

## Aspiring engineers go 'on the rails' at residential course

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Forty aspiring teenage engineers were on campus in July to take part in 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 (BCRRE), 16 and 17 year olds from across the country took part in one of two challenges that explored aerodynamics, crashworthiness, radio communications, railway control and signalling systems.



The programme culminated in an awards presentation led by surprise guest, The Gadget Show's Jon Bentley.

"We thought it would add a bit of excitement to the final morning if Jon just "appeared" amongst the students. We kept it a surprise from them so that they would keep focused on the task at hand. 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," commented Stephen Kent, Event Organiser and Teaching Fellow in the School of Civil Engineering.

The event involved two separate challenges designed by staff at the BCRRE. Working in small groups, the students had the opportunity to either design, construct and test a 1:30 scale crashworthy vehicle model, or build a train control system using Lego Mindstorm NXT components that was subsequently tested on a 10m long test track.

The residential event was sponsored by the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust (The LRET) and the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE), and further support was also received from HE STEM, DeltaRail, Network Rail and the Rail Accident Investigation Branch.

The programme is one of many such courses run by The Smallpeice Trust, an independent charitable trust, founded in 1966 to promote engineering as a career, primarily through the provision of residential courses for young people aged 13 to 18. The trust maintains strong links with industry, education and professional bodies that help to support, promote and develop their courses.