

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
27 August 2015

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	ECAS 51/15

App Development at Wick High School

Report by the Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report supports a presentation by Mr Chris Aitken (Teacher) and pupils on app development at Wick High School, as previously requested by the Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The app development at Wick High School is an example of entrepreneurial activity by staff and pupils in a Highland school, evidencing work on skills for life, work and learning, and also demonstrating the potential of ICT within the curriculum.
- 1.2 'Apps for Good' is a UK based initiative that aims to create a generation of problem solvers and solution makers. Students work in teams to identify problems that affect society, and design an app that solves this problem.
- 1.3 The course involves problem identification, competitor research, designing a wireframe solution and then moving on to coding a working prototype. The course culminates in the teams entering their solutions into the UK wide competition. Last year, over 600 schools entered the competition and out of that, 18 teams reached the finals in London. Wick High was one of those schools, with three out of the 18 teams.
- 1.4 Wick High has been involved with Apps for Good for three years. They have had teams win the national awards every year.
- 1.5 Students are encouraged to see beyond the remoteness of their community and realise that they have the skills to compete at both a national and international level. One Click Politics, an app designed to get young people engaged with politics, won one of the awards this year.
- 1.6 In 2014, HIE approached Mr Aitken to find out how they could use Scottish Government Digital Skills funding to get more young people engaged in problem solving, digital creation and computational thinking.
- 1.7 Both primary and secondary schools were given the opportunity to take part in Apps for Good and were given funding to purchase mobile devices to allow them to research competitor apps and test their prototype designs on. Over 20 schools in Highland opted to take part and found it a very engaging course.
- 1.8 Being a part of the Apps for Good movement has opened up many opportunities for Wick High students, including a rolling summer internship at Thomson Reuters software development centre in London. This year, they also had two students take

part in the Outbox Incubator. This startup aims to get young female entrepreneurs encouraged and involved in pursuing a career in STEM, by providing seed funding, intensive mentorship and support.

2. Implications

- 2.1 **Resources:** This work is largely funded within Wick High School budgets, or from dedicated funding referred to above. The later report on ICT in Learning, sets out how further advances might be achieved through enhanced access to technology in the classroom.
- 2.2 **Equalities:** In Wick High School we have seen a 400% increase this year in the number of students opting to take the blended S3 Computing Science course, which combines Apps for Good with aspects of the Level 4 Computing Science experiences and outcomes such as robotics programming and games design. We have also seen an increase in the number of girls opting to study Computing Science at certificate level.
- 2.3 There are no **Gaelic, rural, risk, legal, or climate change/carbon clever** implications.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Committee is asked to note the issues raised in this presentation, and to commend the work being undertaken at Wick High School.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 17 August 2015

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