme that we've ran since 2010, in particular, has been the craft apprenticeship, which is a more technical based apprenticeship, but it's more electrical engineering based.

And that's to aid the SP Energy Network part of our business that keep the lights on, keep the electricity running 24, 7, 365 days a year. So that's a kind of hands on technical apprenticeship. And then you kind of move up into your graduate apprenticeships, your higher skilled apprentices as well.



And they can be in a number of different areas like business or cyber. I'm trying to think of some other ones. There's also the graduate ones.

**Michelle Kelly**

Yeah, because you have quantity surveying as well. There's loads of different ones that you wouldn't even think about that are not technical, that you can maybe go and be a project manager after that.

**Host**

And I think that's a really pertinent point, because I think when people hear Scottish Power Apprenticeships, they do assume that it's going to be something that's hands on, engineering based, possibly predominantly male dominated environment. Whereas there are, like you said, loads of different areas of the business, whether it's in legal or in corporate as well, there's all these different functions and areas. And Michelle, I guess you're best placed to talk about that, because as a year in industry student at Scottish Power, tell us a wee bit more about what you've been involved in.

**Michelle Kelly**

Yeah, so I mean, me personally, I did go to university, but you can come on to the year in industry without having to go to university. But I didn't have any office experience. I had no professional environment experience, really.

**Host**

What did you study at uni?

**Michelle Kelly**

So I actually studied, which everyone's very surprised about, but I did fashion and marketing, which you don't think...

**Host**

I'm not surprised at that at all.

**Michelle Kelly**

Which you don't think is related to a company like Scottish Power, but I did a lot about sustainability and I was really interested in that. So, you know, coming to a big company like Scottish Power, where that is a value, it is related. But yeah, so I just didn't have that experience because of Covid and things like that.

I didn't get to go and do an internship or... So I'm kind of doing it reverse, but being able to do it, I think, after you've gained all those skills is also good as well, because I'm putting them into practise now. Yeah, putting all that theory into practise.

**Host**



So you studied fashion marketing and what has been, do you think, the role that you've been in, what sort of skills are you using from what you've learned at university and putting into practise?

**Michelle Kelly**

Yeah, so I mean, even my team, they're so nice and everybody lets me work on what I've already learned at university. So you can switch about your objectives for this role just depending on your strengths, really. So I do a lot of comms within the team, you know, if we need to communicate something to staff or just they let me do things that, you know, I would be good at a university and things like that as well.

But I'm also doing things that I've never done before, like working with charities, going to schools. And so it's really, really varied what I get to do.

**Host**

And when you go to schools and charities, are you yourselves doing this? I know when you said when they get the schools, you let the experts run those sort of more technical aspects of the workshops. But what kind of things are you doing when you go out to schools or charities?

Do you get the sleeves rolled up?

**Natalie Murphy**

A lot of fun things. Yeah, we do. I mean, Michelle and I basically spent from September to November out at career events, at STEM events.

And we would take kits with us. You know, we've got like a winter, you were speaking earlier about your door building a wind turbine. You know, we have wind turbine kits that we took down to Dumfries House recently, which is another STEM education centre that we support.

And then we got the kids turning blades in different directions to try and get the most optimum winds. It was absolutely amazing. But it was just, we do like getting involved, but we are a small team as well, which is why we often have to, you know, put out a call to employees to help us because we, I mean, Michelle and I, we were just talking about this yesterday, we could be invited to every single school in the whole of Scotland and the whole, you know, in the areas where we operate, we could go to every single school career fair, but we just can't, you know, as a team. So we do often put those opportunities out to employees to say, look, you know, do you know somebody or does your child go to this school?

Would you be interested in going? So we try and get out and go to as much as we possibly can, but it isn't always easy just with us being a relatively small team.

**Host**

And then talking about schools and makes you think about subjects and the best subjects for going into a career in STEM or indeed any world of the world of work, really any workplace.



Are there certain subjects that children or school leavers rather should be looking at to give them a better chance of getting in?

