

Television star to award next generation of engineers

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Forty aspiring teenage engineers are set to receive a surprise visit from a television star today (Thursday 21 July) at the University of Birmingham to celebrate completion of a four-day residential course exploring the technologies and systems of railway engineering.

Hosted by the University of Birmingham's Centre for Railway Research and Education, sixteen and seventeen year olds from across the country have been taking part in an exciting programme of hands-on activities and group projects exploring a range of subjects including aerodynamics, crashworthiness, radio communications, railway control and signalling systems, which will culminate in an awards presentation led by *The Gadget Show's* Jon Bentley.

Sponsored by The Lloyd's Register Educational Trust (The LRET) and The National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE) and run by The Smallpeice Trust, the residential course, which began on Monday 18 July, is designed to expand students' interest in railway engineering through a series of sessions and challenges delivered by University of Birmingham railway engineers.

Separated into small groups, the students have been taking part in one of two challenges, either designing, constructing and testing a 1:30 scale crashworthy vehicle model to be crash tested on an inclined ramp, or designing, building and constructing a train control system using Lego Mindstorm NXT components to be tested on a 10m test track. Prizes will be given to the successful designs.

Event organiser and teaching fellow in the University of Birmingham's School of Civil Engineering, Stephen Kent, commented:

"It is hoped that from this event, the students will recognise that engineering, and the railway industry in particular, offers an interesting and rewarding career."

"Jon will be popping in on Thursday for a couple of hours just to see what the kids are up to, 'crash testing for kids' as he put it. He will also be helping to judge the designs and hand out the prizes to the winning teams."

"We thought it would add a bit of excitement to the final morning if Jon just 'appeared' amongst the kids. It will be rather nice for them to be working away, look up, and recognise him. We have kept it a surprise from them so that they keep focussed on the task at hand."

For more information, please contact Professor Felix Schmid via 0121 414 5138 or f.schmid@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:f.schmid@bham.ac.uk>). To find out more about The Smallpeice Trust, please visit www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk ([http://www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk/](http://www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk)).

Notes to Editors

For media enquiries, please contact Amy Cory, University of Birmingham Press Office, via 0121 414 6029 or a.cory@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:a.cory@bham.ac.uk>).

About The Smallpeice Trust

The Smallpeice Trust is an independent charitable trust which promotes engineering as a career, primarily through the provision of residential courses for young people aged 13 to 18.

The Smallpeice Trust was founded in 1966 by Dr Cosby Smallpeice, a pioneering engineer and inventor of the Smallpeice Lathe. Following the stock market flotation of his company Martonair, Dr Smallpeice invested his energy and part of his personal fortune to set up the Trust to ensure that British industry could continuously benefit from his proven design and engineering philosophies: "Simplicity in design, economy in production."

The Trust is now governed by an eminent board of non-executive trustees and members from a diverse range of engineering, industry, educational and professional bodies.

In 2009/10, The Smallpeice Trust ran 30 residential courses for 1,700 school-aged students at universities across the country, with girls accounting for 38%. In addition, 15,977 students attended a Smallpeice in-school STEM masterclass.

A strong interface is maintained with industry, education and professional bodies that help to support, promote and develop the courses. For more information about The Smallpeice Trust and the training they provide, please visit www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk ([http://www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk/](http://www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk)).



Gadget Show's Jon Bentley with The Smallpeice Trust students