

Saving the planet's resources through design . . .

NORTH East secondary and middle school students are being challenged to redesign the way we live to help ensure vital resources survive for future generations. Year eight students from across the region will take part in the Dott 07 Eco Design Challenge which is launched today (Tues).

The aim is to get young people thinking – and talking – about all aspects of design. And the challenge, with great prizes up for grabs, is interesting, educational, worthwhile . . . and fun!

Pupils have been invited to take a 'eco footprint' of a typical school day – recording everything from how many miles their food has to travel before it reaches their plates, to how much energy and water is used to heat and clean their classrooms. They will then design new and improved ways of reducing their school's footprint - with the winners being rewarded with a visit from a top flight designer, to help take their ideas to the next stage. And the team at Dott 07, which today issued the challenge, await the results with bated breath.

'Sometimes children can come up with the most blindingly simple solutions to questions that have been raging in the minds of the so-called experts for years.

'We fully expect to be astonished by the creativity and enthusiasm that this contest produces,'" said Nick Devitt, Eco Design Challenge co-ordinator.

'Dott 07 poses the question "who designs your life?" and it will be a great start for us if we can get across the message to an up-and-coming generation that design is not all about brand names and products . . . it's about a way of life.

'The result will be this future generation learns how to maximize its resources leading to greater sustainability of the planet's resources in years to come,' he said.

A number of top designers have already signed up to support the initiative and there will also be prizes for pupils and teaching staff.

A series of cool animated characters embodying each of the Eco Design Challenge's themes have been created to bring the campaign to life for the young people.

One of the first schools to sign up is Walker Technology College, Newcastle. And head teacher Steve Gater said: 'The Eco Design Challenge presents us with the opportunity to discuss something which is very relevant both to the work we are doing in school and to the future lives of these youngsters.

'I have found that many of our pupils care passionately about the environment and are interested in finding ways to make a positive impact on the environment. This provides us with the opportunity to do just that.'

Teachers from all over the North East are being invited to events to find out more about the Eco Design Challenge and how their schools can sign up. Judging will take place in March.

Anyone interested in finding out more can log on to www.dott07.com/go/education/eco-design-challenge.

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Photo and interview opportunities will take place with year eight students, teachers and representatives of the Eco Challenge / Dott 07 at Walker Technology College, (Walker Technology College, Middle Street, Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 4BY) at 11am, Tuesday 26th September.

Editor's notes:

- The Eco Design Challenge is the education strand of Dott 07 (Designs of the time 2007) which aims to change the way we live through design.
- Dott 07 is funded by One NorthEast and the Design Council.
- It is the first in a bi-annual roll out of the ten year Design Council Designs of the time (Dott) programme which will be delivered across regions and countries of the UK.
- Dott 07 has several themes: energy and environment; sustainable tourism; school and community; health and wellbeing; mobility and access; town and country; food and nutrition; and housing and home.
- The Challenge is being led by programme director John Thackara, renowned internationally for his work as director of design futures network Doors Of Perception, which organises projects in which designers, technology experts and grass roots innovators work together in new ways.
- The executive producer is Robert O' Dowd who has extensive experience in business and creative development from being an original director of Classic FM to chief executive of Real Health (UK) Ltd and 180 Solutions (UK) Ltd.