

TRADE & INVEST | Good people do their best work in Wales

TECH VALLEYS

Centred in Blaenau Gwent, in the South Wales Valleys, tech start-ups have a place of their own, designed to meet their needs now, and as they lead us into the future.



Vision of the future.

Blaenau Gwent is becoming a hi-tech hotbed for developing new technologies and advanced manufacturing, with new infrastructure, superfast broadband, and a selection of properties for companies of all sizes — all backed up by full business support.



LEE WATERS MS
Deputy Minister for
Economy and Transport

The Tech Valleys programme is creating a perfect environment for the kind of clever, quick-thinking industries that are changing the way we live and work. It's centred in the county of Blaenau Gwent, in the South Wales Valleys. This has been an industrial powerhouse for hundreds of years, producing the coal and steel which powered and built the modern world.

These days, the Valleys are looking towards the next industrial revolutions. The region is becoming a hi-tech hotbed for developing new technologies and advanced manufacturing.

It's a team effort. The Welsh Government is investing £100m over 10 years to create 1,500-plus jobs*. We're working with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, industry and academia to invest in the infrastructure and skills to make it happen.

And it *is* happening. Many tech companies have already made this their home. We've built new start-up units, business parks and industrial estates. We've upgraded the existing ones. The National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) is a world-class technology hub at the heart of the Tech Valleys.

Location is key, too: on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park, with superb transport links to the rest of the UK. It's a great environment, in every sense.

Front cover:
Dh ASL Testing Lab,
©Blaenau Gwent County
Borough Council.

Source:
*Welsh Government,
Tech Valleys Strategic Plan,
April 2018



TECH VALLEYS

Location
Blaenau Gwent, South Wales
Announced
2018



Centre of excellence:
The Works site in Ebbw Vale includes (above) Coleg Gwent
and (below) the Lime Avenue Box Village Start-up Units.
Image by VisEngine Digital solutions.
©Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

By 2027 the South Wales Valleys will be a globally recognised centre for developing new technologies to support cutting-edge industry.



MORE THAN A NAME

Tech Valleys is more than just a vision. It’s happening right now. We’ve invested millions in recent years to make this a hugely attractive place to do business.

In the Zone:
Ebbw Vale Enterprise Zone
has 40 hectares (98 acres)
of development land.



Tech Valleys doesn’t exist in a vacuum. It’s part of an integrated portfolio of projects that work together. Ebbw Vale has one of Wales’ eight Enterprise Zones, meaning it’s a priority area for business support, skills, first-class infrastructure, financial incentives, and property and development opportunities. It’s part of the wider Cardiff Capital Region, a project that’s investing £1.2bn of public money to leverage another £4bn of private investment across South East Wales.*

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council’s business team works with Welsh Government to deliver what’s needed. As a devolved Government, we don’t need to wait for decisions from Westminster. So we can act fast to help businesses set up and thrive.

Some of the work we’ve done is very visible — a railway extension, A465 dual carriageway, and massive physical infrastructure work. Then there are the vital invisible elements: the comms and tech infrastructure that underpins game-changing digital technology: 30,000 premises can now access superfast broadband.†

We’re supporting high-value advanced technologies that underpin cutting-edge industries. These are some of the areas of expertise that are already flourishing in the region:

- Artificial intelligence
- Autonomy
- Advanced robotics
- Machine learning
- Cyber security
- Internet of Things
- Advanced manufacturing
- Automotive
- Autonomous and electric vehicles
- Electric vehicles
- Battery technology
- Pharmaceutical
- MedTech
- Nanomaterials
- Compound semiconductors
- Environmental technologies
- Off-grid energy storage and generation
- Renewable energy:
marine, tidal, solar, wind, hydro
- Fintech



Aiming high:
Coleg Gwent Learning Zone
is based at The Works site
in Ebbw Vale.

Source:
*cardiffcapitalregion.wales/about
†[Blaenau Gwent CBC](http://BlaenauGwentCBC)

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we don’t need to wait for
decisions from Westminster.
So we can act fast to help
businesses set up and thrive.



Space that Works.

Not every start-up grows into a tech giant. But it's good to know that there's plenty of space to grow in the region.

This aerial view offers a good window into the scale of what's happening in Blaenau Gwent. The site of the former Ebbw Vale steelworks has now become a vibrant, mixed-use facility called The Works. The site provides learning, leisure, recreational and community facilities — as well as commercial opportunities.

