



Hands on learning that helps drive change

PRESS RELEASE

GASP PREPARES GREEN CARS FOR GOODWOOD DEBUT

Two teams of teenage racing drivers competing at Goodwood next month will have the advantage of knowing their cars inside out – because they built them!

The students, aged 13-17, are learning mechanics at the GASP Motor Project in Albury and they are honing their technical skills building two Greenpower 'Formula 24' electric kit cars ready for racing on the famous Goodwood circuit on April 17.

The enthusiasm of these young motor engineers was tangible at the charity's showcase event on March 9 when they regaled the audience of funders, supporters and GASP Friends with details of the new engineering skills they have learnt, including mastering the latest Siemens' CAD software in order to engineer and design the Greenpower vehicles.

Making the framework of the electric car is just the first step: critical to the final speed capability is the design of the superstructure – and each group is free to create its own design. Representatives from The Coleman Trust and The Kelsey Trust, the two charities that funded the Greenpower kit cars for GASP, were there to see the difference their grants have made.

"Once the cars are built, each GASP group will form a team and compete in a programme of regional heats – 2 x 90 minute races – organised by Greenpower at some of the best motorsport venues in the UK," says Andy Finch, CEO of the GASP Motor Project. "We are immensely grateful to the volunteers who run our evening sessions – all of them trained engineers – who had the idea to encourage our students to embrace new technologies in this exciting way, and who will be taking the teams and their Greenpower electric cars to Goodwood."

When it comes to the competition days, all teams have the same motor and one pair of 12 volt batteries per race – and at least three team members must drive the car during the race. At the GASP workshop event, students demonstrated to watching guests how swiftly they could manoeuvre in and out of the electric cars and so make the changeover in seconds – and up to six further members can act as pit crew. The winner is the team that covers the greatest distance on the day.

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To further encourage students to embrace this new engineering technology and move into the world of electric vehicles, GASP Friend Sir John Samuel was invited to speak about his long career working on groundbreaking electric car development in the UK and US – including presenting the Enfield 8000 in Phoenix, Arizona in 1969 where it caught the eye of one Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California!

GASP runs evening sessions at its workshop three times a week during term time. Students in mainstream education – who want to supplement their school curriculum – travel to attend the sessions. Some of them also use it for their D of E Gold or Silver Award skills section. These workshop sessions also often act as a diversionary activity for young people from the rural area that surrounds the GASP workshop.

Evening student Cameron McKenzie said: "It's a great opportunity for us. We are learning how to build the cars and other students will be able to improve on them. The best bit is that we will get the chance to race them.

"I have always enjoyed engineering. I have had great fun and learned a lot at GASP. It is really interesting here."

David Sequeira said: "I really enjoy it. Getting the car working and testing it will be really good as I am hoping to become a motor mechanic."

Sir John Samuel was enthusiastic about the project, explaining that the goal of all electric car design was to make a car go faster and farther before its battery needed recharging. The recent change to lithium batteries was a big stride forward, he said. "Electric power is the future and it's all happening! I can't believe it!"

Rob Collard, British Touring Car Champion, told the students that the key to success was teamwork. Everyone in the team was equally important. "Electric cars are definitely the future," he said. "People like me racing petrol cars will be the dinosaurs!"

Ends

Editor's notes:

GASP uses **motor mechanics and practical engineering** as the key motivator to deliver accredited AQA courses to 14-19 year old students, some of whom may be disaffected and marginalised, and to those with Special Educational Needs.

It primarily targets young people in areas of greatest deprivation. The programme – developed in association with referring agencies – enables these young people to re-engage with education and learning. As important, they develop '**soft skills**' associated with changes in behaviour and attitudes, experiencing the value of teamwork, and building concentration and self-confidence.

This personalised learning is delivered to a maximum of **six students per session** from the purpose-built GASP workshop, at Albury near Guildford. Students across the county also benefit from the programme, via the GASP mobile unit.

Some of **the young people – boys and girls – who attend sessions** at the GASP Motor Project are in mainstream school, but respond best to vocational learning. Others are at short stay units (PRUs) or on court orders. Most are either NEET (not in education, employment or training) or at risk of becoming NEET. Often they are disengaged, disruptive and on the margins of their communities. GASP aims to support them to progress into education and training, and prepares them in a practical way for the world of work.

The young people attend on one evening a week for two hours. As well as developing their motor mechanics skills, they can gain AQA Unit Award accreditation to evidence the progress they have made. Unlike GASP daytime courses, the evening programme is not for a set number of weeks. If students are keen to continue learning, then they can keep on attending for up to 12 months, which is when as a general rule they make way for those waiting to join the programme. On rare occasions, if they have a natural aptitude for mechanics, the evening student may stay on longer, to work with and support the new arrivals, passing on their knowledge.

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