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National Grid organises lesson on the River Dee

National Grid arranges for local schoolchildren to take to the water to learn about bridge construction and other feats of engineering as part of the Western Link project

14 Jun 2017

- **Ysgol Golftyn school children take to the water to learn about the River Dee**
- **Quay Watermen's Association teach valuable lessons in engineering, wildlife and safety**
- **Western Link project funds the day and provides life jackets for the river trip**

Pupils from Ysgol Golftyn donned their life jackets for a trip down the River Dee for a very special lesson on the life of the waterway.

They were accompanied by volunteers from the Quay Watermen's Association during a day of hands-on learning which saw them put their science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills into practice.

The school's year 6 students started the day at the Kathleen and May Heritage Centre, where they learned how cargoes at Connah's Quay docks had been moved using cranes and derricks – and then put their knowledge to the test by building bridges with a range of materials.

They learned about the lifecycle of the common tern, which migrates from Africa in the spring to nest on the Tata lagoons and feed on the Dee, and then went out onto the water to do some bird watching and to take a closer look at the engineering of the many bridges on the river.

Most importantly, they also had a lesson in safety on and around the river.

Sharon Kevan, Year 6 teacher who accompanied the children, said: "This was a fantastic opportunity to put the knowledge from their STEM lessons into practice. The children learnt so much, not only from the activities in the Heritage Centre but also from the volunteers from the Quay Watermen's Association. They accompanied us around the docks and brought old photographs along so they could explain the changes that have taken place over the years."

Chair of the Quay Watermen's Association, Paula Ellis, explained why they had decided to run the course. "We're a voluntary organisation established by local fishermen, boat enthusiasts and local residents," she said. "We want to conserve the Connah's Quay dock area and raise awareness about its maritime heritage – but most importantly, we want to give children respect for the River Dee.

"With summer holidays coming, we want children to be outside enjoying the river banks and the history of the docks, but it's absolutely vital that they learn how dangerous the river can be if they don't take care. With Western Link's funding we purchased life-jackets for the children so they could go out on the river safely, which was a great experience for them."

Glyn Sibson, project manager for Western Link's new Flintshire Bridge converter station just across the river from the Kathleen and May Heritage Centre, joined the activities for the day.

"We were delighted to be able to support the Quay Watermen's Association to promote safety around the river," he said. "And an added bonus from our perspective was the opportunity to show the children that science is fun."

"Our country needs engineers and a day like this, that brings STEM subjects alive, is a great way to inspire young children and grab their interest from an early age. The boat trip was an exciting end to what will be a very memorable day for them, I'm sure."

The £1 billion Western Link project is a joint venture between National Grid and ScottishPower Transmission. When complete, it will bring renewable energy from Scotland to homes and businesses in England and Wales and help the UK meet its carbon reduction targets.

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Notes for editors

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- We own and operate the gas National Transmission System in Great Britain, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. Our network comprises approximately 7,660 kilometres (4,760 miles) of high-pressure pipe and 618 above-ground installations.
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