The Works is already home to the National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC), Coleg Gwent, a school, hospital, nature reserve, railway station, leisure centre and sports pitches. The Gwent Archives and local history museum are based in the grade II* listed General Offices, alongside hi-tech conference facilities. The Works has its own energy centre to reduce costs and carbon emissions. There are plans for 56 new homes and 6.2 hectares (15 acres) of publicly-owned, developable land.

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Diverse, flexible, future-proof.

There’s high-quality commercial space for companies from boutique to behemoth, and at every stage of their growth cycle. Start off with a single desk in a serviced office, and grow your big idea onto an entire industrial estate.



MOE FOROUZAN
Business and Innovation
Manager, Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Lime Avenue Box Village Start-up Units

This striking collection of 21 units ranges in size from 14.7 to 20.4 square metres (159 to 220 square feet), to a total of around 372 square metres (4,000 square feet). There are also communal areas and superfast broadband throughout. New for 2020.

Lime Avenue Hybrid Units

These 9 starter units range from 223 to 929 square metres (2,400 to 10,000 square feet), with a total of 2,044 square metres (22,000 square feet). It’s split broadly into 50 per cent office and 50 per cent workshop / manufacturing / development space. New for 2020.

Ebbw Vale Innovation Centre

Top-quality business premises with free parking, meeting rooms, a serviced reception, plus gym and sauna. 35 office units, 12 workshop units.

Roseheyworth Business Park

This park in Abertillery is home to some of the area’s key tech companies. Several units are being upgraded for greater energy efficiency and internet speeds.

Tredegar Business Park

Tredegar Business Park comprises 2.1 hectares (5 acres) of publicly-owned developable land, immediately available for commercial uses.

The General Offices

Listed grade II*, the original steel industry HQ is home to several civic organisations. Modern conferencing facilities have been added, including 4D cinema, 360° projection room and Sandpit interactive system. It has 7 flexible meeting spaces to cater for capacities from 2–250.

Old meets new:
New industrial units are available in strategic locations like (centre) Tredegar Business Park, while the grade II* listed General Offices have been given a thoroughly modern hi-tech makeover.



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Blaenau Gwent has an excellent selection of commercial properties and land to suit every type of business spread across 19 business parks and industrial estates. There are also development sites in both public and private ownership.

It’s easy to grow a business here.
There’s an Enterprise Zone at the heart of the Tech Valleys with plenty of possibilities for expansion. Many units are ready for immediate occupation. At bigger sites, the ground has been prepared, and roads, utilities and services installed. It’s a land of limitless potential for start-ups, growing businesses and developers.

Ambition has no limits.

Waun-y-Pound Industrial Estate

Minutes away from the newly dualled A465, Waun y Pound offers 3 hectares (7.4 acres) of developmental land available for business and industrial uses. There are existing units available for a number of business needs.

Rassau Industrial Estate

Rassau has 7.1 hectares (17 acres) of privately-owned, developable land that could accommodate larger buildings for business and industrial uses. Ready-to-move-into industrial units are also available for immediate occupation.

Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate

Home to world-leading manufacturing companies, and with room for a wide range of businesses in both the development sites or existing units. The estate also has 2.16 hectares (5 acres) of developmental land available for business and industrial uses.

Blue sky thinking:
Rhyd-y-Blew is the largest piece of development land in the South Wales Valleys.

Land of promise.

Bryn Serth

This flexible site can accommodate a wide range of projects in its 10 hectares (24 acres) of privately-owned, developable land suitable for multiple kinds of commercial and industrial uses.

Rhyd-y-Blew

The largest site in the South Wales Valleys has 13 hectares (32.5 acres) of publicly-owned, developable land set within 29 hectares (72 acres). Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) are available which could accommodate larger buildings for commercial and industrial uses. The Welsh Government has built access roads and installed infrastructure as part of its vision to create a high-quality industrial park that will attract leading businesses. They have also invested in a 4,645 square metre (50,000 square feet) flexible space, setting the standard for architectural and landscaping quality for future developments.

Future opportunities.

Former Techboard building and adjoining land

This strategically important site is being upgraded, while the adjoining 15.4 hectares (38 acres) of land is available for development.

Lime Avenue Employment Park

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is working on this new site with space to bring forward 25 flexible space units housed in a range of building sizes. It’s part of The Works development in the centre of Ebbw Vale.

Festival Park

Part of the 1992 UK Garden Festival site, it has served as a modern shopping centre with family activity park. The fantastic views from this location are set to become home to a new and exciting mixed use, office and residential opportunity, currently being developed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

SPACE TO GROW

Everything's in place.

