



# New workshop is set to boost charity's services

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A CHARITY offering young people engineering skills is set to increase its services after launching new facilities.

Members and supporters of GASP Motor Project, which provides practical courses in basic motor mechanics for 14 to 19-year-olds, celebrated the opening of its new workshop at the Sand Pit in Albury on Monday. The building is almost twice the size of GASP's former workshop in Gomshall.

It was unveiled along with the charity's new mobile service, a converted ambulance, which will deliver GASP sessions across the county.

GASP leaders said these facilities would allow it to significantly expand its programmes by delivering more than 150 daytime sessions in the next 12 months, three times as many as it held in 2011.

The Motor Project was launched in 2005 as an evening activity for teenagers living in and around Gomshall, Albury,

Shere and Peaslake (hence the name GASP).

It was the idea of a local police officer who recognised the need for a diversionary activity for young people joyriding and torching stolen cars in the area.

Members build go-karts to race off-road and take part in other projects that contribute towards their Duke of Edinburgh awards.

In 2009 GASP became a charity, introducing daytime sessions for young people across Surrey who are disaffected, disadvantaged or under-achieving, and those with special educational needs.

The new workshop, built by the Northumberland Estate, was opened by the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey Dame Sarah Goad. Guests included staff from Surrey County Council's Youth Support Service, officers from Surrey Police, the High Sheriff of Surrey Karin Sehmer and others who have supported GASP's expansion work.

Dame Sarah praised the charity for giving an alternative to young people at risk of anti-social behaviour. She said: "The provision of alternative



**Dame Sarah Goad opens GASP Motor Project's new workshop in Albury. (Ref: SA125404\_5)**

learning programmes for young people who find it hard to engage with mainstream education has never been more vital. I have watched with interest the development of the GASP Motor Project over the past seven years and am delighted now to be opening this splendid new workshop."

GASP chief executive Andy

Finch said it had an experienced team of engineers and skilled volunteers, led by workshop manager Barrie Birchmore, teaching practical skills in a supervised environment. He said: "We work with some of the hardest to reach young people in society. Using motor mechanics as a key motivator, we deliver customised

activities giving them the chance to re-engage with education and learning."

This autumn, GASP will partner with the Brooklands Museum in Weybridge to run a 12-week programme for at-risk young people, who will repair and restore vehicles used in Brooklands' 'driving days' with funding from Toyota.