Pupils test out new Water Lab at WWT Llanelli

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Pupils from Lakefield School in Carmarthenshire tested out the new Water Lab at WWT Llanelli Wetland Centre at its official opening on Friday 22 May.

The children enjoyed watching the mug cascade and playing with the giant chaos waterwheel, which are powered by rain in the innovative new outdoor classroom.

The Water Lab is designed to help teachers show the important role of wetlands in the environment. It's a very current issue as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) – specially constructed wetlands – are increasingly used to manage flooding in a natural way in towns and cities. Features like ponds and wet ground can slow down, soak up and store rainwater.

A visit to the Water Lab will be on the itinerary for many of the 3,000 pupils that go on a school trip to WWT Llanelli Wetland Centre each year. And all visitors, young or old, can have a play when it's not booked for a class.

The building has been funded by HSBC as part of WWT's Inspiring Generations programme, which each year gives more than 12,000 school children from disadvantaged areas across the UK a free school trip.

WWT staff and volunteers joined local school children, HSBC representatives and Carmarthenshire County Councillor Meryl Gravell for the opening of the Water Lab to the public.

Pam Styles, Learning Manager at WWT Llanelli Wetland Centre, led the activities:

"We are delighted to have such an inspiring new learning space here at Llanelli. The Water Lab showcases some fantastic SuDS features, demonstrating in a fun and engaging way how we can create buildings in harmony with nature – supporting natural processes, preventing flooding and providing homes for wildlife all at the same time."

"Wetlands are absolutely essential for life, and the Water Lab will be used to inspire all our visitors, particularly school children, to think about where their water comes from, how wetlands fit into the water cycle, and the essential part wetlands can play in future sustainable development."

Mrs Phillips, Year 4 teacher from Lakefield School said:

"It has been a real treat being invited to the opening of the Water Lab and the children have thoroughly enjoyed the activities. The children were able to practically engage and discuss through a scientific enquiry based on the water cycle. It was a real learning experience outside of the classroom that will create a lasting memory."

Paige Richards, a year 4 pupil involved in the activities thoroughly enjoyed the experience:

"I thought the Water Lab was great. The glass on the building was cool with all the different colours. The cups were really fun to watch as all the water trickles down. It was good to learn about the water cycle and to find out how water runs off different surfaces."

Sue Alexander, Senior Manager Environmental Programmes at HSBC, said:

"HSBC is delighted to support WWT with their education programme "Inspiring Generations". Connecting our young people to nature is so important in this ever more urbanised landscape and ideas such as the Water Lab are a catalyst to learning about the natural world in which we live, in a fun and interactive way. "

- Ends –

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Notes to Editors:

Wetlands are essential for all life, including humankind. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) creates and protects wetland habitats to provide water, food and shelter for all of us and our wildlife. We work around the world to save species from extinction, and to sustain healthy local communities. Our UK visitor centres and nature reserves inspire a million visitors and 50,000 schoolchildren a year to enjoy being close to nature.

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