



NEWS RELEASE

Pupils' eco-car carries team to the final, displaying a bright future for engineering solutions

8 July 2008

Institution of Mechanical Engineers and Greenpower Somerset heats Saturday 5 July

As the world's most powerful countries agree on cutting greenhouse emissions by 2050, the next generation of engineers from the Minehead Middle School, Minehead, have built a low-carbon wonder car that covered an incredible 90 miles on nothing more than two sets of car batteries to win the Somerset heat of the IMechE Greenpower school electric car races.

The event took place at the Haynes International Motor Museum, Somerset, on 5 July, with 13 teams racing their eco-cars over furthest distance possible in this four-hour endurance heat. The teams, comprising of six drivers and six pit crew, have spent the last six months designing and building their cars from scratch as part of extra curricular programmes in order to reach the final to be held at the famous Goodwood track on 19 October.

As the G8 member states this week agreed to halve greenhouse gas emissions before 2050, this approach to educating and promoting cleaner transport and engineering solutions could not come at a more relevant time.

Pupils aged 9 -16 get involved in every stage of the concept and manufacture of the cars, helping to create initial designs and concepts, before rolling up their sleeves and tackling the hands-on engineering challenges that give them the chance to work with a variety of materials in order to understand what makes the most economical car.

The eventual winner 'Grinpower' managed an incredible 271 laps of the track. 'Blue Peter' from West Somerset Community College, Minehead (with help from the BBC children's programme) and 'Whitstone Wackys' from Whitstone School, Shepton Mallet, finished second and third respectively.

Stuart Reeson, team leader at Minehead Middle School, Minehead, speaking about his young team, said: "They were magnificent and coped really well on the day. It's nice to win but it's even better to qualify for the final at Goodwood, they're all really looking forward to it! We've still got the Dorset heat to come which we'll use to test the car more, but we'll be altering the gearing for Goodwood to give us some extra speed for the more open track there."

The new IMechE Greenpower partnership offer schools an exciting insight into careers in engineering. At the event, John Ling, IMechE Transport programme manager, said: "Building and racing an electric car is not only an exciting way for young people to gain an insight into engineering, but it also makes them aware of the energy issues that we all face."

As part of the partnership, the IMechE is working with its members acting as 'mentors' to assist pupils in the event and pass on their expertise. The next step up for schools entering the event is the IMechE's hugely successful Formula Student event which is Europe's largest student motorsport event.

Barry Shears, who founded Greenpower in 1999, said: "IMechE Greenpower is a proven way of not only motivating and exciting pupils about engineering as a career option, but also encouraging innovative, green thinking. The huge enthusiasm shown by pupils in designing, building and racing their own electric vehicle as part of a large team is a delight to see and shows great promise for the future of British engineering."

The thrilling final endurance race around the Goodwood track lasts for four hours, testing student's design and driving capabilities to their highest. With almost 100 finalists last year this year's teams will be looking to secure their place on the grid.

IMechE Greenpower Somerset Heat Results:

1	Grinpower Minehead Middle School	271 laps	89.43 miles
2	Blue Peter West Somerset Community College	259 laps	85.47 miles
3	Whitstone Wackys Whitstone School	239 laps	78.87miles

IMechE Greenpower Somerset Schools:

Danesfield Middle School, Taunton;
West Somerset Community College, Minehead;
Whitstone Community School, Shepton Mallet;
Bishop Fox's School, Taunton;
King Arthur's Community School, Wincanton;
Stanchester School, Stoke Sub Hamdon;
Selwood Middle School, Frome;
Ansford Community School, Castle Cary;
Minehead Middle School, Minehead;
Chilton Trinity School, Bridgwater;
Buckler's Mead Community School, Yeovil;
Kings of Wessex Community School, Cheddar;
Southgate Motors, Yeovil.



On the right track: The winning car [Image available in hi-res]

ENDS

- The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) is one of the world's leading engineering institutions. Established in 1847 it has some of the world's greatest engineers in its history books. It currently has around 80,000 members in 120 countries representing mechanical engineers working in groundbreaking areas such as automotive, rail, aerospace, medical, power and construction industries to name a few. Visit www.imeche.org or contact the press office on media@imeche.org or call 0207 304 6888 for more information.
- Greenpower is a company dedicated to promoting engineering and technology as careers to pupils throughout their school life, through an exciting hands-on project to design, build and race an electric racing car. For more information visit www.greenpower.co.uk