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PRESS RELEASE

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Royal visit to Edinburgh schools event at Finmeccanica – Selex ES on National Women in Engineering Day

The Duke of Rothesay visited an engineering event for girls in Edinburgh today, to mark National Women in Engineering Day. This was hosted by Finmeccanica - Selex ES at their Crewe Toll site.

His Royal Highness, who has been championing engineering as a career for a number of years, met girls from schools in the area, getting involved in a range of high-tech activities and representatives from other companies and organisations involved in promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

The day is part of Selex ES's involvement with engineering in education programmes. Activities on the day, including building circuit boards, constructing robots and launching rockets, are all aimed at stimulating the girls' interest in the fascinating world of science and technology.

HRH heard about Selex ES's research initiative, conducted in conjunction with local schools, aimed at gathering data to provide viable evidence of the effect that fun and informal STEM games and activities, like the ones on the day, can have on girls' educational outcomes and subject choices.

Local primary 7 school girls aged between 11 and 12 years of age have also been invited to attend National Women in Engineering Day 2015 events at the company's Basildon and Southampton sites on 18th June and in Luton on 20th June, as well as Edinburgh.. The goal is to give the girls the opportunity to understand what engineering really is – a creative, dynamic world based on innovation. It is hoped that through a range of activities, of which this day is a part, girls and their parents can have a better sense that they can have a future on the engineering side of STEM. As they progress through school and beyond, this will make available a broader choice of careers than they might have imagined.

Behind the event

Recent research conducted by the IET[1] and WES has confirmed that unconscious bias within schooling means that girls often feel steered away from the sciences. By giving the girls first-hand experience of Selex ES's engineers and the engineering environment, through access to fun, STEM-related activities, they will be given the opportunity to develop their confidence in this field and build informed ideas of what engineering careers can offer.

It is hoped that the NWED activities across the UK will give attendees a new understanding of how fun and creative engineering can be, coupled with a willingness to attend STEM clubs if they aren't already doing so. Participants will reflect each school's general population, rather than a pre-existing interest in engineering, to maintain the objectivity of the study.

The Duke of Rothesay is keen to support and encourage manufacturing and engineering job opportunities and training. He has consistently undertaken visits to factories and businesses which rely on, and in turn support, training in manufacturing and engineering. In 2013 His Royal Highness kicked off two days of industrial skills engagements with a visit to Jaguar Land Rover in Halewood, Merseyside, where he launched his Industrial Cadets training programme. Other visits in recent years have included Redcar Steelworks, Middleport Pottery, security firm ATG Access, the Stroud Festival of Manufacturing and Engineering.

About National Woman in Engineering Day 2015 and the Women's Engineering Society (WES)

National Women in Engineering Day was set up by the Women's Engineering Society (WES) in 2014 to celebrate its 95th anniversary in anticipation of their centenary in 2019. In 2014 there were some 80 events across the UK involving some thousands of people with extensive media coverage and social media activity.

On 23 June 2014 WES wanted to focus attention on the great opportunities for women in engineering, at a time when it has never been more important to address the engineering skills shortage. By encouraging girls into engineering careers we will not only be increasing diversity and inclusion – a business imperative – but enabling us to fill the substantial future job opportunities that have been predicted in this sector.

The idea behind National Women in Engineering Day is to encourage all groups (Governmental, educational, corporate, Professional Engineering Institutions, individuals and other organisations) to organise their own events in support of the day, and link them together for maximum impact through the use of the NWED logo, corresponding website, and supporting resources.

The Women's Engineering Society is a charity which started in 1919 at the end of the First World War when the women who had worked in technical jobs during the war wanted to continue with this work. A change of law to ensure that the country reverted to a pre-war setting when the War finished meant that women were unable to continue with their (engineering) jobs, and were unwanted in the technical professions. The pioneering and influential women of the time set up the Women's Engineering Society, and have been working since that time to ensure equality for women in this non-traditional sector. Today WES is a membership organisation which has the following three roles:

1. Women: Support women to achieve their potential as engineers, applied scientists and leaders and to reward excellence.

2. Education: Encourage and promote the education, study and application of engineering.

3. Sustainability: Work with organisations and influencers to promote gender diversity and equality in the workplace and sustain the historic legacy and future effectiveness of the Women's Engineering Society.

About Finmeccanica in the UK

As a world-class high technology leader in aerospace, defence and security, Finmeccanica employs some 8,000 people in the UK through its companies AgustaWestland (helicopters) Selex ES (electronics) and Telespazio (space services), with annual revenues of more than £2.3 billion. The future of the UK's strategic skills base is guaranteed by companies such as these, which for decades have been a mark of excellence, able to attract and develop the best talent, whilst allowing their development within a large international group like Finmeccanica.

About Finmeccanica – Selex ES in Edinburgh

Edinburgh is home to one of the biggest research and manufacturing sites of technology firm Finmeccanica – Selex ES. Over 1,900 people are directly employed at Crewe Toll designing and producing high-tech products and services based on airborne radar, advanced lasers and electro-optic systems. In 2013 the Edinburgh site celebrated its 70th anniversary.

Today the site is a centre of excellence for both microelectronics and lasers. To ensure that such cutting-edge technology will be available into the future, the company invests in extensive research and development programmes and continuing professional development opportunities for its staff. It runs highly-rated apprenticeship and graduate schemes.

Finmeccanica - Selex ES in Edinburgh has won two Queens Awards for Enterprise in 2010 and 2011 for Innovation and International Trade. It also holds an Investors in People Gold Award and was recently recognised with the Investors in Young People accolade.

1 IET: Inspiring the next generation of engineers; www.engineer-a-better-world.org