

Self-driving car test centre for Harborough

www.harboroughmail.co.uk 15/12/18

1 min read

The Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground.

An £8.4 million self-driving car testing facility is to be created in the Harborough district, making the area a UK hub for this technology.

The test centre, at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground, north-east of Lutterworth, will put the area at the forefront of so-called “Connected and Autonomous Vehicles” (CAV) technology boom.

The UK is aiming to be a leading light in the CAV market, which has the potential to be worth more than £50 billion per year to the UK economy by 2030.

Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground, in partnership with Madrid-based Applus+ IDIADA, will be helped by a British government grant of £4 million to design and operate the new test facility for self-driving vehicles.

The Proving Ground is already the largest privately-owned vehicle test track facility in the UK.

Dave Walton, managing director of Bruntingthorpe said: “Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground and Applus+ IDIADA are delighted to become part of a vision for the future CAV testing ecosystem in the UK.

“The site at Bruntingthorpe and the experience of the Bruntingthorpe team, together with IDIADA’s experience in designing and operating proving grounds, will allow us to develop a world class CAV facility which will attract intelligent vehicle development activities to the UK.”

The investment was also welcomed by councillors of both parties on Harborough District Council.

Conservative council leader Neil Bannister called it “brilliant news at the cutting edge of motor technology”.

And Lib-Dem opposition group leader Phil Knowles added: “It’s a huge investment in our district.”

The Bruntingthorpe initiative includes six kilometres of new roads, to provide a “comprehensive, flexible set of highway intersections” for self-driving cars.

Dave Walton added that the project would deliver a road network “ranging from smart motorways to rural roads, all within a fully connected and carefully controlled environment”.

The emergence of CAV technology could generate unprecedented levels of change within the automotive industry, many experts believe.

With its testing ecosystem in place, the UK could become a global centre of excellence for the design, development and commercialisation of this technology.

The roads upgrade at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground should enable “the testing of almost any vehicle under almost any scenario” the company says.

Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground and Airfield is owned by C Walton Ltd, a private, family-owned company, with an annual turnover of more than £30 million.

The 680-acre former WW2 RAF airfield and USAF base already plays host to a number of facilities including a vehicle test track, a vehicle remarketing site, an aviation recycling centre and a new conference and exhibition centre.

Companies on the Bruntingthorpe site employ more than 700 people.