Or is it really just that it's wide open?

**Natalie Murphy**

Well, I guess there's kind of two ways at looking at this. So specifically for Scottish Power, you know, when we're looking at technical apprenticeships, we are looking for young people to be studying maths, you know, and a science or a STEM subject as standard, because as a kind of electrical engineering based type role, they're going to need to understand calculations. They're going to need to understand voltages and things like that.

So maths and science or a STEM based subject is absolutely necessary for that type of apprenticeship. But also English is another subject that we ask for because we are a customer facing business. We do need our employees to speak, to be able to speak to customers, to be able to communicate effectively with each other and their teams, but also to be able to understand and read some of the safety protocols and procedures around because we work with electricity.

It's very dangerous. And luckily, you know, the company, we have had a good track record, you know, in recent years of good health and safety, but we need to maintain that at all times. So but the customers are at the heart of everything that we do.

So we need to make sure that when our young people are out in the field and they're working with their hands and they may be restoring somebody's electricity supply, that they are able to communicate to the customer, OK, this is what we're going to do and this is why we're doing it.

**Host**

And so all that said, Maths, Science, English, Fashion marketing... can still get you out because there are so many different entry points to a career at Scottish Power, isn't there? It's not just that, because thinking back to when I was at school, for example, that was a long time ago now. But you know, there's that sort of, I guess there's the consensus or the thought that if you don't get the grades for your subject, that's it, oh, no future, future's over, whereas now if you don't get the subject grades or rather if you don't get the grades, it's not a case of not being able to get in, is it?

**Natalie Murphy**

Not at all.

**Host**

Can you tell us about some of those other entry or access points?

**Natalie Murphy**



Of course, yeah. So yeah, and like we've just outlined the kind of entry requirements for some of our technical apprenticeships, but there are a number of other employers, you know, in this industry specifically who are more than willing to take on a young person who maybe doesn't have the right grades because they will be able to give them that training and development when they go on their programme. So most apprenticeships are two or three years long.

That's enough time for a young person to go and get your maths or your English up to GCSE or national five level, go and study whatever. I mean, in England and Wales, I think there's now a requirement to study maths and English or they have to have their GCSE by the time they turn 19. So so there is there is that as well.

But in Scottish Power specifically, we did recognise that there was a large group of young people who may not have received, you know, when that dreaded day in August when they were like, well, it's not a brown envelope anymore for the test, it was a brown envelope at school and you were waiting for the postie to come with those exam results and how disappointed you were if you didn't get what you thought you were going to get or what you wanted to get.

So we developed a programme called the pre-apprenticeship programme and that's been running since 2010. And that's an amazing programme that we run in conjunction with three colleges and the areas where we operate our distribution network licence for the electricity business. So that's in Glasgow Clyde College, Cardonald, right, isn't it?

And then we've got one in Edinburgh College that runs out of the Dicleth College and then also Cheshire College that runs in the Chester campus. And the whole point of that programme is to get 14 young people on each of those programmes of 42 overall. They come on, they go to college for an academic year.

They get an engineering degree or sorry, an engineering qualification, and that gives them the step up that they needed to then apply directly for an apprenticeship programme. And in many cases, we have actually just cherry picked the top performing students to become an apprentice straight off the bat, because we're kind of looking at that as a year long interview really. We're getting a year to see this young person develop their skills, get their qualifications up to the level that as a company we ask for.

And by that point, they're ready to go. And they just needed that. They just needed that extra push.

And sometimes the school environment isn't for everybody also. So going into college, it's a bit more, you know, they get treated more like an adult as well. So they tend to flourish and thrive in that type of environment.

Host



I think it's a great confidence booster as well for them, because they're not just coming out of a sort of formal education or school setting and going straight into an unfamiliar environment. Absolutely.

