

# Welsh Government and Thales to work together on £20m cyber centre in Blaenau Gwent

The National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) will be the first research and development facility of its kind in Wales, and will provide the perfect setting for SMEs and microbusinesses to test and develop their digital concepts.

It will also provide a research lab in which big multi nationals can develop major technology advances and will connect Wales to major tech centres across the UK and globally.

Not only will the cyber centre help Wales to exploit the global opportunities of digital transformation, it will also equip businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of large regional and national projects.

The NDEC, located in Blaenau Gwent, will be delivered by Thales in collaboration with the University of South Wales (USW).

The University will run an Advanced Cyber Institute at the Centre that will provide a base for major, multi million pound academic research and will also operate a Digital Education Centre that will enable SMEs, schools and individuals with the skills they need to protect themselves online.

As well as providing a vital facility for Welsh SMEs and academic research, the NDEC will also root technology giant Thales firmly in the South Wales valleys. The centre will be managed by a small team, some of whom have already been recruited from the local community.

Both the Welsh Government and Thales have committed £10m each to the project which is expected to generate significant income. All elements, apart from the educational aspects of the centre, are expected to be fully self-sufficient within five years.

Announcing the Welsh Government's partnership with Thales, Economy Minister Ken Skates said:

"I am delighted that the Welsh Government is working in partnership with global technology company Thales on a new £20m cyber centre that will be located in Blaenau Gwent and right at the heart of our Tech Valleys project.

The centre will help ensure that Wales exploits the global opportunities of digital transformation, provide a base for ground breaking research and will equip businesses of all shapes and sizes with the skills and knowledge they need to win a greater share of

large regional and national projects.

I am confident that through our partnership with Thales and the University of South Wales we will work to stimulate and create employment in high value technology businesses – an ambition that is right at the heart of our Tech Valleys project.”

Speaking of the announcement, Gareth Williams, Vice President, Secure Communications and Information Systems, Thales, said:

“We are very pleased to be working with the Welsh Government, University of South Wales and Blaenau Gwent Council to develop and deliver the NDEC. This will act as a cornerstone of our cyber security capabilities in the UK, providing a test bed for our technology, whilst also providing a catalyst for regeneration in the region.

This highly technical and accessible facility will be a centre of cyber and digital development and education, and a connection for South Wales to major technology centres across the United Kingdom.”

Professor Julie Lydon, University of South Wales (USW) Vice-Chancellor, said:

“USW is already a recognised expert in cyber security, with our Newport-based National Cyber Security Academy (NCSA) working closely with businesses to give students real-life experience in the sector.

This expertise in preparing students for a career in industry means we are ideally placed to support the NDEC’s aim of harnessing academic research and graduate education to develop market insight, enhance technological capability, and develop a skilled labour force in Ebbw Vale and the wider South Wales region through its educational outreach, CPD courses, and support for SMEs.

This project will be a significant step in building the region’s reputation in the ever-expanding global market for cyber graduates and research expertise.”

The Tech Valleys project is a key commitment of the Ministerial Taskforce for the South Wales Valleys.