We're well connected, in every sense. High-speed comms offer an instant connection to the world, while the newly up-graded A465 provides a fast physical link. Not that locals are in a hurry to leave: this corner of Wales has some of our favourite places right on the doorstep. Quality of life counts for something, too.

The region’s easy accessibility means you’ll have strong road, rail and air links to customers and suppliers in the UK, mainland Europe and beyond.

Road

The A465 Head of the Valleys road is completing a £1bn upgrade, with new dual carriageways giving easy access to the UK motorway network — the M4, M5 and M6 are less than an hour away. This links us with the West Midlands and other UK manufacturing hubs in under two hours. The airports at Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham and London are easy to reach, too.

Drive times	
Brecon Beacons National Park	10 mins
Abergavenny / Crickhowell	20 mins
Wye Valley	30 mins
Cardiff	45 mins
Swansea	50 mins
Bristol	60 mins
Cheltenham	80 mins
Birmingham	110 mins
London	180 mins

Rail

An £11.5m rail extension and station — Ebbw Vale Town — opened in 2015, bringing the national rail network into the heart of the region, with hourly services to Cardiff and plans to increase capacity to four trains an hour as part of the South Wales Metro programme. This integrated public transport network is transforming rail and bus services, as well as cycling and walking. The electrification of the Great Western mainline between Cardiff and London has reduced rail journeys to just 100 minutes.

Communications

Tech businesses expect — quite rightly — the fastest broadband speeds and 5G. Ebbw Vale has an Enterprise Zone, which means it’s a priority area for delivering fast, reliable communications. Today, 98 per cent of premises have access to superfast broadband.*

