PRESS RELEASE
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First Lego League Inspires 1,000 Scottish Children to Revel in Robotics

Lambda Jam and the RSE Young Academy of Scotland (YAS) have been building on the success of last year's FIRST LEGO League (FLL) to bring the enjoyment of robotics to 1,000 Scottish schoolchildren.

The young master builders and inventors have been gearing up to put their robots and ideas to the test at tournaments across the country. This is the culmination of months of engineering design, programming, and research, led mainly by teachers with mentoring from professional engineers and university academics.

The excitement kicked off at the Glasgow Science Centre on the 8th December with the World Champion of Robot Wars coming to judge the mechanical designs. Teams from Ayrshire, Dumbartonshire, South Lanarkshire, and Glasgow had all completed several robot missions, and at the event they showcased their designs and their inventions. Williamwood Academy won the robot game competition. Dunard Primary won the research project competition. The overall champion was St Joseph's (Busby) Primary School, scoring high in all categories. St Joseph's will be going on to the UK national finals, together with their coach from St Joseph's primary and their engineer mentor from JP Morgan.

Scotland's top universities will be playing host in the coming weeks. Robert Gordon University's School of Computing Science and Digital Media will welcome teams on the 12th December, followed by Moray House School of Education (9th January) and The University of St Andrews (16th January). The final Scottish tournament will be held The University of Dundee (23rd January).

Along with St Joseph's, the winners of each of these regional tournaments will also go on to the UK national finals hosted by the Institution of Engineering and Technology, the national FLL organisers. A winning team will be selected at this event to represent the UK at the world final in St Louis, USA where regular supporters Will.i.am and Barack Obama may be in attendance cheering them on.

Organiser Laura Meikle says, "We have been running FLL in Scotland for 3 years and it continues to go from strength to strength. The appetite to take part has been phenomenal. The combination of Lego - the world's most popular toy - with technology is definitely part of the appeal. However, it's the focus on a major world issue which really draws a diverse group of children, making it a unique STEM initiative."

Working in teams, children aged 9 - 16 have spent three months designing, building and programming Lego robots which are capable of tackling a variety of set missions. This season's missions have been centered on the theme of TRASH TREK℠, which has encouraged participants to think about the world's problem of waste.

In addition to creating the robots, the teams have been set the challenge of identifying a specific problem with the way people make or dispose of rubbish. They will create innovative solutions in response to this challenge. This aspect of the programme is designed to help participants realise the potential they have to change their communities and improve the lives of others.

A primary focus of YAS and Lambda Jam has been to broaden participation in FLL and this programme is the perfect platform to ignite an interest in engineering and computing. A bursary scheme was set up to provide the children with robot kits, training and support. Priority was given to teams likely to have limited access to resources and those with a majority of female participants. Skills Development Scotland were keen to support the programme as part of their Digital World campaign, which aims to change attitudes and promote careers in the digital technology sector.

YAS member and FLL organiser Fiona McNeill commented, "At the Young Academy of Scotland, we are really focused on helping kids to access the amazing possibilities in technology and engineering - industries which are crying out for enthusiastic people and which see thousands of jobs go unfilled. FLL is fantastic for helping kids see how exciting and creative engineering and programming can be."

Ends.

Notes for Editors

We can supply pictures to illustrate this story.

Dr Laura Meikle from Lambda Jam is available for interview on 07772 269929. The company website address is http://lambdajam.org/FLL

The FIRST LEGO League (FLL)
FLL is a global science and technology competition for teams of students aged 9 to 16. It aims to encourage an interest in real world issues and develop key skills that are crucial for their future careers. The students work together as a team to explore a given scientific topic and plan, program and test an autonomous robot to solve several missions. In 2015, over 250,000 children from over 80 countries are taking part.

FLL Scotland
FLL is run in Scotland by the RSE Young Academy of Scotland and Lambda Jam. They joined forces in 2014, acting as regional partners for the UK organisers the IET.

TRASH TREK
Each year the FLL centres on a given theme. In the 2015-16 season, the theme is TRASH TREK℠, challenging teams to think about the world's ever increasing waste problem. Teams will be exploring all aspects of the issue, from collection and sorting to smart production and reuse.

The Challenge
This year's challenge requires young people to identify a real-world problem in the way that waste is dealt with, investigate it and come up with an innovative solution. Teams will also be tasked with building, testing and programming an autonomous robot using LEGO MINDSTORMS® to tackle a series of waste-related missions.

The RSE Young Academy of Scotland
The RSE Young Academy of Scotland fosters interdisciplinary activities among emerging leaders from the disciplines of science and humanities, the professions, the arts, business and civil society. Established by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2011, the Young Academy of Scotland provides a platform for able and innovative young entrepreneurs, professionals and academics to develop a coherent and influential voice, and to address the most challenging issues facing society in Scotland and beyond.

Lambda Jam
Lambda Jam is a not for profit organisation whose aim is to help children develop problem solving skills relevant to the technological era. It is focused on nurturing creativity, logic, and perseverance, for it believes these skills feed success and joy, which in turn feed these skills, ad infinitum. Lambda Jam works closely with YAS and the IET to broaden the pool of young people exposed to the fascination of computer science. Lambda Jam began running the FIRST LEGO League in Edinburgh in 2013 and with the partnership of YAS have grown the programme so that more Scottish children can benefit.

The IET
The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) is FLL's UK and Ireland operational partner. Supporting the competition is part of the IET's commitment to show young people the benefits of careers within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Digital World Campaign
Digital World is an initiative to promote careers in the digital technology industry. It has been developed by Scotland's digital technologies sector and Skills Development Scotland. This includes collaborating with some of Scotland's top tech companies. It's all about inspiring people to challenge convention and make a difference with tech, whether they are a student, a graduate or looking to switch careers. That's why Digital World highlights the amazing ways digital technology betters lives, and showcases Scotland's success stories in the sector. Visit www.digitalworld.net for more details.

Supporters

The FIRST LEGO League is only made possible in Scotland thanks to the generosity of sponsors. The 2015 sponsors are:

- Skills Development Scotland
- The IET
- Cloudsoft
- Amazon Development Centre
- The Women's Engineering Society
- The Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (SICSA)
- The British Computing Society (BCS)
- Scottish Network for Able Pupils
- Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh
- The School of Computing Science, The University of Glasgow

Our venue sponsors for 2015 are:

- The Glasgow Science Centre
- The School of Computing and Digital Media, Robert Gordon University
- Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh
- The School of Science and Engineering, The University of Dundee
- The School of Computer Science, The University of St Andrews