Michelle Kelly

Yeah, because it just shows you that, you know, if you don't have the qualifications, you don't need to just discount yourself, you know, you can do anything because you just work your way up at the end of the day, and in a company as big as Scottish Power, you can keep doing that for however long you want, but being able to go to college and doing an apprenticeship at the same time, I think it's actually quite good, because I had to wait four years before I could apply my skills, whereas you're applying these every day. So I think you're able to learn probably faster, actually, as well.

Host

Yeah, yeah, that's a good point, actually, because you're almost sort of doing it on the job sort of thing, learning those skills, and then putting them into practise right away. What would you say are the benefits of doing, I know we're bouncing a bit here from apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships to, again, year in industry, but since we've got you here, we want to hear about your experience, what are the best parts of it? What do you think are the benefits of doing year in industry placement as opposed to finishing uni and then starting afresh, looking for a job somewhere, anywhere, sort of thing?

Michelle Kelly

I would say the main thing for me is having a support system, because you're coming in, you're not expected to know everything, whereas maybe if you went and got a full-time job after uni, I don't really know because I've not done that yet, but they might expect you to know more than you do, and you're not really supported in that way, but I feel like I've got great support from everybody in Scottish Power, they want to answer questions, they want to help you, so personally for me it's the support system, and also just being able to do so many different things in this role, and also networking as well I find is really good because you've got other year in industry students that are on the same level as you, probably the same as an apprenticeship, everyone's kind of on the same boat, if you need to ask a question you can go to someone else, whereas, you know, if you go to a full-time job everyone's doing their own things and it's different.

Host

Yeah, it sounds like a nice sort of transitional phase of just coming out of uni and having those skills and everything that you've learned, and having a foot in, well more than a foot in the workplace, but you know it's still, like you say, it's not something that you're going to sort of cold, there are other people in the same situation as you that is a ready-made support network, and also the placement itself is understanding of the position that you're in, and you're able to get those skills, get that experience, but also with a mind to like, well I've just finished uni here, and I'm just taking it easy out of the world of work, so it sounds like a really good place to be, it sounds like a good balance.





### Michelle Kelly

Absolutely, I think for, you know, any sort of, not just pre-employment but an apprenticeship of any sort, you need that support when you're coming into the workplace for the first time because going straight from university, college, whatever, to a job, it can be difficult for everyone, and some people might find it harder than others, so yeah definitely for me it helps anyway.

### Natalie Murphy

I think even like from our team's perspective, you know, we tend to have a year in industry student come in every year, and Michelle obviously, like we've joined us this year, but what they bring to the team is just like that fresh pair of eyes, and because we're kind of getting a new year in industry every year, they're bringing new perspective, fresh ideas, looking at things differently, and it's really great for our team as well because we get to, you know, experience people like, oh okay, let's do it differently this year, that sounds great, you know, so it keeps you on your toes, it does, absolutely, it's been great.

### Host

What do you think, Michelle, would be a good piece of advice for somebody who might be at the stage where they're coming to the end of their degree, for example, because you, as we talked about, have been to uni, if they're sort of thinking, right, I'm nearing the end of this course, might not know what they want to do, and like yourself, although we joked about it, you wouldn't assume that fashion marketing was a natural sort of place, and was a natural route into a career at somewhere like Scottish Power, so what kind of things would you say are the benefits of what you're doing, and what advice would you give to people who are maybe nearing the end of their degree without a solid career plan?

### Michelle Kelly

For me personally, I would just say don't worry too much about it, because I wish I would have listened to my advice I'm giving now, because you don't need to have a plan in place, there's always going to be another option, and do your research, because I didn't even know the kinds of things that Scottish Power offered, to be honest. I would think, even if I looked at the apprenticeship offerings that we've got just now, or pre-employment programmes, whatever that may be, I might have not even went to university, I didn't even know that these things existed, and being able to come in, there are apprenticeships called graduate apprenticeships, you can actually do a degree and work at the same time, so I might have done something like that, I might have done it differently, but I'm glad that I did what I did, because now I'm here, so again it just works out the way it's supposed to, I think, and not to worry too much about that, but I would say the main advice is to do your research, and to also have yourself a professional profile, if you will, but on LinkedIn, I would say is a huge big thing, because I went on there, I asked loads of questions to people in the different areas that I wanted to apply for, and even getting knowledge and what other people do in a day-to-day is useful, when you want to decide what you want to do.