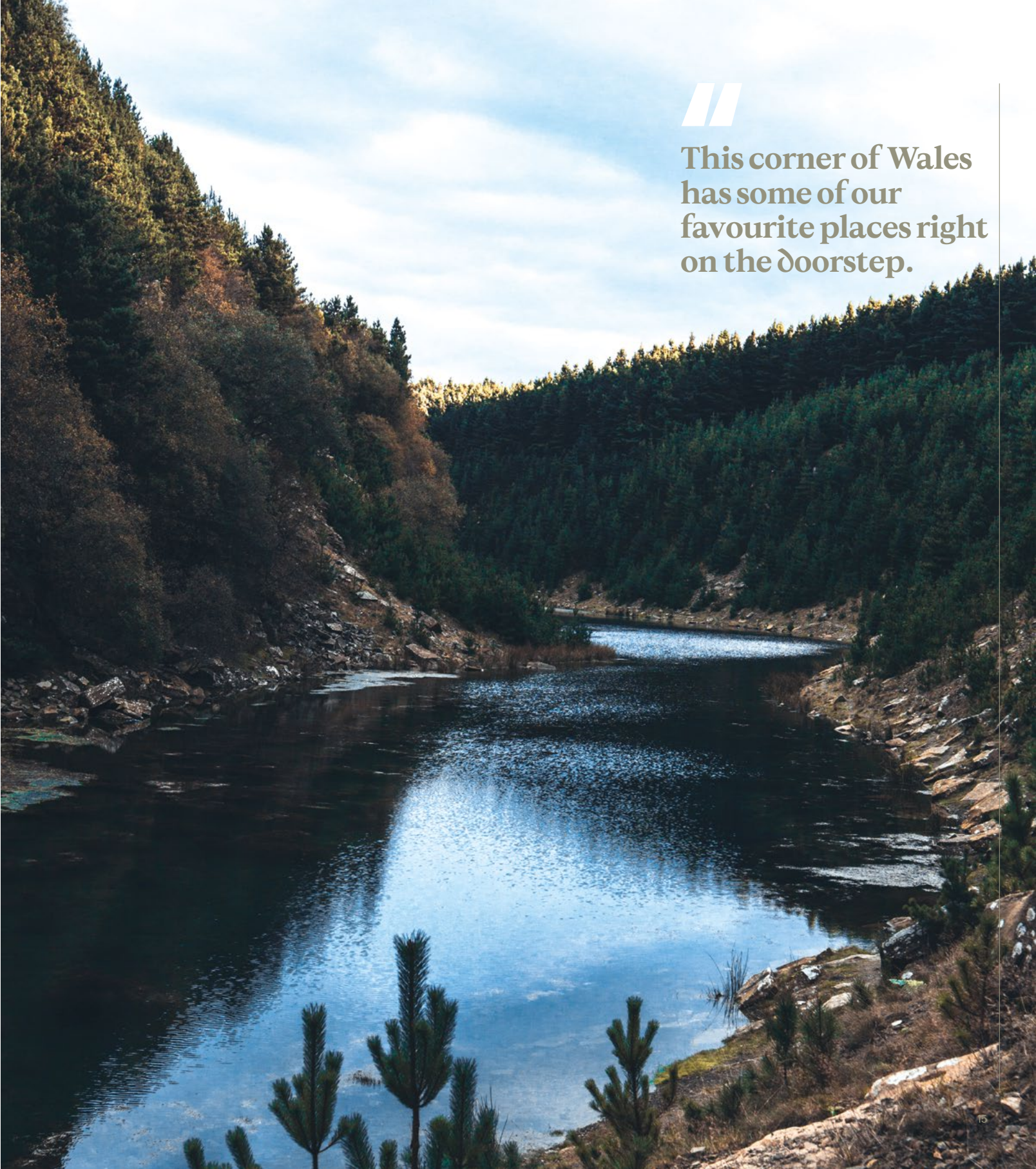
Lifestyle

Above all, it’s a great place to live and work. Commuting distances are short, the cost of living is low, and the quality of life is high. The Brecon Beacons National Park, Wye Valley and Gower Peninsula are all within easy reach, while Cardiff has all the cultural attractions and amenities of a modern capital city.



Joined up thinking:
Blaenau Gwent is well connected to the UK, Europe and the world, and there’s plenty to enjoy on the doorstep, like (right) Blaencuffin Canyon in Abertillery.

Source:
*Blaenau Gwent CBC



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This corner of Wales has some of our favourite places right on the doorstep.

FUTURE SKILLS

The next revolution will be powered by knowledge. Tech industries rely on a smart workforce that’s trained in all the right skills. The local education system is preparing the next generation for high-skill, high-value jobs.



COLEG GWENT

Location	Blaenau Gwent
Founded	2012



*One of Coleg Gwent’s six campuses, the Learning Zone is based in The Works site in Ebbw Vale. They offer 32 A-level courses, more than 150 full-time vocational courses, and 36 university-level courses. There’s a strong emphasis on providing both personal fulfilment and the real-world skills that employers need. They also collaborate with local businesses and organisations like Aspire Blaenau Gwent to provide award-winning apprenticeships.**

Source:
*coleggwent.ac.uk
†cardiff.ac.uk, swansea.ac.uk

Dennison Advanced Materials Centre

Coleg Gwent have also teamed up with local industry to create DAMC, which is Wales’s first specialist training centre for composite materials. They’ve formed partnerships with key engineering companies to make all of their courses current and relevant.

Cyber College Cymru

The Cyber College Cymru initiative works with industry partners to develop the cyber skills we need now and in the future. As part of the scheme, Coleg Gwent is delivering a BTEC National Diploma in Computing that gives students the skills they need to be workplace-ready.

Centre for Automotive & Power Systems Engineering (CAPSE)

Based at the University of South Wales, CAPSE is a nationally recognised independent research, development, test and certification house for the advanced automotive and power systems engineering sectors. CAPSE’s mission is to help develop the next generation of low carbon technologies, supporting the creation of new jobs and economic opportunities.

Cardiff and Swansea Universities

Two of the UK’s most prestigious universities are less than an hour away. Part of the elite Russell Group, Cardiff University is ranked 2nd nationally for the impact of their research as measured in the Research Excellence Framework, and are among the top five universities in the UK for research excellence. Swansea University’s major research strengths include innovation in manufacturing, materials, low carbon buildings, modelling and design, medical devices and nanotechnology, software and ICT.†



The NDEC will act as a cornerstone of our cyber security capabilities in the UK.

NATIONAL DIGITAL EXPLOITATION CENTRE

Government, industry and academia join forces to create a centre of global excellence.


The Welsh Government has worked with global technology company Thales to establish a £20m cyber centre at the heart of the Tech Valleys. The National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) was founded in 2019, in its new purpose-built home. It's the first R&D facility of its kind in Wales, and provides the perfect setting for SMEs and microbusinesses to test and develop their digital concepts.

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

The NDEC is delivered by Thales in collaboration with the University of South Wales (USW). The University will run an Advanced Cyber Institute at the Centre, a base for major academic research, and a Digital Education Centre.

Ken Skates, Economy Minister, said: "The centre will help ensure that Wales exploits the global opportunities of digital transformation and provide a base for ground-breaking research. 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."

