

### Introduction

As part of its ongoing relationship with Oxford & Cherwell Valley College (OCVC), Mistral promoted its successful bid, in a consortium with six other colleges and schools, to run a groundbreaking engineering diploma pilot before a nationwide roll-out.

The new diploma is set to deliver world class skills in a £2.9bn UK industry which has a major skills shortage. Working closely with local motorsport employers, including Honda Racing, Prodrive, Force India and Bicester-based Pankl, the diploma provides young people with an alternative to other types of education. It is split into three levels – foundation, higher and advanced – giving 14 to 19 year-olds the opportunity to study for vocational qualifications.

The bid involved impressive plans to extend OCVC's successful, but not particularly well known, Performance Engineering Centre including a new showroom to display student projects.

### Objective

- To raise the profile of the Performance Engineering Centre as a local centre of excellence for motorsport engineering with expert and highly trained staff, delivering the very best in training and education for the motorsport industry
- Help attract 14-19 year-olds to study for the new engineering diploma
- Strengthen existing relationships with local motorsport employers

### Strategy

Using a Performance Engineering Centre Open Day as the news angle, Mistral developed a local and regional media campaign to publicise the new and exciting plans afoot at the college.

### Results

Coverage was secured in local press as well as announcements on local radio encouraging potential students to attend the event. The new diploma course proved very popular with one parent expressing relief at the open day that, thanks to the seeing the coverage and being persuaded to attend on the day, his previously unmotivated son now had now discovered how he might turn his passion for motorsport into a vocational qualification.



## Boost for a college of motorsport

**By HAYLEY COVER**

A NEW motorsport facility is soon to put Bicester in the fast lane after planning permission was granted to develop a centre for teaching race engineers of the future.

Cherwell District Council has given the go-ahead for a £250,000 extension to the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College Performance Engineering Centre in Telford Road.

A state-of-the-art extension will be added to the existing building, where the college will be able to offer an engineering diploma to students.

Located in the heart of "motorsports valley", the development also includes a new showroom to show students' projects.

A consortium of six colleges and schools, including Bicester Community College, in Queens Avenue, and Cooper, in Church Hill Road, worked together to prepare the bid and have been selected to run a pilot diploma course in September.

Oxford and Cherwell Valley College principal and chief executive Sally Dicketts said: "If you've ever been trackside at Silverstone or watched the Grand Prix from the stands and longed to be involved, this is a great opportunity to be part of the fastest and most exciting industry."

"The new diploma will deliver world class skills in an area where there is currently a major UK skills shortage."

"The facility will train people in the vocational skills required and drive them towards a successful, rewarding and interesting career."

The town's schools will be working with the other institutions to deliver the engineering diploma – which will be offered to students aged between 14 and 19 and includes both practical and theory work.

The building work will start at the end of this month and is expected to be completed by September.

For those interested in finding out more about the new diploma, or any of the other specialist motorsport courses, there will be an open day at the college on Saturday, April 19, between 10am and 4pm.

## In pole position for a great new career

**A NEW £250,000 extension to Bicester's motorsports college is set to put students on track for exciting careers.**

The state-of-the-art facility, which was recently given the go-ahead by planners, will allow students to gain a new engineering diploma at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College's (OCVC) Performance Engineering Centre in Telford Road.

OCVC is part of a consortium of six colleges and schools which successfully bid to pilot the new diploma before it is introduced across the country.

Sally Dicketts, OCVC principal, said: "The new diploma will deliver world-class skills in an area where there is currently a major UK skills shortage."

"Working closely with local motorsport employers, including Honda Racing, Prodrive, Force India and Bicester-based Pankl, we're confident we will create a high-quality learning environment."

She said the new diploma will be an alternative to other kinds of further education, and will be split into three levels for students aged between 14 and 19 – foundation, higher and advanced.

A foundation diploma is roughly equivalent to four or five GCSEs, while higher diplomas are worth five to six GCSEs, and an advanced diploma can be compared to three A-levels.

The new extension will include a showroom to display the young engineers' creations, as well as extra classrooms and an enlarged canteen.

Building work will start on the new facility at the end of April, and is due for completion in September.

An open day for anyone interested in motorsports courses will be held at Oxford and Cherwell Valley College's Bicester site on Saturday, April 19, running from 10am to 4pm. Contact Andy Thomas at OCVC on 01865 501109 for more information.

**by Joe Garbe**  
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