### Host



Yeah, I think it's a great balance, like we said before, and it kind of struck me when you were saying that about how it's working for you, when you think about you've done four years, or three or four years at uni, and then you go into this unfamiliar environment, if you're just going, you know, applying for a job out of uni, it's a nice sort of introduction to it, and it's a bit of like, sort of exposure to a corporate environment, but almost in a sort of shielded way, in that it's a bit sort of protected and supported, but exposed to a multinational global operation, but without the scary bits.

### Natalie Murphy

Well, if you think about like, the graduate programme that we've got is fantastic as well, you know, it's an absolutely brilliant programme. The graduates, though, in their first year, they rotate every maybe six to twelve weeks, so actually they're not getting the same depth into a role as maybe a year in industry student does in that first year, so by the time Michelle completes her year in industry, she'll have experienced probably a lot of things that maybe a graduate at that moment wouldn't have been able to, because they're, okay, three months they and then they go somewhere else, so they're getting like snippets, little snippets here, there and everywhere, whereas the year in industry is great, because you get to really dive into a particular role.

### Michelle Kelly

Yeah, and projects as well, you get to fully immerse yourself. Yeah, exactly, but even for maybe people who are on the graduate programme, they've maybe already done this through uni, whereas I didn't get the chance to, so now I'm kind of just putting that into practise now, but yeah, because I mean, I've worked on projects now that were a couple of months long, and then you really see it pay off, and you get recognition as well for what you've done. What I think is really nice, it's not just, oh, here's some admin tasks that you can get on with, it's not, here's an actual project that you're going to be working on, and this is how you've helped the team, which is really nice to know.

### Host

Great, and all that, it's really great sort of building that skill set for the wider working world as well, and I mean, I'm not putting anybody in the spot here, but just an observation that a lot of year in industry students tend to, what, from what I've seen, go on to have roles, you know, permanent roles, day and after, and is that something that you think you would like to do?

### Michelle Kelly

Absolutely, yep, yes. No, no, I mean, even speaking to previous year in industry students, they've went on to do, you know, if you don't have a degree, you can go and do an apprenticeship, if you do have a degree, you can progress the graduate programme or a full-time job, so I mean, I've loved every minute since I've been here, so I'm hoping that I'm able to stay on if possible.

### Host



Yeah, and so would that be the plan then? You do it for a year, you started in September, so you finish in September, and then what's the plan?

### Michelle Kelly

Whatever, I mean, I have applied for the graduate programme, so we will see what happens with that, if not, even just getting a full-time role would be really suited to me, because I feel like I've done that for this year, so I'm kind of used to working now, and so maybe just going into a full-time role would suit me better, but we'll see when the time comes, I think, I don't know yet.

### Host

And just to recap on the options then, because it feels like there are so many ways in, you know, whether depending on your age, depending on your skills, depending on your experience, depending on your qualifications, so if we take it from, I guess, maybe the youngest age group, can you talk us just through or just recap on the specific programmes and routes of entry?

