

Car of the future now in Southampton



*No ordinary
Fiesta . . .*

A revolutionary new car, which averages more than 200 miles per gallon in the city, is being developed at the University.

Postgraduate research student Dennis Doerffel has turned a hatchback into a hybrid electric car. It uses the latest lithium ion batteries linked to a small petrol engine, which cuts in automatically if more power or range is required.

Dennis said: 'More than 90 per cent of all car journeys are less than 50 miles long. That is the range of the battery and it can be charged up overnight from a domestic power socket. Longer journeys are possible with the aid of the economical petrol engine.'

It is predicted that cars may eventually be powered by hydrogen or fuel-cells when global oil reserves run out. This three-year project represents a vital stage in the development process towards new fuels. Dennis's work centres on making the various systems and components work together as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Dr Suleiman Abu-Sharkh, who is supervising the work, said: 'This new technology has many advantages in terms of energy use, safety, pollution and noise. We hope to find partners in the automotive industry to develop these sustainable transport ideas further or perhaps a local garage which is interested in getting involved.'

The car has already been displayed at the Winchester Alternative Transport Day and the Environmental Show at Brockenhurst College. Dennis plans to take part in an alternative vehicle race around Germany this summer to test the reliability of the technology and promote engineering.