

# Economy Secretary welcomes plans for a digital and cyber security powerhouse

Global technology company, Thales which provides solutions for the aerospace, defence, transportation, space and security markets, is seeking Welsh Government support for a programme that would see it establishing a new National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) in Ebbw Vale.

Thales plans to work with the Welsh Government, Blaenau Gwent Council and the University of South Wales in establishing the centre which would act as a catalyst for digital and cyber educational training and research facilities.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

I am pleased to confirm that the Welsh Government is in discussion with Thales about their plans to establish a National Digital Exploitation Centre as part of our Tech Valleys project.

The centre, which would be located in Ebbw Vale, could help Wales exploit the global opportunities of digital transformation and equip our businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of large regional and national projects.

It could also serve to stimulate and create employment in high value technology businesses which is an ambition that is right at the heart of our Tech Valleys project.

The Welsh Government is currently assessing Thales's proposal for the centre.

Gareth Williams, vice-president of Thales UK's security and cyber business, said:

We are delighted that the Welsh Government is keen to work with industry and academia on developing this critical capability and skillset within Wales.

One of the major benefits of this digital centre is to develop a talent pipeline of people in this increasingly important sector. As well as developing specific skills, it will also enable businesses – large and small – to use digital transformation in a safe and secure way.

By their very nature, digital and cyber security are constantly evolving and this centre will play an important role in that. We also have an established partnership with the University of South Wales and that is allowing us to conduct invaluable research into the future of cyber security.

The NDEC's research capability and educational outreach is being developed in partnership with the University of South Wales, a strategic partner of Thales UK and founder of the National Cyber Security Academy in Newport.

Professor Julie Lydon OBE, USW's Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, said:

This centre would be a significant step in developing South Wales's reputation as a leading region in the growing global market for cyber graduates and research knowledge. We want the centre to harness the academic research and graduate education together with the market insight and technological capability of industry. It's an exciting combination that would be good for our local communities, for Wales, and for UK plc.

The Tech Valleys project in Blaenau Gwent is part of the wider Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys, which was set up by the Welsh Government to deliver real change for the South Wales Valleys; create good-quality jobs, closer to people's homes; improve people's skills and bring prosperity to all.