

FACING NEW CHALLENGES



BY YASHKA SMITH, STEM LEAD AT TECHFEST

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One of those new team members is Yashka Smith, who worked with TechFest in 2010 and has returned to help the team cater for resource demand and reach a much wider pool of people as part of our updated strategy.

Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) surrounds us everywhere, both professionally and personally.

As the world continues to evolve, we are faced with numerous new challenges including climate change, the energy transition, food security and an ever-growing population. But how can we work towards solving these issues? In my opinion, it's STEM education.

Growing up, I always had a passion for STEM and how it impacts everyday life. I'm a huge believer that everyone in society should have access to STEM resources and discover not only the various career opportunities available but gain a better understanding on how things work or can be improved.

When I first joined TechFest in 2010, I was a STEM co-ordinator focused on delivering maths and energy projects to secondary schools across Scotland. It's both inspiring and rewarding to work with young people and watch as they become more engaged in learning, so when the opportunity arose to work with TechFest again almost ten years later, I jumped at the chance.

Now taking on the role of STEM lead, I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to incorporate my passion into my career through working with TechFest, which has an amazing reputation for delivering high quality project-based experiences for young people.



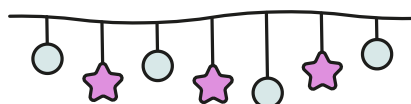
TechFest adapts its resources to mimic real world problems, so taking the current global issues into account, much of my role will focus on revamping the original maths programmes I used to run, aligning them with the energy transition.

It's also imperative that we make sure our programmes have a high degree of accuracy, so I'm working closely with industry professionals on an ongoing basis to develop concepts and workshops that reflect the world of work.

Working for TechFest you have a bit of a hybrid role, which certainly keeps you on your toes! We have a team of intelligent and innovative women who continuously develop new educational resources but we're also continuously managing events to ensure this knowledge is passed on in

a fun, engaging and dynamic way for young people.

One of our flagship events, the Early Years and Primary Programme was back in person for the first time in two years and it was a massive success. It feels like there is a real appetite for events again, which here at Techfest, we're thrilled about! Face-to-face interaction and a buzzing atmosphere are integral for many people's knowledge and understanding. There are so many ways to learn and we find combining theoretical knowledge with practical examples outside the classroom, really maximises an individual's interest.



While running these educational events can be a challenge – you always have to prepare for the unexpected! - I love the thrill of organising them. Seeing pupils work through problems and gain confidence in both themselves and a STEM subject is a real privilege to witness.

In addition to the educational side, I'm enjoying facing my own challenges in a professional capacity. One of the main differences from my previous role at TechFest is I'm now involved in all aspects of a project, from drafting funding proposals to the overall delivery. It's fantastic to produce something from start to finish and see the results.



While objectives, resources and deliverables will continue to change and evolve, one thing that has remained the same from my previous time at TechFest and my time now, is a brilliant team environment.

Every person has passion that aligns with the organisation's ethos and it's a pleasure to collaborate with like-minded individuals on a daily basis. We're so proud of what we do and I think that shines through our programmes and events.

I can't wait to both personally deliver and support the wider team with some incredibly exciting projects and initiatives this year. In addition to refreshing some popular industry challenges, TechFest is working on some new pilot programmes that will certainly pique young people's interest and show how STEM is much wider than traditionally depicted.

TechFest has an exciting programme of year-long events aimed at primary and secondary school pupils, alongside a public festival in November.