Gareth Williams, Vice President, Secure Communications and Information Systems, Thales, said: "The NDEC 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. It 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."



NDEC

Location	Blaenau Gwent
Founded	2019



Government, industry and academia join forces: Education Minister Kirsty Williams (above) visits the £20m NDEC cyber centre, a cornerstone of our cyber security capabilities in the UK. ©Thales

MEET THE PIONEERS

A wide range of businesses have already established, and are steadily growing, in the Tech Valleys region.

PCI Pharma Services

Drug manufacture

The global pharma company's Tredegar site is its centre of excellence for drug manufacture. They've invested in cutting-edge technologies to develop and manufacture clinical and commercial scale products. Services include formulation and analytical development, clinical trial supply, and commercial manufacturing of solid oral dose, powders, liquids and semisolids, supported by in-house packaging and labelling services and on-site laboratory services.



YOU'RE IN
GOOD COMPANY

The right chemistry:
PCI Pharma Services.

Toucan Systems

Bespoke electronic design

Toucan offer bespoke electronic design and manufacture, from R&D and prototyping through to electronic design, software design and PCB assembly. The family-owned business was founded in 1986, but continues to think of itself as a start-up: flexible and innovative, nimble and responsive, allowing them to create bespoke solutions for our clients. They have recruited young engineers and designers to stay in touch with the latest thinking, and invested in state-of-the-art production facilities and equipment at their purpose-built premises in Abertillery.

Neem Biotech

Life sciences

Neem Biotech is a pharmaceutical R&D biotechnology company that pioneers and develops new solutions for tenacious healthcare challenges. Right now, their primary focus is on countering the spread of antimicrobial resistance through a transformative approach to managing bacterial infection. Founded in 1998, the company expanded into 15,000sq.ft. purpose-built laboratory facilities in Abertillery in 2015. This transformed Neem Biotech into its current status as an R&D company with its own active pipeline of assets being generated, developed and transacted.

Global Laser

Medical / clinical lasers

Specialising in a wide range of OEM, high-performance, high-reliability laser products for use in many niche applications including machine vision, alignment, medical, measurement, positioning, scientific and military. Their highly-trained employees have more than 50 years' electro-optics experience in low power laser diode module design. Their in-built control electronics provide excellent power stability over time and temperature as well as a range of modulation features that are unmatched on the marketplace.

Insurgo Media Services Ltd.

Tape media experts

Insurgo is the only UK-owned company in the tape and data management sector. Established in 2009, the company has gained experience and industry knowledge through working for global organisations who specialised in developing and manufacturing enterprise tapes for OEMs. Over the years, Insurgo has heavily invested in researching and developing its patented solutions for secure data erasure which removes all traces of data from tape media. Today, Insurgo provides tape and data management solutions to organisations across the globe and are trusted by security-conscious organisations such as Thales, Morrisons, Met Office, Cardiff University, and four of the world's largest investment banks.

Making it happen:
Continental Teves (UK) Ltd, Yuasa Battery Manufacturing (UK).



TECH, AUTOMOTIVE, FOOD, ADVANCED MATERIALS... THERE'S A DIVERSE RANGE OF SECTORS IN BLAENAU GWENT.



- BMI Redland
Roofing materials
- Continental Teves (UK) Ltd
Automotive supplies
- G-Tem
Automotive metals
- GTS Flexible Materials Ltd
Flexible laminates and insulation
- Hille
Furniture manufacture
- Northern Automotive Systems
Automotive trim
- Sears Manufacturing Ltd
Construction machine seats
- Seren Lighting Ltd.
Smart LED lighting
- Tenneco Walker Ltd
Automotive exhausts
- Yuasa Battery Manufacturing (UK)
Europe's top battery supplier



- Freudenberg Performance Materials
Technical textiles



- Eurocaps Ltd
Softgel capsule manufacturers
- Express Contract Drying Ltd
Food services
- Zorba Delicacies Ltd
Food manufacturer

Support and Incentives

There’s plenty to choose from: SMARTInnovation can help with R&D, while SMARTCymru supports businesses to develop new products, processes and services. You can also call on SMARTExpertise or form SMARTpartnerships.

If you’re in the Enterprise Zone, you could be eligible for Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) and reduced-rate loans from the Development Bank of Wales. Planning applications are fast-tracked here, and you’ll have access to plenty of support in skills development, ICT, R&D and international trade.

