

# Funding for 50,000 sq ft industrial building to kick start Automotive Technology Park

The Economy Secretary made the announcement ahead of a visit to Ebbw Vale on Monday, where he is due to meet local apprentices and speak to the board of the Enterprise Zone and others about his plans and vision for the area.

Earlier this year the Economy Secretary announced the Welsh Government would invest £100m over ten years in an Automotive Technology Park in Blaenau Gwent with the potential to create up to 1500 new full time jobs in one of Wales' most deprived areas.

The park is one of six strategic hubs identified in the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys' high-level action plan, Our Valleys, Our Future, which was published in July.

Speaking ahead of his latest visit to Ebbw Vale, he said:

"I am keen to progress our plans for a £100m Technology Park as quickly as possible in order to secure high quality jobs and investment in Ebbw Vale and stimulate economic growth across the Heads of the Valleys.

"Today, I am pleased to announce that I have approved the necessary funding for the design and construction of a 50,000 sq ft industrial space in Rhyd Y Blew in Ebbw Vale to kick start that process.

"Since I announced the Welsh Government's plans to establish the technology park, we have had a significant number of enquiries from automotive companies looking to move to Ebbw Vale, and I am confident that the development of this new facility will help us to start to meet demand in the market.

"There is no doubt we are at a pivotal time for the automotive industry. I want the new Technology Park to become renowned as a centre for the development and application of next generation technologies for intelligent transportation. I'm confident that the inclusion of elements such as a 5G test bed will help us achieve that.

"This needs to be a project that can have an impact in both the near and the long term. We need to retain our focus on the here and the now, which also means focussing on jobs on the ground and the petrol engines that will be with us for some time to come, but it needs to be built in a way that can capitalise on rapid changes happening in the automotive industry. The park and our investment

needs to be future proofed to develop and take advantage of the cleaner technologies of the future.

“We need to be clever and collaborative in order to make the Technology Park a success which means leveraging in funding from both private and public sectors, working constructively with our partners and investing in local skills.

“Later today I look forward to meeting a group of Aspire apprentices working and training in and around Ebbw Vale. Their skills, and the skills of other like them across the Heads of the Valleys will be key to the success of this technology park. We owe it to them and the region more widely to make it a success.”

Chair of the Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone Board, Mark Langshaw said:

“ We are pleased to welcome the Economy Secretary to Ebbw Vale again to discuss plans for the £100m technology park. It is good to see that work is progressing and that the Welsh Government has committed to the construction of a 50,000 sq foot industrial building in Rhyd y Blew. We look forward to working with Welsh Government on this project to ensure that it delivers for the people of Blaenau Gwent and beyond.”

The Economy Secretary will co-chair another Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys Taskforce public engagement event at Ebbw Vale Institute later today alongside fellow Taskforce Minister Alun Davies, where economic prosperity and opportunities to capitalise on the region’s natural environment will both be on the agenda.