

Kinlochleven pupils powering ahead with green energy ideas

- School is Scottish Champion in the Scottish robot competition
- Competes in UK national finals
- Plans to host 'green energy expo' on April 20

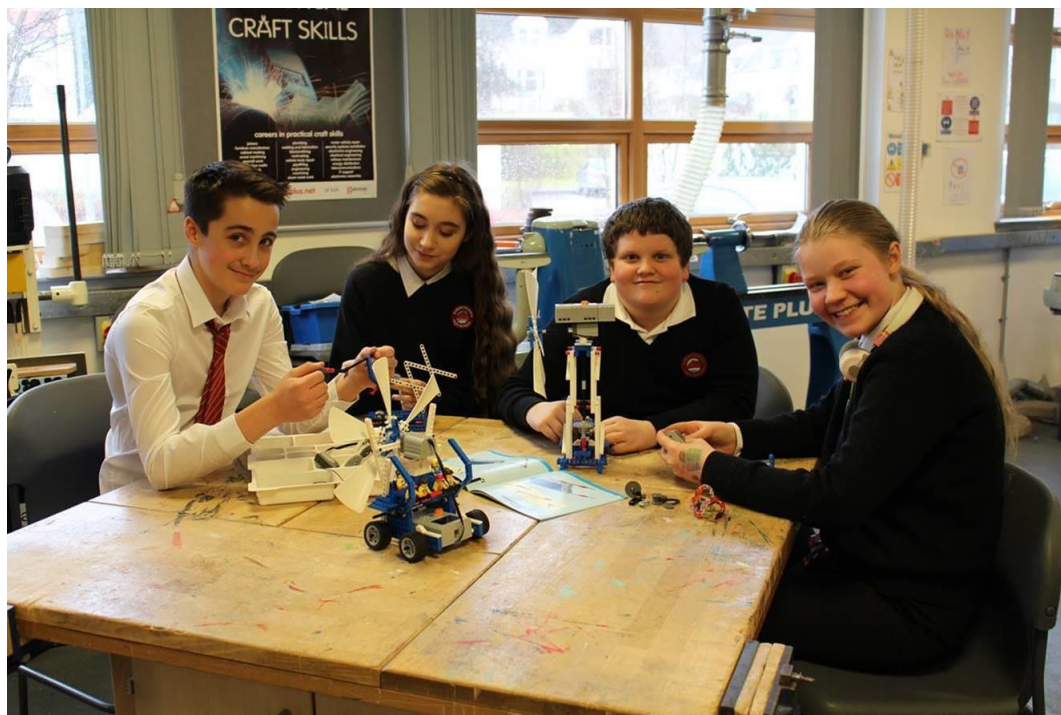
Is it a wind turbine? Is it a racing robot? Or is it means to generate green energy from hillwalkers in Lochaber?

Well, if you are a pupil at Kinlochleven High School it could be all three.

Over the last few months S1 and S2 pupils at the school have been powering ahead with green energy ideas – using Lego to build prototypes and try out their blue sky thinking.

In February the S1 team entered a robotics race challenge for Scottish schools – and produced the fastest-ever self-powered Lego robot in the UK, covering four metres in just 1.66 seconds!

This led to the UK-wide *Tomorrow's Engineers Robotics Challenge* final in Birmingham this month, where the Lochaber team's robot went head to head with 44 other schools from across the country.



Left to right: S2 pupils Danny Cockerill, Hanna Olah, Hugh Purvis, Daisy Baldwin.

They didn't win – this time – but they have now been invited to attend the Scottish *Big Bang* event in Perth on 12th June as Scottish champions.

And not happy to rest on their laurels, the school's S2 pupils are about to launch a 'Green Energy Manifesto' – using Lego models to showcase ideas on how green energy can be used to transform the area.

They have already invited the local MP, MSP and councillors to a launch 'energy expo' on April 20, where they hope to generate enthusiasm and support for their manifesto ideas – which include a hillwalker-powered generator and a tourist attraction which uses green energy to take folk up and down the hill.

"The whole initiative was sparked off last year when local Councillor Andrew Baxter suggested we visit the new 2MW Loch Eilde Mor hydro scheme being built by Green Highland Renewables just outside the town," explains Kinlochleven Head Teacher Rebecca Machin.

"Their project manager Colin Gilmour has been helping the school with STEM projects, and he got us thinking about green energy and how important it is in the local economy.

"We then applied to the Royal Society for support, with Green Highland as our industrial partner, and this resulted in an award of £3500 to buy technical Lego," Rebecca says.

On the back of this success the school then entered the robotics race challenge for Scottish schools, which gained them another £2000 worth of Lego. They are now using these building blocks to fuel their green energy ideas.

"It's a really exciting time for our school," says Rebecca. "In many ways Lochaber has been built on renewable energy. Everyone knows the history of hydro, and it's been terrific to see the pupils become so enthused and embrace the opportunities that have come their way.

"Going to see a new, operational hydro scheme makes their learning very relevant and has encouraged them to be creative and put their experience into practice, and we are all really proud of what they are doing," Rebecca concludes.

Commenting on the scheme Colin Gilmour, Project Manager at Green Highland Renewables said:

"It has been a real pleasure to work with the pupils and talk about the engineering challenges and opportunities offered by green energy. The children are just full of ideas and it is wonderful to see these taking shape through all of the school's initiatives. We plan to bring them back up to our scheme in late March to see our second turbine being installed."

The Kinlochleven High School energy expo show will take place on April 20, to which all parents, local employers and politicians are invited.