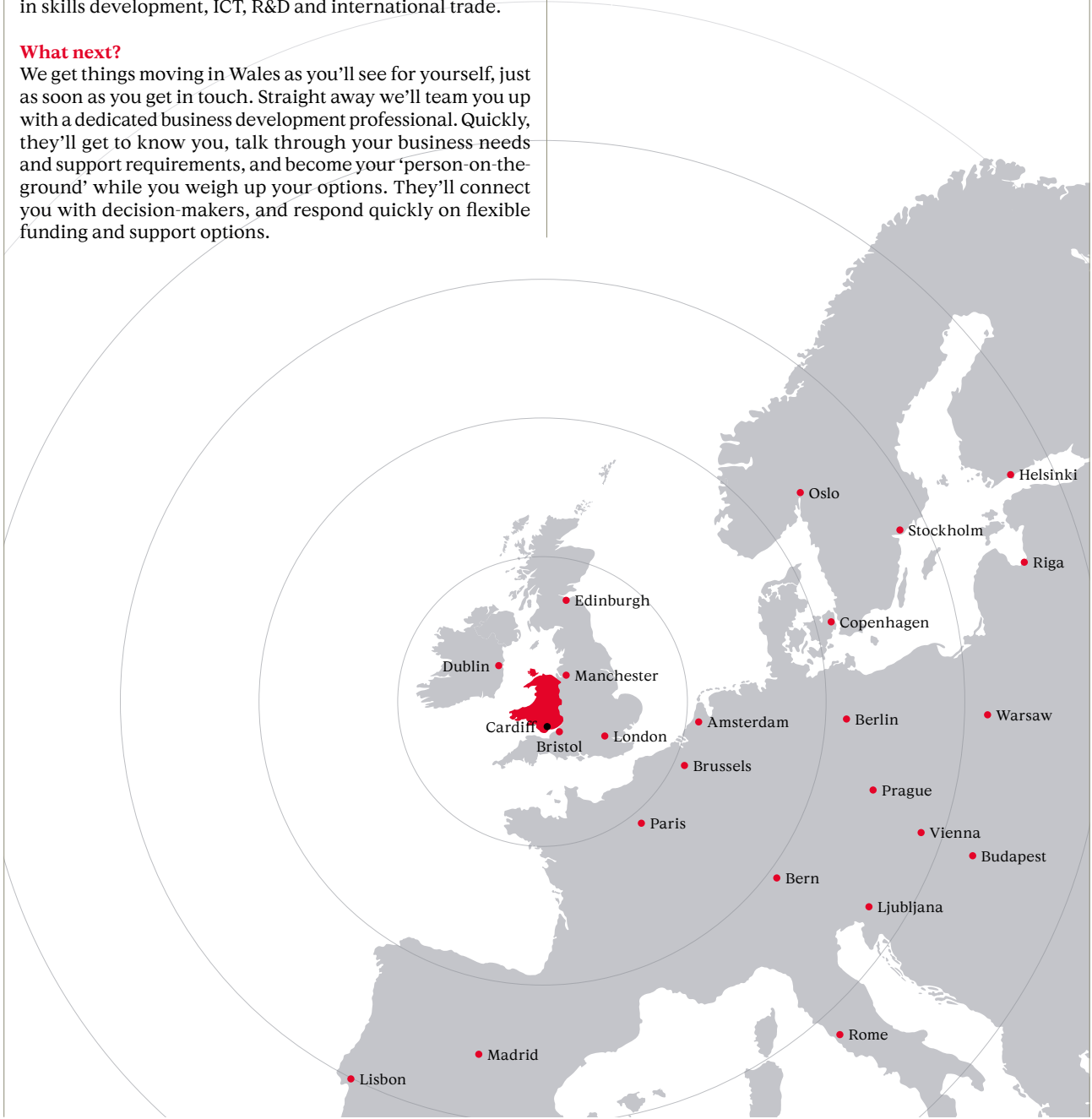
What next?

We get things moving in Wales as you’ll see for yourself, just as soon as you get in touch. Straight away we’ll team you up with a dedicated business development professional. Quickly, they’ll get to know you, talk through your business needs and support requirements, and become your ‘person-on-the-ground’ while you weigh up your options. They’ll connect you with decision-makers, and respond quickly on flexible funding and support options.

Find out what Wales can do for your business:

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This publication is also available in Welsh.
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The £100m that we are investing in Tech Valleys will drive high-value jobs and help to make Blaenau Gwent and the South Wales Valleys a globally recognised centre for the development and delivery of emerging technologies.

Ken Skates MS

Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales