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NEWS

Published: 20/06/2011 17:02 - Updated: 21/06/2011 15:59

Carties head to Cairngorm

by Gavin Musgrove

THE best soapbox racing teams in the country will be returning to Aviemore at the start of next month to race at speeds in excess of 60mph down the Cairngorm Ski Road.

But although they share a name with the traditional homemade carts beloved of children the world over, these custom made racers are very different from their cousins of fondly remembered childhood.

"When you first mention soapbox racing, people immediately think of something made out of planks and pram wheels with a bit of rope for steering, but we've moved on a bit from there," said Scottish Cartie Association Chairman and race organiser Stephen Hall.

"But instead think 'Oor Willie' meets Formula 1. Look closely at the machines at Cairn Gorm and you'll see hydraulic disc brakes, slick tyres, steering dampers, suspension, roll bars, harnesses and fully enclosed aerodynamic bodywork.

"They'll reach speeds in excess of 60mph, which is not bad for something without an engine".

The event started in 2009 following a successful bid for funding from the Cairngorm Local Action Group under the LEADER+ scheme, and has grown in size and stature since then.

When entries for went online last November, all the places were snapped up within 48 hours.

It is now the most prestigious race in the UK and, with 40 teams expected this year, one of the largest too. There is even one team travelling from the other side of the Atlantic.

Last year's winner, Steve Thomas, from Wiltshire, will be returning to defend his trophy but keen to challenge him will be Lee Wakefield.

Lee has been making a name for himself in England, but he has never raced at Cairngorm and wants to make his mark at the longest and fastest soapbox rave in the UK.

Last year Steve was clocked by radar speed trap travelling at 64mph on the two mile course.

Both he and Lee will be aiming to break that top speed when they compete for the ultimate prize - the 'King of the Mountain' trophy.

The road ski will be closed to traffic during the event, and the racing will be from 6pm until a little after 10pm on Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd July.

The main event is the Saturday evening when the teams race head to head in thrilling elimination heats which culminate in the grand final starting at around 9.45pm.

Spectators are welcome to come and watch the spectacle free of charge, and should park at the Hay Field by the Glenmore snow gates before proceeding on foot, following the directions of the volunteer marshalls.

For further details, see www.soapboxracing.co.uk.

Although there are no competitive places left, there is still time to get involved.

The organisers are looking for volunteer marshalls and 4x4 vehicles and drivers to tow the carties back to the start line after each run.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact the organisers via the event web site at www.soapboxracing.co.uk.



The ski road will be closed as the carties race

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