

Standard - News for Wisbech and the surrounding area

Gallery: Students build environmentally-friendly racer

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One of the final tests for the car took place last Thursday in the school playground. 9530PU68

THE last thing on the mind of most racing drivers is how much fuel they are burning as they scream through the chicanes.

But with record petrol prices continuing to rise, students at a Fenland school have built their own environmentally-friendly racer to line up on the grid at one of Europe's fastest motor speedways.

A team of six pupils from the Thomas Clarkson Community College in Wisbech designed the electric car and drove it at the regional heats of the Greenpower series at Rockingham Motor Speedway on Tuesday.

And, instead of a high-octane race to the chequered flag, the winners will be the most energy-efficient team who travel furthest on the charge in their batteries.



The school's challenger, which took four months to build. 9529PU68

The car was tested in the school playground last Thursday but suffered a puncture - one of the challenges the pit crew may have to overcome if they are to qualify for the national finals.

Nicki Cobbin, of the school's inclusion support unit, said: "To me they are winners already. They have been tremendous in getting it together and if they win it will be a bonus.

"We got the kids to write their own statements and the thing which came out most of all was that they enjoyed working as a team to get the job done."

One statement said: "We are proud of our achievement and feel we have learned lots of new skills which will help us in our future careers."



The team pick up some last minute advice from engineer Bob Jackson, centre, under the watchful eye of Wisbech Mayor Jonathan Farmer and his wife Susanah. 9522PU68

The school was approached by retired engineers Bob Jackson and Dave Smith who offered to help design the car to the Formula 24 specifications set by Greenpower, which has run electric car races to promote engineering for school students since 1999.

"It is about the type of components to put in - you have to make the right choices," said Ms Cobbin. "The height and weight of the drivers also has to be considered. It is also about how quickly you drive it - a consistent speed works best for efficiency."

The car took four months to build under the supervision of design technology teachers Marcus Loosemore and John Bunyan after funding was secured from the Elizabeth Wright charity and sponsorship from local businesses.

The Rockingham circuit in Northamptonshire is Europe's fastest banked oval racing circuit. It can be arranged in several configurations featuring hairpins, straights and chicanes.

The lap record for the one-and-a-half-mile oval was set at 24.719 seconds - an average speed of more than 215mph - by Brazilian driver Tony Kanaan in his Ford/Lola car in 2001, when Rockingham staged the American-based Champ Car series.

* Students aged 14-16 will take on the Carbon Challenge today when oil company BP's enterprising science programme visits the school. They will be challenged to develop plans to cut the school's carbon footprint.

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Four of the six-strong team which ran at Rockingham, from left, Luke Gilding, Lewis Southwood, Arran Callaby and Amanda Clark. 9519PU68

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