### Natalie Murphy

So all of our programmes start from 16, so you can apply for any of our programmes if you're 16 or above. Now, we do have a number of programmes that are specifically for adults, which we have two main ones, one is the returners programme, which is an absolutely fantastic scheme, which allows people that have taken a break in their career, maybe for personal reasons, to have children, or what have you, care for somebody, that they can come back into a career and use the expertise and the knowledge that they have, and then progress in the company. So we've got some really fantastic examples of people that have been through that programme. And in addition, we've got an adult craft trainee programme, which is, it's a similar programme to the craft apprenticeship, it's hands-based, sorry, hands-on skills, kind of technical-based role, they're going to be working out in the field, maintaining the electricity network, but it's for people who may have had a similar type career, maybe they've, you know, worked in a similar industry, or a, you know, we've had lots of people that have come through that are postmen, for instance, you know, in the past, you know, but they're very physically fit, and they come in and they're able to do that job as well, so they can retrain for two years, and then they go on to become a fully-fledged craftsman as well. So we've got the kind of adults, but starting from the kind of 16-year-olds, it's the pre-apprenticeship, then the craft apprenticeship, after that we've got higher skilled apprenticeships, which may be kind of still technical-based, but more office work, maybe dealing more with spreadsheets, project management, that sort of thing, and then we're moving up into what Michelle was talking about earlier, graduate apprenticeships as well, so that's kind of the mix between university and work, and I think that that kind of takes us up to the kind of highest level that we have, so within there though, we've got different types of, you know, we've got the technical and the non-technical, so we've got cyber security, we've got data analysts, you know, we've got jobs coming up in hydrogen, you know, more in renewables, so these, although we've got maybe four or five different types of apprenticeships, they cover a number of different business areas really, so I think there's definitely not just that one-size-fits-all



anymore, there's so many options for apprenticeships in different subject areas, so there's something that, you know, I mean.

#### Michelle Kelly

I mean, I feel people don't even know that now, because you can, I mean, I still associate apprenticeships maybe with hands-on, but the more I've come here and the more I've researched it, and obviously as part of our job, we're going out and speaking to young people, I don't think even they know until we go and, you know, educate them on that, that, you know, you don't have to be in a field hands-on, but if you want to do that, that's great, but you could be in an office, you could be doing something to do with cyber, which is a huge area for us anyway now, but there's so many different entry routes and areas that you can study in.

#### Natalie Murphy

Yeah, and that's probably one of the the main misconceptions, that is that you need to wear a hard hat, you have to be wearing high-vis, you have to be in coveralls, when in fact maybe that was the case, you know, 14 years ago perhaps, when like we started really recruiting for our apprentices, but nowadays it's it's not the case, you know, we've got lots of people that are office-based working in the headquarters that are apprentices, and you would never know, because there's just, I don't know, like we don't, we need, that's why we're kind of doing a lot of work around apprenticeship week this year, because we want to promote these, these roles plus week as a business, we need them, because if we've got, we're going to be able to meet our net zero obligations, we have to have the workforce ready to go when that, when that, you know, well it's already happening, but I've been doing it wrong, I've been sitting at the desk with my high-vis and my hard hat on.

#### Host

But you're right though, that is one of the misconceptions, isn't it? That it's just all to do with that, that hands-on sort of electrical engineer type role or whatever, but...

#### Natalie Murphy

And it's that it's just for boys as well, it's, you know, we've got lots of young, young girls, young, young females who are coming on to the, coming on to a lot of our training programmes these days, and it's really, it's really great to see that we are kind of moving away from from that, that image of the kind of white, the white hard hat, you know, and the high-vis and moving more into, you know, okay, there's lots of other opportunities there.

#### Michelle Kelly

Because you want to diversify the workplace anyway, and that's kind of what we do at Scottish Power anyway, it's a main value again, having loads of different people and being able to work with people from, from every area of the world, especially on the, I've been speaking to a lot of people recently, been out at these graduate events and different things like that, who are from you know, loads of different areas that have come to Scotland, and even just speaking to them and getting to know them, and learning new things, it's just,



what I like about being here is that you learn something new every day, well I have anyway, which I think is great.

#### Host

And I think even when you were saying that about from all over Scotland, but even, I mean, we've got apprenticeships or people on placements who are going over to the headquarters of Labour Drola in Madrid, and well, all over the world really, isn't it, because Scottish Power is part of the Labour Drola group, operates globally, so the opportunities even for people to maybe start here, but end up in Brazil or America or Spain or wherever, it's, that's another great example of, or a great facet of it as well, isn't it? That you, that's available.

