



The HALO backs Scotland's CyberFirst Girls

The HALO Urban Regeneration Company today (Fri 13th March) announces it is sponsoring Scotland's CyberFirst Girls from Greenwood Academy in Irvine.

The cyber savvy Greenwood girls won the Scotland regional section of the National Cyber Security Centre's annual competition to qualify for the Grand Final which takes place in Cardiff next week.

And the HALO, whose Enterprise and Innovation Hub in Kilmarnock will open next year with a focus on digital and cyber businesses creating opportunities for young people from not just Ayrshire but across Scotland, is proud to sponsor the girls on their quest to win this prestigious prize.

The HALO will support the S2 pupils, Kaci Howson, Hollie Allardyce, Katie Armour and Róisín Clark with some of the tech needed to help them move to the next stage of their cyber learning.

Meanwhile Marie Macklin CBE, Founder and Executive Chair of the HALO, will meet with the girls to talk through all the exciting digital and cyber opportunities available at the HALO and share with them her inspirational vision for the role of young people both at the HALO and in Scotland's cyber future.

The HALO Enterprise and Innovation Hub will collaborate with its Platinum partner Scottish Power to create an industry leading cyber and digital training and learning facility, establishing the HALO at the forefront of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" – the digital revolution.

Another Platinum partner at the HALO is Barclays, the multinational investment bank, who will work together to generate economic growth, innovation, enterprise and digital skills development in Kilmarnock.

Now in its fourth year, CyberFirst Girls is a competition that provides a fun but challenging environment to inspire the next generation of young women to consider a career in cyber security.

The Grand Final, aimed at girls aged 12 and 13, will see teams of up to four tackle a real-world scenario of protecting a global sporting event from cyber attacks over more than four hours of gameplay.

The HALO in Kilmarnock is a £63m brownfield urban regeneration project on a 23-acre site, formerly the home of Johnnie Walker, the world's leading Scotch whisky

and will be the first town centre net zero carbon energy project in Scotland - setting the standard for low carbon energy sites across the UK.

Marie Macklin, Founder and Executive Chair of the HALO Urban Regeneration Company, said: "To win the Scotland section of the CyberFirst Girls competition is an incredible achievement so it is a huge honour for the HALO to be able to sponsor these four inspiring girls from Greenwood Academy.

"The HALO is all about tomorrow's world and the young people of Ayrshire will play a huge part in that so we are extremely proud to have been able to support these girls and it is really exciting to see first-hand how innovative and creative our young people can be.

"I'd like to wish all four girls – Kaci, Hollie, Katie and Roisin – the very best of luck for the final and everyone at the HALO is rooting for them."

Kirsty Allan, Faculty Leader of Technologies at Greenwood Academy, said: "We are extremely grateful to Marie and the team at the HALO for sponsoring the girls and supporting them in the CyberFirst Girls competition.

"The girls have been working hard over the last few weeks and are now as prepared as they can be. We are very proud of the girls and it has been lovely seeing their confidence and friendship grow. They are really excited but also a wee bit nervous ahead of the Grand Final but they are looking forward to representing Greenwood Academy and performing to the best of their ability".

Kate Forbes, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, said: "I am delighted to see HALO Kilmarnock joining forces with Greenwood Academy in Irvine, following four pupils' success in the CyberFirst Girls Competition.

"The four girls are representing Scotland in the UK final and we send them our very best wishes. For HALO's Founder and Chair, Dr Marie Macklin, to provide resources and funding to the school to support computing science and cyber security learning is fantastic to see.

"I hope that the relationship between HALO and the school will be long and productive, inspiring young people in Ayrshire and, crucially, giving them well-paid jobs locally that make a contribution to Scotland's economy as a whole.

"I would like to see more relationships between industry and education developing along these lines across the country."

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Further enquiries

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Notes to Editors

The HALO in Kilmarnock is a £63m brownfield urban regeneration project on a 23-acre site, formerly the home of Johnnie Walker, the world's leading Scotch whisky. The HALO will provide a sustainable community approach to a low carbon mixed-use development providing jobs, economic growth, skills development, access to employment opportunities, clean energy and housing.

The HALO's Enterprise and Innovation Hub will include:

- A state-of-the-art building designed to maximise collaboration between entrepreneurs experimenting, creating and growing highly specialised digital and cyber businesses.
- Cutting-edge technology supported through a combination of dedicated sector-based suites that simulate the new working environment in areas such as Energy, Health, Social Care and Space.
- Facilities for virtual and augmented reality-based scenario training.
- "Living labs" to enable the innovation and evaluation of digital technology and skills that are emerging across society.
- A knowledge-sharing environment where established businesses and business angels can support emerging entrepreneurs.
- A unique learning environment providing opportunities through accredited courses with a facility to show-case developing products and processes enabling people of all ages to expand their knowledge and practical skills for living and working in a digital world.
- An entrepreneurial ecosystem intended to encourage the development of new digital and cyber security products and services, responding, in particular, to the needs of the energy, health and space/aerospace sectors.
- Office and workspace for established companies looking to drive innovation through their organisations.

<https://halo-projects.com/>