

PRESS RELEASE

6 March 2017

Gearing up as F1 arrives in Mid and East Antrim

Ballymena is gearing up to host the NI final of F1 in Schools as part of the Circuit Festival 2017, running from 4-7 April.

The Sentinus F1 in Schools competition will see hundreds of school children aged 10-17 from across NI compete to build their own Formula 1 racing car. This year's Festival is aimed at enabling young people to get a taster for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

Through the STEM@ The Circuit competition, students will create a team brand and produce their model cars to reach speeds of 60-70km/hr, powered by CO₂.

Bill Connor, Chief Executive of Sentinus is looking forward to the integration of STEM into the Circuit Festival for the first time: "We're all set for a fun week where students will develop their scientific understanding, their communications, team-working and all the skills that are important to employers.

"As well as our team challenge, we're focusing on research and development activities linked with local companies including NIE Networks, Wrightbus, AES and Sensata. The companies will join forces with A-level students to tackle real industry problems and devise solutions, supporting industry and enabling the young people to build up their skills and experience."

Mayor of Mid and East Antrim, Cllr Audrey Wales MBE added: "We're delighted that Sentinus is joining us to promote STEM subjects in Mid and East Antrim again this year. We have already had strong success stories in developing links between businesses and our education sector, particularly between Wrightbus and

Ballymena Academy on STEM projects last year. We're hoping to see the formation of more successful partnerships in 2017."

Festival organisers of the local rally, which was hoped to form part of the Circuit Festival, recently confirmed that a rally will now not take place due to funding and timings. Rally Director, Bobby Willis said: "We are very much looking forward to the innovative STEM @ The Circuit event in April. Creating positive paths to employment in these sectors is so important for young people, particularly young women who are traditionally under-represented in technology and engineering roles.

"With just four weeks to go we're really busy making sure that they're going to have a fantastic experience in Ballymena. For the rally, we will instead be focusing our efforts on attracting the European Rally Championships back to Mid and East Antrim in 2018. We've had fantastic support from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and I thank the Council and Sentinus for their support in opening up their STEM events to include the Circuit of Ireland brand. I hope we can continue to develop our ambitious partnership in years to come," he said.

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