#### Natalie Murphy

Absolutely, and that's one of the, one of the great things about our company is that we are a large international company, so those opportunities do exist, so when you come into our company as a, as an apprentice, who knows what the, what the future, you know, what that may lead to in the future, you know, we've just had a cohort of graduates come back from stints in Bilbao in Madrid and, like, had an amazing experience and, you know, they're talking about it online and been like, oh, like, if you can go for it, it's going to be a great experience, so, you know, we, we have the ability to do that and, yeah, you know, and who knows what will happen in the future if we'll be able to offer different types of global rotations, you know, to different trainee groups, but, you know, who knows.

#### Host

Just on that, maybe to finish up, where do you see the whole sort of apprenticeships programmes going in the next three to five years?

#### Natalie Murphy

Well, you know, since 2010, certainly, we've, I think the, the stats around, like, we've seen a 900% increase in the numbers, the intakes that we've been having, so, like, I think at any, any moment in time over the last couple of years, we've had at least 500 in-flight trainees, which is amazing, you know, because, but that just shows because we've got a lot of people who were retiring through the business, like, through natural, kind of, what's the word, attrition, natural attrition, and also people retiring, so we had to replace that, that, the skills and knowledge that they were taking with them when they left, so we have had a huge push, but I think going forward, we're certainly going to see a lot more in the cyber worlds, that's definitely, like, an area that, you know, we hear a lot about, you know, in our own, kind of, team briefs, in our, in our own, kind of, world within the people function, where we work, that that's what keeps people up at night, it's, it's cyber, you know, and that threat of,



of cyber security and what have you, so, so we're going to see a lot of, a lot of new trainee roles coming in cyber and data, and we mentioned hydrogen earlier, which is another, kind of, growth area or, or, kind of, new area that's going to be developing soon.

**Michelle Kelly**

Yeah, just in general, I think it's going to increase, and it's going to keep increasing because even when I was at school, it was very university, university, but now it's not, and you find that a lot of people are thinking, well, I'm going to go and do an apprenticeship now, and the business needs them, they need an apprenticeship, it can only, it can only increase, I think.

**Host**

Yeah, and I suppose it has that added bonus of actually doing something for the greater good, insofar as renewable energy and all the innovation that's coming in with that, and so being part of a company that's really pushing on with a greener future, and it's a real worthwhile exercise, isn't it?

**Michelle Kelly**

Yeah, absolutely, yeah. I mean, I think more young people, even from just speaking to them, they are interested in sustainability, whereas maybe when I was younger, I wasn't, or maybe I just wasn't educated enough, I think, but I think in schools now, with either us going out or teachers pushing it, pushing it, that is, you know, it is a thing, and we need to work towards fixing it.

**Natalie Murphy**

And the curriculum supports that as well, so the Curriculum for Excellence, specifically in Scotland, however, you know, there is that element of sustainability and, I think, climate change that is now taught through the kind of school curriculum, and that's where a lot of the programmes that we support, that we spoke about earlier, you know, that allows that teacher to tick that off, to say, okay, that module has been completed, so there is a real change in the mix, and I guess what we're trying to do is influence people as young as possible, so that as they kind of grow up, and the more touch points that we have with that young person, you know, we were speaking earlier about it's hard to measure whether that, you know, that they will then go on to a career in STEM, but the hope is that the more visibility and the more exposure that we can give the schools and these communities about, okay, well, here's the jobs that are going to be coming up in the next five years, five, ten years, what have you, got something to work towards. Yeah, absolutely.

**Host**

And we talked a lot about having a support network, a natural support network in other year in industry students, in your case, Michelle, but in terms of the support more widely that Scottish Power is able to provide people who are coming in through these entry routes, apprenticeships, placements, etc, what does that look like?



### Natalie Murphy

Well, there's a number of ways that we support all of our trainees, I think, first and foremost, we support them financially, so that, you know, they're not going to end up like me, who's still paying a student loan off 20 years later. I also show my age now. So we support them financially, we know we pay them, they get their salary every month, but they also, if they're, you know, one of our training schools, we have two training schools, one in Cumbernauld and one in Hoylake near Liverpool.

