

Business brunches to inspire future workforce

Young people from Edinburgh schools attended a business brunch earlier this month to hear from a range of business leaders about the need for language skills in their companies.

Pupils from Balerno High, Broughton High, Currie Community High, Firrhill High, Forrester High, Holy Rood High, Portobello High, St Thomas of Aquin's High and The Royal High School all attended the Business Brunch at Dynamic Earth. The event was organised by Scotland's Centre for Languages at University of Strathclyde in partnership with Developing the Young Workforce and the University Council for Modern Languages.

Companies attending included China-Britain Business Council, easyJet, Edinburgh International Festival, J.P. Morgan, Maroc-o-phile, Scotch Whisky Association and The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland.

A teacher attending the event said: "Today's event has opened my learners' eyes to languages as a key skill for work in all industries, and as something to enrich their lives."



SCILT, learning foreign languages

One of the young people added to this, and commented: “I learnt that languages are useful for everything, including my personal life. I also discovered that knowing a language makes you a lot more employable. I didn’t expect places like Dynamic Earth to have languages as one of their work experience opportunities.”

Lynn Houmdi from Maroc-o-phile and one of the speakers, stated: “The event was really well-organised. I chatted to people on a few of the stands and was really impressed that so many companies and organisations are actively seeking language skills.”

Sophie Dawes, Project Officer at Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Edinburgh, Midlothian and East Lothian regional group, and one of the organisers, stated: “Giving young people an opportunity to hear directly from businesses across a broad range of sectors highlighted why continuing with languages at school could be so beneficial to opening up a world of opportunities beyond school. With a variety of industry led workshops and exhibitors speaking directly with young people, everyone had opportunities to be informed and inspired. The day was action packed from start to finish and the feedback received from young people and teachers has been

so positive. We're already looking forward to planning for 2020!"

Fhiona Mackay, Director of SCILT said: "In these times of uncertainty, it is even more important than ever that we equip our young people with the skills they will need for life beyond school. We want them to be outward-looking and able to operate in an interdependent world. Events such as these highlight the importance of language skills and intercultural competencies in the world of work.

"The business leaders who speak at these events give of their own time because they understand how much these skills are needed and valued by employers and how vital they are for Scotland's business community. This kind of collaboration is an example of how education and business sectors can work together for their mutual benefit so that we can support young people and help them develop the portfolio of skills that employers require in their workforce."



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The following businesses supported the event by hosting a stall in the Marketplace: Asia Scotland Partnership for the Environment, Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh Napier University, Farne Salmon, Historic Environment Scotland, Kath Lothian Languages,

Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, Mitsubishi Electric Ltd, Plexus, Project Trust, Royal Navy, Skills Development Scotland and The Open University in Scotland.