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The automotive story grows at St Athan...

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UK

battery company Britishvolt charges ahead in Wales...

By Robin Roberts (Wheels Within Wales)

A £1.1 billion investment in a new massive car batteries plant adjacent to the Aston Martin Lagonda facility at St Athan, in the Vale of Glamorgan.

UK start-up battery manufacturer Britishvolt has shortlisted the site at the former RAF base next to where AML started making their luxury DBX SUV in December and where it also plans to assemble its fully electric luxury sports saloon in a couple of years.

That time-frame will fall in very conveniently to the Britishvolt investment announced this morning for the UK's first 30-plus gigafactory at Bro Tathan.

The Britishvolt GigaPlant and accompanying solar park will be situated in 80+ hectares of



green industrial park, with a production capacity of up to 35 GWH. Britishvolt will be a global leader in producing high performance green lithium Ion batteries. It will become one of the largest industrial investments in British history.

A Welsh Government spokesperson said, “We have been working with Britishvolt on this project for a significant period of time and we are very pleased they have shortlisted Bro Tathan as a location for its landmark gigafactory. We firmly believe that Bro Tathan provides a compelling case particularly for a company looking to become one of the greenest battery producers worldwide.

“We will continue to work closely with Britishvolt on a range of issues, including localising their supply chain, to secure this investment which would be transformative post-coronavirus both in terms of the nature of the technologies adopted and the scale of employment opportunities.”

The battery industry is forecast to be worth £5 billion domestically by 2025, and the demand for lithium ion cells across a number of industries, including vehicle electrification, is already increasing dramatically, and risks becoming constrained as the UK Government strives to meet its Road to Zero targets by 2050.

Not only is Britishvolt filling this gap in the market, but is also moving to leverage the UK’s world-leading lithium ion battery research development and academic community to ensure the country retains a commercial and technical lead.

The initial wave of £1.2 billion of investment into the site will create 1,200 jobs but eventually two further phases will lead to around 3,500 jobs in total, but you can double that when adding the component supply chain and probable R&D and other academic jobs.

The firm is also announcing plans to build a solar park alongside the factory, to support sustainable production of batteries and meet low carbon objectives, ensuring the firm plays a true and active part in the global green agenda and this fulfills the Welsh Government’s drive to be the greenest region in the UK and one of the leading low carbon engineering



centres of excellence.

Lars Carlstrom, CEO at Britishvolt said, “We aim to deliver a scalable, onshore production and diverse portfolio of world-class lithium ion batteries, to support the unprecedented transition to electrification - primarily servicing the automotive and energy storage markets. “After six months of careful analysis, Bro Tathan is the preferred choice due to number of different factors. The Welsh Government has welcomed us with open arms and impeccable due diligence, and the region meets crucial criteria including import/export accessibility, availability of labour and skilled staff, along with convenient geographical proximity to customers and local industrial companies.”



Bro Tathan industrial zone, Vale of Glamorgan.

Lars continues: “The sheer scale of this project means our gigafactory will have one of the top three largest single footprints in Europe. The plant will be one km long and 30 metres tall, needing 80 plus hectares of land, and the energy intensive nature of producing lithium ion cells means nearby renewable sources are of huge importance.

Our ambition is to become one of the greenest battery producers worldwide, which will be facilitated through the creation of our very own solar park, ensuring a near carbon neutral



electricity input.”

Lars explained that the state of art and high efficiency gigaplant will employ at least 3,500 local Welsh people. These will be across a wide range of disciplines and will create a local ecosystem of 10,000 to 15,000 further jobs for the wider supply chain - including material suppliers, contractors and local services.

“By the third quarter of 2023, we plan for the first stage of our plant to be fully functional, and envision that between 40 and 60 per cent of the initial £1.2 billion of investment will be injected directly into the chosen community, representing a real catalyst for growth in the local economy and the UK.”





Lars-Carlström BritishVolt with his Saab V6 9-5.

The Welsh location is well known to Britishvolt's chief operating officer, Orral Nadjari, who studied at Cardiff University for seven years and said St Athan was a "very good location" for the factory.

"The direct dialogue that we've had with the Welsh Government has been going on now for a couple of weeks, and the readiness and preparedness that they've shown us has been extremely interesting, hence now why they're in the running for our site location."

He said last year when Britishvolt was looking at 42 possible locations for the plant, "By 2023 our plant will be capable of 10GWh, building out an additional 10GWh afterward with a final goal to achieve 30GWh by 2025/2026."



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Orral Nadjeri.