

IAN MCCARTNEY VISITS

Presenter: Trade, Investment and Foreign Affairs Minister, Ian McCartney, visited two leading energy industry businesses to highlight the importance of the oil and gas industry to the North East economy. First stop was McNulty Offshore Construction Limited in South Shields, one of the leading firms supplying the subsea industry.

Ian McCartney: Well, my job as Minister for Trade is to be an advocate and an ambassador on behalf of the industry, and I'm very keen to work with industry. And only in a few hours here we've already identified some countries and projects which I'm going to personally get engaged in with industry, to try and win these contracts for Britain.

Presenter: Managing Director, Steve Keyworth, says the Minister's role is crucial when it comes to attracting new business.

Steve Keyworth: We'd like to continue to receive backing from the government for our endeavours in to the international markets of the world. The Minister's been here today and he's promised us backing at the highest level from himself into the markets, such as Canada and India, and we really appreciate that.

Presenter: The Minister then moved north of the tide to Duco Limited and was giving a guided tour of the world's leader in design, manufacture and installation of umbilical systems for use in the oil and gas industries. Duco's Managing Director, Alistair McDonald, says it's absolutely vital that the Minister witnesses first hand exactly what's happening in the North East.

Alistair McDonald: I think it's very important that the Minister comes and sees what we're producing here, and in particular the international element of our business. With such a growth internationally in the subsea oil and gas sector, which is a major success story for a number of the businesses here, it's vitally important that he has a feel for what we're doing here and can actively support this.

Presenter: Throughout the visit the Minister was given an overview of the industry by specialists from NOF Energy, the North East based business development organisation for the oil, gas and related energy sector, which represents more than 225 member companies with combined turnover approaching £2 billion. Here's Chief Executive, George Rafferty.

George Rafferty: I'm pretty confident that it will send back a message that in the North East of England we have got world leading companies. We've got world leading management in the North East of England, and that the technology developed here in the North East of England is actually helping worldwide global oil and gas markets.

Presenter: Mr McCartney also acknowledged the importance of the role that NOF Energy plays in working with industry partners.

Ian McCartney: Well, the partnership is critical and it's not just a critical partnership in terms of people working together. As you will see, the industry itself is very much an industry that co-operates with each other, company with companies. Helping each other winning contracts, helping each other with research development, helping each other with training. And then going out and recruiting people to work in this industry.

Presenter: And it's a partnership that companies are keen to develop.

Alistair McDonald: NOF Energy help us all in terms of pulling together the strengths of the individual companies and representing us, as well as giving us opportunities in accessing international markets.

George Rafferty: It's very important that we continue to build the relationships on a daily basis with our members, members of all sizes, from the very small to the very large businesses such as Duco and McNulty Offshore that the Minister has visited today.

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