

Robots land in Suffolk and Essex

National Grid launches Vex Robotics programme in local schools

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- **Robots set to inspire the young engineers of the future**
- **Free robotics kit worth £2,000 up for grabs**

National Grid is sponsoring an exciting new education programme to encourage youngsters in Suffolk and Essex to become the engineers of the future.

Three schools – Westbourne Academy in Ipswich, Thomas Gainsborough School in Sudbury and East Bergholt High School – have taken up National Grid's offer of a free robotics kit. Students are being challenged to design and build robots to pitch against each other at an end of term competition. They can then go on to compete in regional and national competitions.

The three schools will be using the VEX Robotics education programme – a unique teaching system which uses robotics to inspire young people and introduce them to the world of engineering.

Over the autumn term, National Grid engineers and the VEX Robotics training team will support the students as they create their own robots, developing valuable science, technology, engineering and maths skills along the way.

Brian Smethurst, Senior Project Manager for National Grid, said: "National Grid is passionate about encouraging young people to consider engineering as an exciting and rewarding career. We're facing a real shortage of engineers in the energy and utilities industry in this country and there are great career opportunities available for young people if they choose to study science, technology, engineering and maths.

"VEX Robotics is a fun way for students to learn these skills and we look forward to following their progress."

At an introductory training session, teachers from the three schools were introduced to the kit which links STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) education with building robots. The teachers got to try out the system for themselves and see what the robots can be designed to do and how it fits with the national curriculum. The programme also encourages teamwork, leadership and problem solving skills among students.

National Grid has another VEX robotics kit, worth nearly £2000, to give away. Students and teachers who are interested are asked to contact the company on 0800 377 7340. To qualify, the school or college must be located in Suffolk or Essex and be willing to participate in the end of term competition.

Since October 2009, National Grid has been consulting on proposals to build a high voltage electricity transmission connection between Bramford in Suffolk and Twinstead in Essex. It is needed to connect a number of new power generators to the national transmission network in East Anglia.

Brian added: "Although the Bramford to Twinstead Connection project has been put temporarily on hold, we are committed to keeping in touch with local communities. By sponsoring the VEX Robotics programme for schools in the area, we hope to inspire youngsters to think about a career in engineering."

Martin Foreman of Westbourne Academy said: "We are delighted to be part of the National Grid VEX Robotics programme and are looking forward to engaging students with this exciting opportunity."

Oliver Trethewey, of Thomas Gainsborough School, added: "We are delighted to take part in the National Grid VEX Robotics programme. The students are really excited about building their own robot and are looking forward to competing against the other schools. This is a really great scheme to promote STEM in schools."

- Ends -

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In Britain, we run the gas and electricity systems that our society is built on, delivering gas and electricity across the country. In the North Eastern US, we connect more than seven million gas and electric customers to vital energy sources, essential for our modern lifestyles.

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- ? Our gas distribution business delivers gas to 11 million homes and businesses
- ? We also own a number of related businesses including LNG importation, land remediation and metering
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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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- Other UK activities mainly relate to businesses operating in competitive markets outside of our core regulated businesses; including interconnectors, gas metering activities and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) importation terminal – all of which are now part of National Grid Ventures. National Grid Property is responsible for the management, clean-up and disposal of surplus sites in the UK. Most of these are former gas works.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/group/news>

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