

# Scottish space company travel 380 miles to inspire next generation

AN EDINBURGH space company has made the journey south to teach a group of Brownies about its work – after learning of a six-year-old's love for them through social media.

A team from Skyrora travelled to Newport to visit the Girlguiding Gwent group after finding out about Lexie Morgan's passion for all things space.

What started as a simple tweet turned into an event for over 200 of Lexie's fellow Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers all eager to earn the specially designed space badge with the help of Skyrora engineers.

As well as helping the girls earn their badge, the event also informed the girls of the diverse range of careers available to them in this exciting industry.

Sam Morgan, Lexie's mother, said: "The event was a huge success. I'm very grateful that something as simple as a tweet resulted in Skyrora coming down to Wales to teach the girls about space.

"Before the event, Lexie had said to me that she wanted to work for Skyrora when she grows up and I'm now more certain than ever that this is still the case.

"I think it's really important to help young girls learn more about traditionally male-dominated industries and I'm sure lots of the other girls in the room are now thinking about a career in space."

The budding space enthusiasts took part in a series of educational activities in the hope of becoming galactic

geniuses, completing tasks such as creating miniature rocket models and designing their own meteorite finders.

Andrea Rodley, County Commissioner for Girlguiding Gwent, said: "Everyone was excited that Skyrora were willing to travel so far to spend time with us – it made us feel very special.

"There were amazing questions asked and it has really sparked their enthusiasm for space. Many of the girls now feel that a career in the space industry is a possibility. One Rainbow even said to me that she can't wait to work on Mars"

Skyrora is currently developing launch vehicle technology that builds on previous rocket systems, having successfully transported the Black Arrow rocket – the UK's only rocket to reach orbit – back to the UK from the Australian outback earlier this year.

The firm's rapidly expanding team aims to capture its share of the fast-growing small satellite launch market and has already created two separate prototype engines, one of which is set for testing at Cornwall Airport Newquay.

The space company started their developmental launch programme in August last year, with preparations already underway for a further two launches in early 2019.

Derek Harris, Business Operations Manager at Skyrora added: "We jumped at the opportunity to meet Sam after seeing her original tweet about Lexie and her group's space badge.

"With our LEO engine completed and testing underway, our engineering team are focusing on the manufacturing completion of our 30KN engine which we expect in the near future.

"It's up to our STEM ambassadors to inspire the next generation and make sure we have the future engineers to continue their work."

Committed to the importance of educating the younger generation, the firm has already signed up to the STEM Ambassador Programme.

Derek added: "The new commercial space race is a great chance to open up a world of opportunity to the next generation of engineers and teach them about possible career paths they maybe wouldn't have considered otherwise."

Following on from presentations at Edinburgh University, an RAF100 celebration event with cadets at RAF Syerston, the space firm held mini-rocket workshops with youngsters at the Scottish International Airshow.

The firm is now visiting schools across Britain to teach students more about science, technology, engineering and maths, often referred to as the 'STEM' subjects.

Despite recent improvements, women are still underrepresented in the industry, occupying only 24% of STEM positions.

UN estimates suggest that by 2025 there will be seven million new STEM jobs and not enough qualified people to fill them, meaning the need to inspire young girls has never been so important.

Skyrora draws on Britain's launch heritage and aims to build a robust supply chain while creating new employment opportunities to inspire the next generation of talent.