



Young people at the forefront of the 4th Industrial Revolution at HALO Kilmarnock

A 200-strong “digital army” of young people will be established at the HALO Kilmarnock when it opens its doors in May 2021 following the commitment of £1.5 million of funding by the UK Government under its Kickstart Scheme.

The 16-24-year-olds will work at The HALO under its #RockStars programme and be trained in the latest digital & cyber skills and techniques. Their work will help protect the UK’s businesses and organisations from potential cyber attacks, as well as open up new opportunities in digital businesses. The training will result in a HALO accredited qualification to support future employment opportunities.

The HALO 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. Since its inception, The HALO’s stated aim has been to create an industry-leading cyber and digital training and learning facility at its Enterprise and Innovation Hub, currently under construction, establishing The HALO at the forefront of the “4th Industrial Revolution”.

The HALO has appointed Business Resilience International Management, founded by Mandy Haeburn-Little, former CEO of the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, to design the HALO Cyber Course. The training will be the catalyst for further courses and will entail a combination of on-site training and e-learning, preparing the participants with life skills and expertise suitable for employment in a number of fields. Under the scheme, all 200 young people – their number chosen to reflect the fact that this is Johnnie Walker’s 200th anniversary – will be paid for a minimum of 25 hours per week.

Upon completion of their first six months of training and work experience, it is hoped that participants will then be able to enter a further six-month work placement. These placements are expected to be with a range of different companies, from The HALO's corporate partners, such as ScottishPower, Barclays PLC and Anderson Strathern, to start-up companies based at The HALO and beyond. It is hoped that these work placements will, in time, become full-time opportunities.

With a vision for a dynamic commercial, educational, cultural, leisure and lifestyle quarter where people can 'Live, Work, Learn and Play', The HALO will provide a sustainable community approach to a mixed-use development powered by electricity with a net zero carbon footprint. The HALO will be the first 23-acre net zero carbon energy "Community Urban Village", setting the standard for low carbon energy sites across the UK. The development will provide a sustainable community approach to a net zero carbon mixed-use development providing jobs, economic growth, skills development, access to employment opportunities, clean energy and housing.

In addition, plans are under way for the successful candidates to potentially be housed within a number of The HALO's 210 net zero carbon emission smart homes that will be built in the second phase of the development. This will mirror the model that Johnnie Walker, on whose former site The HALO is located, operated in the 1950s and 60s when the company provided affordable, high quality homes elsewhere in Kilmarnock for many of their workers.

Marie Macklin, founder and executive chair of The HALO Urban Regeneration Company, said: "My vision is for The HALO to create a cyber/digital army of young people who will gain the skills necessary to go out into the UK's businesses, third sector and public sector organisations to fight the ever-increasing number of cyber criminals who are threatening this country.

"This funding from UK Government is indeed a great kick start for this scheme and will make a significant contribution to the UK's future cyber security. But I don't want to stop at 200. I believe we could create opportunities for as many as 500 young people a year at The HALO.

“The sustainability of this ambition is all-important and I am acutely aware that for many local young people, affording housing is a challenge. We aim to address that for those participating in this scheme in much the same way as Johnnie Walker did all those years ago.”

UK Government Scotland Minister, Iain Stewart, said: “We are pleased to be working with HALO Kilmarnock to offer 200 young people from across Scotland the opportunity to develop the latest digital skills. The digital tech sector is one of Scotland’s biggest success stories and will make a vital contribution to economic recovery from Coronavirus.

“The UK Government’s vision for the Kickstart scheme is to give young people a future of opportunity, I would like to thank HALO Kilmarnock for sharing this vision and being an early pioneer of the scheme.”

Keith Anderson, ScottishPower CEO, said: “When we think of green jobs we think of roles like offshore wind technicians or networks operatives, but it takes so much more than that to keep a company like ScottishPower delivering clean, renewable energy. To help build our business and to continue to keep it operating well into the future we need to work with digital and cyber experts.

“The funding from the UK Government’s Kickstart scheme will help support the development of these future digital and cyber specialists here at The HALO, and I am confident that the knowledge and expertise soon to be gained here will help propel its students forward towards helping to deliver a green recovery and achieving Net Zero.”

Ends

26th October 2020

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Notes to Editors

The HALO Urban Regeneration Company <https://halo-projects.com/>

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The HALO Enterprise and Innovation Hub will collaborate with our 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" which is digital.