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£140m plan to turn former RAF base into 'motorsport valley'

New automotive innovation centre to be built on former bomber base in Oxfordshire could create 1,500 jobs

By Alan Tovey, INDUSTRY EDITOR

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Britain's "motorsport valley" is set to be turbocharged with plans to develop a Second World War bomber base into a centre of excellence for automotive technology.

Up to 1,500 jobs are hoped to be [created by Bicester Motion](#) as it turns the former RAF base into a innovation centre for the car industry, as well as a tourist attraction for car

enthusiasts.

Acquired in 2013 by the company, the 444-acre former RAF base at Bicester in Oxfordshire [has already been turned into a hub for classic cars](#).

More than 50 wartime buildings have been restored and 45 businesses focused on maintaining and selling veteran vehicles have moved onto the site.

Bicester Motion has now unveiled a £140m investment plan for which it is running an equity raising. It is aimed at attracting more companies with the aim of becoming the UK's main automotive cluster where businesses can develop technology and test it on on-site tracks.

Classic cars on show in Bicester's 'motorsport valley' - a hub for motoring enthusiasts | CREDIT: Mathieu Bonnevie

It is hoped the site will also become a major tourist destination, increasing by tenfold the 100,000 visitors a year.

Dan Geoghegan, chief executive of Bicester Motion, started the project after being a passenger in a historic rally car which crashed.

During his recovery, he hit upon the idea of establishing a centre for the restoration of veteran vehicles, bringing together specialists at a single location, having previously spent years taking cars around the country to have them repaired.

Dan Geoghegan has already spent £20m turning RAF Bicester into a classic car destination. Now he wants to attract automotive firms who want to test new technologies | CREDIT: Alex Shore

He added: “Since we first acquired the RAF Bicester in 2013, we’ve spent around £20m turning part of it into the leading aviation and classic car hub in the country.

“That’s just one part of our overall Bicester Motion vision, a tourist destination that celebrates the innovation, technology and culture behind mobility.

Bicester's classic cars will remain, with hopes they can attract 1m tourists a year | CREDIT: Mathieu Bonnevie

"Over the next five to seven we wish to develop the airfield further with another £140m of investment. Our Innovation Quarter will focus on nurturing futuristic technology developments, including autonomy and electrification, and our Experience Quarter will allow for test drive and off-road activities for the public."

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