So if the young people don't live in those local areas, or it's not easy for them to commute, then we'll put them up in a hotel. So they get a hotel, they get bed and breakfast, they get their lunch for free, they get their dinner paid. So they shouldn't be leaving the programme with the same amount of debt that perhaps a graduate would have.

So we are really supporting them financially. We also then give them the opportunity to do behavioural training as well. So they get to learn about teamwork and communication, and they go away for a couple of days to the Lake District, which is really nice.

And they get to go in canoes and, and do like lots of team building activities. And then, of course, as Michelle's mentioned, they have the line manager support, but they also have, you know, that mentoring available as well, you know, maybe from a former trainee or, or just somebody else in the business that they've, you know, contacted, say, look, reached out to them.

### Michelle Kelly

Yeah, to even have multiple mentors, managers that you can go to is a really good thing. And because you'll learn from them as well, and they'll be able to support you, but you can have, I think it's quarterly reviews as an apprentice, but it does depend on which apprenticeship you're on. And then you'll have like weekly catch ups.

I mean, even on my programme, I'm catching up all the time with everyone in the team. So just having that, that support again, is really useful.

### Natalie Murphy

And there is another like team that can sit and like holistically look, look at the programmes and say, right, is this still working? And they have these kind of 12 weekly check ins, and they ask kind of more general questions around how they're feeling, you know, is everything going okay, are they getting the right support that they need in the role that they're maybe doing, like their line manager that's given them their day to day tasks and things like that. So they have a number of different places where they can go for support and advice.

And all the while they're earning money while they're learning, you know, so that's kind of one of our kind of main straplines is like earn and learn. And that's amazing, because, you





know, you should, you should be able to then financially be able to support yourself from the moment you start to the moment that you come off the programme.

Host

So it's well financed and well supported. And where do we sign up?

Natalie Murphy

I know, I mean, I think when like, I guess going back to the common myth, like when I was at school, no one ever spoke about apprenticeships. It was as if like, no, you know, if you want to be somebody and you go to university, and if you didn't, and you left school at 16, then you were considered almost like a failure.

Host

And that was it. There was no future for you. There was no way of ever getting to that level by any other route.

Totally not the case. Absolutely not. And just lastly, what about in terms of these apprenticeships then?

Although I feel that you've maybe already answered this, but I was going to say, why should we be, you know, promoting apprenticeships to school leavers?

Michelle Kelly

Yeah, well, I would even say an apprenticeship is a great kind of bridge between school and a full-time job, because you're still learning. And you're able, again, like I said earlier, to put that into practise while you're learning. So it's not just this huge jump.

You're still supported. And it's not scary if you were to recommend it to someone.

Natalie Murphy

And you're also getting industry recognised qualifications as well. That, you know, let's say you don't want to stay in a particular company forever, that you can then move into another industry within the area that we're working, you know, some of our supply chain, that sort of thing, that also we require, you know, people to work. We need it all to work, you know.

So if people have the right skills and the right qualifications, they can take that anywhere, you know. We obviously want people to stay in the business, but, you know, we have to be realistic as well and say, well, you know, these are industry recognised qualifications that we are providing. And that's for life, you know.

No one's going to take that off you. So it's skills, going back to that theme of skills for life.

Host





So we spoke a little bit about people earning money, earn while you learn. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

**Natalie Murphy**

Yeah. So we are, you know, a competitive, we pay, sorry, let me start again. So as an employer, we have a responsibility to pay our employees correctly, you know, and provide them with a good wage.

So the starting salary for our apprenticeship programmes at the moment is £20,000, which, you know, if somebody had offered that to me when I was leaving school, I'd have been like, where do I sign up? So, you know, we start at 20, but then over the course of the three years, you know, they do get, you know, annual kind of increases in line with, you know, the rest of the company's business performance and inflation and what have you. So by the time that they come off the programme, they're on the same level as a fully qualified craftsperson, for instance, in this case.

