

Northamptonshire Solar Car Challenge 2003

Seven Borough and District Councils (Northampton BC, Daventry DC, Kettering BC, South Northampton Council, Corby BC and Wellingborough) in Northamptonshire formed a group called the Northamptonshire Energy Efficiency Partnership (NHEEP). The group also includes representatives from Powergen, British Gas, Warm Front, Ideal Boilers, Worcester-Bosch Boilers, Plumb Center and the Leicestershire/Northants Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. The partnership enables:

- Exchange of information and sharing of good practice
- Promotion and assistance with implementation of HECA (Home Energy Conservation Association/ Home Energy Conservation Act 1995) strategies
- Increased opportunity of obtaining funding
- Development of countywide energy efficiency initiatives including bulk purchase discount scheme supplying condensing gas and energy efficient oil boilers and an Able to Pay insulation scheme

Members of NHEEP decided that they would like to start some countywide work with schools. A sub-committee was formed to look at this area of work. The sub-committee researched school projects in other parts of the country and found details of the Hampshire Solar Car Challenge. The sub-committee put forward the idea of setting up a Northamptonshire Solar Car Challenge to NHEEP and it was approved. Once the idea of a Northamptonshire Solar Car Challenge had been approved members of the sub-committee contacted other agencies to see if they would like to work in partnership on the project and Northamptonshire Education and Business Link, the Environment Agency and British Gas agreed.

The purpose of the Solar Car Challenge was to provide a enjoyable way for children to learn about sustainability and environmental issues. The challenge was targeted at the 8-11 year olds (Key Stage II) and integrates into the National Curriculum requirements on sustainability, environmental education and design and technology for this age group. It also allows the children to use their creative and engineering skills and will increase their team-working and problem solving skills.

In February 2003 an email was sent to all primary schools and middle schools in Northamptonshire. A week or so later a flyer was sent to all the schools in the post. Those schools that were interested in participating in the Solar Car Challenge contacted their local council. During April the schools were issued with a Race Pack and 2 solar car kits, comprising of a solar cell, motor, gearing and wheels. The task was to construct 2 cars, one to race in the fastest car category and one to participate in the best-designed car category. The Race Day was in July 2003 and more than 100 pupils from 26 schools gathered at Rockingham Motor Speedway. Each team competed in six rounds so every team had a chance of electric demonstrating unit for use in the classroom. The best-designed car was awarded a trophy, medals and £50 of craft materials.

The event was joint funded by British Gas, the Environment Agency and NHEEP. On the Race Day mayors from each local council and representatives from British Gas and the Environment Agency attended the event. As sponsors of the event British Gas arranged

for some local members of staff to attend the event and give out energy efficiency materials.

Finally, due to the success of the event last year NHEEP has organised the Northamptonshire Solar Car Challenge 2004!