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North East
Local Enterprise Partnership



The Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult is the UK's leading technology innovation and research centre for offshore renewable energy. Its facilities, research and engineering capabilities bring together industry and academia and drive innovation, and it has bases in Northumberland, Glasgow, Fife and Yorkshire.

**Andrew Macdonald,
Senior Innovation Manager at ORE Catapult**

How would you describe ORE Catapult in a nutshell?

ORE Catapult is here to support UK businesses to grow and expand in the offshore wind, wave and tidal sector and we do that through our engineering teams and through our world-class test facilities.

What are the benefits to an organisation like ORE Catapult to retaining graduate talent?

As an organisation, our strength lies in the skills of our people. We're ultimately an engineering business, so for us success lies in the quality of the engineering

staff we have, therefore it's really important that we can recruit and retain high quality people. There's real value in having graduates coming into the business and understanding our aims and values from an early stage in their careers.

And what are some of the benefits for graduates of staying in the North East for their careers?

The North East is a fantastic place for graduate engineers. There is a huge amount of really exciting engineering opportunities, not only in the offshore sector but also in other engineering sectors like the automotive sector, for example. There are a lot of high growth companies and a real variety of opportunities.

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What can businesses do to encourage graduates to stay in the region?

I think it's important to focus on bringing businesses together to build a strong regional identity. We also need to recognise the importance of investment in our people – not just through training but also through giving people access to networking opportunities. At ORE Catapult we work with a variety of different companies and I'd encourage graduates to engage with all the different organisations like the North East LEP and the Innovation SuperNetwork which encourage cross-sector working.

What kinds of career paths can graduates follow at ORE Catapult?

Our work lies between engineering and commercialisation in terms of supporting other companies to grow, and that means we have graduate roles which are especially interesting. In terms of career paths, you could choose to follow an engineering path – it's an exciting route to follow as we work with world-leading technology, designing and testing cutting-edge methodologies and facilities. There are also opportunities to be involved in the business side of commercialisation in areas like procurement, innovation and supply chains.

What are the benefits to ORE Catapult of being located in the North East?

As well as having a base in Glasgow, we have a large presence in the North East – it's where we can connect with other engineering firms and the related supply chain. The proximity to other high quality engineering companies here is important and the North East is also a fantastic place for graduates to live. You're always close to coastal and outdoor activities, there's lots of history and culture, and vibrant cities. There's something for everyone.

Ravneet Kaur, Innovation Manager at ORE Catapult

Which university did you graduate from and what did you study?

I completed my MBA degree in India before studying for an MSc in International Marketing at Newcastle University, and then gaining certification in Renewable Energy, Enterprise and Management. Newcastle was ranked in the top five for the degree I wanted to study and it was also the friendliest city.

Can you tell me a bit about what your job involves?

I'm part of the Research and Disruptive Innovation team, which leads ORE Catapult's search for future

technology. We look at how the renewable energy sector will evolve over the next 20 to 30 years, making sure that UK businesses are ahead of the game and helping businesses to enter the renewable energy sector, working with them to commercialise new technologies, identify funding and access testing services. My role is diverse as it involves exploring a wide range of technologies including robotics, IoT, AI, VR and AR and applying them to advance the offshore renewable energy sector.

What do you enjoy the most about your job?

A key part of my role is supporting companies and academic organisations to work with one of the world's largest and most powerful Grid Emulation Systems, known as 'eGrid', which is being installed at ORE Catapult's National Renewable Energy Centre in Blyth. I'm pleased to be in a position where I can support UK and North East energy companies to collaborate with academia, to grow and to innovate. It's really exciting for me to be able to help organisations reach their targets and to work in new ways.

Why did you decide to stay in the North East after graduating?

I didn't originally plan to stay here but it's such a warm place, the people are so nice and there are so many opportunities for me as a graduate in this sector. I couldn't have lived anywhere else.

Outside of work, what do you enjoy most about living in the North East of England?

It's much cheaper to live here than in other cities. Also the people are so approachable and you can have a great social life here. We have the coast, the beaches and you're so close to places like Northumberland and Edinburgh as well – it's a centre point.

What has staying in the North East meant for your career?

The North East has a long-standing history in the energy sector and there is a lot happening here, from start-ups through to SMEs and big names like Siemens and GE. We're fortunate to have a lot of resources at our doorsteps and I can only see the sector growing in the future. There are so many opportunities for an energy professional.

Why would you encourage other graduates to live, work and stay in the North East?

Without a doubt. If you choose to work in the energy sector, the North East is the place to be. You can not only start your career here but also grow your career here too.

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