So I think £20,000 is a great place to start when you're maybe 16, 17. And going back to our pre-apprenticeship programme, well, that is not a paid placement, but we do provide a bursary to those young people of £200 a month, which allows them maybe to pay their bus fare or train fare to get to college. So again, we're trying to support these young people that may not have been able to, you know, go to university or go to school every day because they didn't have the money to do that.

So we're giving them money to get to college every day, hopefully that would cover that cost and then maybe buy them some coffee or lunch or something like that.

**Michelle Kelly**

I think it's actually went up as well from £200. I think it's now, because I was reading this as well, it's £333 now. I'm pretty sure, but it does change quite a bit just depending on the rules at the time and what you need to pay and things like that.

But I mean, it just saves you from getting a part-time job, even if you think about that, because when I was at university, you're not getting paid to go to university. So you either need to take a student loan like you were saying earlier, or you get a part-time job, but you've been able to have your whole focus on this is my apprenticeship now, or this is my training programme and not having to think at the weekend that I also have to work. It just takes that away as well.

**Natalie Murphy**

It lets them really focus on the study and actually being able to perform well and turning up on time to college every day. Because again, that's another thing that we kind of look at when we're deciding, you know, if we're wanting to kind of put forward any of these young people to apprenticeships is, you know, like did they turn up every day? Were these skills for life that we've been speaking about?



Because everything that we're teaching these young people, they're going to be able to carry through into their adult careers and for the rest of their life.

**Michelle Kelly**

So, you know, good timekeeping, good communication, even having just like motivation to learn, want to ask questions, be curious, because if you don't know, no one's going to get you into trouble for not knowing something. It's good to be curious and just to be interested really and having a good work ethic.

**Host**

And I think on that point of being curious and asking questions, something that struck me when I saw Keith Anderson speak, who's obviously CEO of Scottish Power, but I remember seeing him deliver a speech to a lot of people who'd newly started at the company and one of the main points he was making was that he wanted people to speak up and question things and not just to assume that because this is the way it's always been done that that makes it the best option.

There seemed to be a real drive there for him to have that fresh perspective from people who are coming in fresh to the business and to have the confidence to question, make suggestions, make suggestions for improvements. And I think that's a really good thing to have as well, particularly from the top, from somebody at the very top as that cascades down through there.

**Natalie Murphy**

And I think that's reflective of the fact that a lot of our senior managers and business leaders in the company started off as either apprentices or graduates, you know, at one point or another, you know, it just goes to show you have to start somewhere, but you have to be able to challenge and you have to be able to ask difficult questions and have those difficult conversations. And that's all comes with experience and it all comes with time.

**Michelle Kelly**

I mean, even I was at that event, actually, that was the one for when everyone started when they were new. But I thought that was really inspiring to listen to because a lot of places maybe are stuck in their old ways, as you would put it. But being able to have fresh ideas, it allows you to be competitive as a business and for yourself, it allows you to learn new things as well by questioning.

And it's good to know that even though these are such senior leaders, they are open to talking to you as well. Like, yeah, I've been here for three months, but they want to know what you think. They want to know your ideas.

**Host**

It's been so good to hear your experience, Natalie and Michelle, thank you so much for joining. It's been great to get that perspective of somebody who works in the HR department and knows is across all of these apprenticeships and programmes and then also somebody who's





living that experience as well and enjoying it. We've had great insight to that role that you're doing in this placement, and I think that's been a really valuable insight.

So thank you both very much.

**Nathalie Murphy and Michelle Kelly**

Thank you!

A big thank you to all of our apprentices who took the time to talk to us. It's been an amazing insight into life on an apprenticeship programme at Scottish Power.

If you would like to find out more about any of the programmes that we've discussed, just visit our website, [scottishpower.com forward slash careers](https://scottishpower.com/forward/slash/careers).



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