British Science Association and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announce new education initiative for UK students

New competition to recognise young people’s science and technology work to find solutions for global health and development issues

London, 26 October 2016: Today, the British Science Association have announced a new extra-curricular initiative for students in the UK: the Youth Grand Challenges.

Run by the British Science Association and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Youth Grand Challenges calls on students aged 11-to-19 to come up with innovative solutions that have the potential to change the world, and will reward the best projects from young people created in response.

The Youth Grand Challenges will explore topics aligned with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Global Grand Challenges – unsolved scientific challenges that could lead to significant advances in terms of preventing, treating and curing diseases prevalent in developing countries.

Katherine Mathieson, Chief Executive of the British Science Association, said: “I am delighted that today marks the launch of our Youth Grand Challenges initiative. The British Science Association prides itself on its work with young people, teachers and educators across the country, and I know that this scheme will be a big success.

“I think it is so important to involve people at a young age in scientific endeavour and innovation not just to spark their imaginations but also to allow them a chance to see the role they can and will play in the future – especially when it involves issues as topical as the Youth Grand Challenges.”

The new education initiative links with the British Science Association’s highly successful education programme, the CREST Awards, which has been recognising young people’s project work in science, technology, engineering and maths for over 30 years.

All students who participate in the Youth Grand Challenges will receive recognition, including a CREST Award at the appropriate level - Discovery; Bronze; Silver; Gold - as well as being entered into the national competition, where they will have the chance to compete for prizes worth up to £10k.

Bill Gates, who is in London for the Global Grand Challenges symposium this week, announced the launch of the Youth Grand Challenges on ITV’s This Morning on Wednesday, where he spoke about the importance of including more young
people in cutting-edge research. He explained that today’s students are the scientific and technological leaders of tomorrow and harnessing their insights on these important global issues is vital when looking for fresh innovation and discovery.

This year’s theme for the Youth Grand Challenges is on infectious diseases, and students are encouraged to undertake project work on that overarching theme, such as investigating mosquito-borne diseases, identifying ways of improving sanitation in developing countries, or designing better transportation devices for delicate medicines such as vaccines.

Infectious diseases are one of the leading causes of death worldwide. For example, each year over one million people die as a result of mosquito-borne diseases (source: Centre for Disease Control, Impact of Malaria 2016). Infectious diseases disproportionately affect developing countries, where deaths are predominantly caused by infectious diseases. Almost one third of deaths in LEDCs are caused by lower respiratory infections, HIV/AIDS, diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and tuberculosis (source: WHO).

Dr James Logan, Associate Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and presenter on Channel 4’s Embarrassing Bodies, is an ambassador and VIP Judge for the Youth Grand Challenges. Speaking ahead of the launch, he said: “It’s fantastic to be able to challenge students to use their skills, passions and interests to explore real-life topics that are at the forefront of research and development – rather than them seeing science as just another school subject.”

“I really enjoy working with young people on my own research, not just because of their enthusiasm for the science, but also because they ask the questions I never think of!”

The entries to the competition will be judged by a panel of expert and celebrity judges, including Channel 4’s Embarrassing Bodies presenter, Dr James Logan, and young entrepreneur and Founder at Germinaid, Ciara Judge. The winning students will receive a money-can’t-buy prize, such as an international field trip to a laboratory in a developing country or a visit to their school from a renowned scientist working on global health issues. The winners will be announced in December 2017.

Ciara Judge, entrepreneur and Founder at Germinaid, is also a VIP judge for the Youth Grand Challenges and has experience herself of entering and, ultimately, winning science and engineering competitions for young people: “I am so excited to be working with the British Science Association on this fantastic youth initiative to encourage young people to innovate. As someone who comes very much from a science fair background, this cause is very close to my heart. I simply can’t wait to see what the participants come up with!”

The British Science Association will provide multiple teaching resources and guides for educators, themes and ideas to inspire young people’s choices for their projects and support and advice for students partaking in the competition.

Teachers, club leaders and other educators can register for the initiative and find out more at: www.youthgrandchallenges.org
For media enquiries, please contact:
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A folder of images is available on this link: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/pdz75vi4un261c4/AAD_SDppOrI9iWRzfkaPZe3a?dl=0

The images are of students taking part in a pilot activity as part of the Youth Grand Challenges. The children are from Bow School in East London where they created prototype hand-washing machines as a solution to improving sanitation in developing countries. PRESS ASSOCIATION Photo. Picture date: Monday October 17, 2016. The Youth Grand Challenges is a new education initiative that aims to inspire young people, aged 11-to-19, to see how science and technology can be deployed to tackle global health issues. Photo credit should be: Doug Peters/PA Wire

Notes to Editors

1. About the Youth Grand Challenges
The Youth Grand Challenges is an education initiative that aims to inspire young people, aged 11-to-19, to see how science and technology can be deployed to tackle global health issues. It calls on students to come up with innovative solutions that have the potential to change the world. All projects taking part will be entered into a national competition with prizes for the top projects worth up to £10,000.

The Youth Grand Challenges is organised and run by the British Science Association and is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

2. About the British Science Association
The British Science Association (BSA) believes that science should be part of – rather than set apart from – society and culture, and is owned by the wider community. Our programmes encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with science, become ambassadors for science, and ultimately to be empowered to challenge and influence British science - whether they work in science or not.

Established in 1831, the BSA is a registered charity that organises major initiatives across the UK, including British Science Week, the annual British Science Festival, regional and local events, the CREST Awards and other programmes for young people in schools and colleges. The BSA also organises specific activities for professional science communicators, including a specialist conference and training. For more information, please visit www.britishscienceassociation.org

3. About the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to
ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.