

Press release

25 February 2016

Young robotics champions win chance to go to USA for World LEGO Final

A team of students from West Linton Primary School in the Scottish Borders has won the Institution of Engineering and Technology's FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL) UK and Ireland Final, which was attended by Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan. The winning team has been invited to compete in the FLL World Festival in St. Louis, USA.

The science and technology challenge, which is aimed at 9-16 year olds, tasks teams to solve real world problems with the help of a robot. This year's challenge, which was announced across the world in August, 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. They also had to design, build and program an autonomous LEGO MINDSTORMS robot to tackle a series of waste-related missions.

The winning team 'West Linton Wasps' impressed judges with their advanced robotics skills, as well as their project, which investigated the problem of wasted vegetables from school lunches. After finding that 60 per cent of vegetables were being wasted, the team introduced an incentive scheme where children earned tokens for eating vegetables, which earned prizes for each class. The school has seen a 47 per cent reduction in wasted vegetables and hopes to extend this scheme to other local schools.

Team members were Aedán Contier-Lawrie (11), Owen Jones (11), Jessica Levine (11), Cameron MacKay (12), Rebecca Moroney (11), Louis Myatt (12), Malcolm Rodwell, Logan Stewart (11), Alexander Walpole (11) and Oscar Weipers (11).

Gail Jackson, one of the team's coaches at the Young Engineers and Science Club at West Linton Primary, said: "We had an amazing, never to be forgotten day. The children loved the whole experience and can't wait to take our robot and our project presentation to the World Championships!"

President of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, Naomi Climer, said: "The IET runs competitions like the FIRST LEGO League in order to show young people how creative, exciting and rewarding engineering can be. In order to tackle the engineering skills gap we need more graduates to enter the profession, and this can only happen if more school-age children are attracted to, and choose to study STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects – competitions like FLL are therefore vital."

At the final each team, of up to ten 9 to 16 year olds, was tasked with designing and programming a LEGO MINDSTORMS robot and using it to solve problems and tasks. The runners up were the 'Rubbish Runners', a team of home schooled students from across London.

Expectations are high this year as past UK and Ireland finalists have gone on to be crowned FIRST LEGO League World Champions at the global final in America.

The West Linton Wasps won a place in the FLL UK final after seeing off fierce competition from teams across Scotland. They were crowned Champions at the Dundee regional heat which was organised by Lambda Jam and the RSE Young Academy of Scotland with support for Skills Development Scotland who were keen to see the competition grow as part of their Digital World campaign, aimed at changing attitudes and promoting careers in the digital technology sector.

The 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).

FIRST® LEGO® League helps young competitors to develop skills in design and technology, programming and control, mathematics, research, strategic thinking and teamwork. For more information visit: [FIRST® LEGO® League website](#).

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Notes to editors:

IET

- Interview opportunities are available with IET spokespeople from a broad range of engineering and technology disciplines including cyber-security, energy, engineering skills, innovation, manufacturing, technology, transport and women in engineering.
- The IET is one of the world's largest engineering institutions with over 167,000 members in 127 countries. It is also the most interdisciplinary – to reflect the increasingly diverse nature of engineering in the 21st century. Energy, transport, manufacturing, information and communications, and the built environment: the IET covers them all.
- The IET is working to engineer a better world by inspiring, informing and influencing our members, engineers and technicians, and all those who are touched by, or touch, the work of engineers.
- We want to build the profile of engineering and change outdated perceptions about engineering in order to tackle the skills gap. This includes encouraging more women to become engineers and growing the number of engineering apprentices.
- For more information, visit www.theiet.org
Follow the IET on Twitter.

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.

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. 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.

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.