

Developing the Young Workforce

Case study on Rockwell Learning Centre's visit to Vital Energi, facilitated through community benefits and MarketPlace.

Pupils from Dundee's Rockwell Learning Centre recently linked up with sustainable energy solutions company Vital Energi, when they visited Vital Energi's Biomass Energy Centre in Guardbridge, Fife.

Vital Energi are committed to providing opportunities for young people through their community benefits commitments, and were referred onto the DYW D&A team from Dundee City Council, to help them get their offers out to young people.

The site visit was facilitated through MarketPlace, a new online platform which allows employers and education to connect more easily. [Employers can register](#) and post 'offers' to schools such as site visits to their workplace, staff delivering talk in schools, employability skills sessions, curriculum inputs and a whole host of other relevant 'offers' that an employer may want to deliver. Schools and colleges can then log in to [Marketplace](#) and book these offers on a first come first served basis, making the process simple and easy to use. The Rockwell and Vital Energi site visit was the first Marketplace booking in Dundee.

Six pupils, accompanied by Rockwell teachers, travelled to the Vital Energi Biomass Energy Centre in Guardbridge, near St Andrews.

This £25 million Biomass Energy Centre & District Heating Network was created in partnership between Vital Energi and the University of St Andrews. The vision of the University was to create a campus-wide low carbon energy system, by refurbishing an old paper mill building, transforming it into a state of the art biomass-based energy centre.



The energy system feeds remote university buildings more than 6km away, through a highly thermally efficient 23km underground district heating network. The project will bring significant environmental benefits, which will see carbon emissions reduced by over 6,000 tonnes per year.

The pupils were given a full site tour of the plant, including the chipping yard and the internals of the energy centre by Scott Harding, one of Vital Energi's Operation & Maintenance Engineers. Scott explained the day-to-day operations of the plant, what each piece of equipment is, how it works and how the whole centre functions to generate heat and hot water for the University.

The pupils were really interested throughout the whole tour and asked some excellent questions, and learnt not just about the plant and its technology, but also about the range of jobs the industry offers.

Research shows the more young people have employer input in their education, the less likely they are to end up 'not in employment, education or training', and that when they do gain employment their earning power is greater. This type of activity is hugely valuable to young people and we hope to grow the range of offers available so young people have access to as wide range of opportunities as possible.

You can find out more information about how to register for MarketPlace here:

Employers: <https://www.ourskillsforce.co.uk/invest-in-young-people/marketplace/>

Educators: https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/marketplace_

Impact

The impact of this visit on the pupils was recognised by Steven McLauchlan, Pupil Support Officer at Rockwell. On many occasions, the young people at Rockwell can sometimes dis-engage with industry insights, however this was certainly not the case here.

Steven said *“Firstly, I want to say a massive thank you to all of the staff at Vital Energi for allowing us to have an educational visit. The young people enjoyed themselves and certainly learnt a lot about your work and different roles within the workplace. Both of the workers on-site who showed us around the facility were absolutely excellent with our young people and were answering any questions the young people asked. From a staff point of view, the visit was a great experience full of positives and we can’t thank you enough for your time and effort. As you can see from the photo’s our young people not only learned a lot but really enjoyed themselves and had fun! I can assure you this does not happen on all of our visits as our young people can be challenging and can dis-engage very quickly. I would certainly promote other schools / groups to take up the opportunity of an educational visit to Vital Energi and hopefully this is something we can repeat with another group in the future.”*



This feedback proves how important industry visits like this are for young people. Not only do they learn about career opportunities in new sectors, they also benefit from speaking to and listening to experienced professionals outside of their normal school environment which challenges them and positively pushes them outside their comfort zone.



View from Vital Energi

From the employer’s perspective, this type of engagement with education is extremely important, as Vital Energi Project Manager Victoria Wallbank explains: *“We recognise the importance of engaging and educating the wider community to share our insights and experience within the sector. A priority of ours is to maximise the opportunities our schemes present to ensure the local community feel the benefits of the project as much as possible. Hosting educational days such as these are key to this as the pupils can learn about*

innovative technology and see first-hand how these schemes work, potentially paving their future career interests.”

DYW Team

Ross Paterson, Employer Liaison Advisor from Dundee & Angus Developing the Young Workforce team believes that this type of opportunity for pupils to experience industry first-hand is invaluable. *“Our DYW Team was delighted to work with Vital Energi to help facilitate this industry insight for pupils.” Vital Energi staff have been excellent throughout the entire process and by offering this fascinating insight into the Renewable Energy sector, they have given the pupils an appreciation and understanding of a*



sector they previously knew nothing about, which can only help to widen their horizons for their own careers.

Get in Touch

If you are an employer who would like to work with education in some way, or a teacher who would like to engage with industry to benefit your pupils, then please contact our DYW Dundee and Angus team who will be able to advise and guide you through the process.

You can contact the team on **01382 443409** or via contact@dywda.co.uk