



## NPT INNOVATION EXCHANGE

### Property and Business Growth

08/06/2022 | 1:00 - 2:30PM | Online

#### **Event Overview**

[Click here to view the event recording.](#)

***Hear from local businesses about plans for growth, linked to challenges and opportunities around property and industrial premises in NPT.***

This meeting brings together a panel of Neath Port Talbot businesses to discuss their issues and opportunities relating to finding space to expand within the county, with a view to making connections and identifying support.

As the local authority begins to develop bids for [Shared Prosperity Funding](#) over the coming weeks, this will also be an opportunity to discuss what businesses would like to see in terms of the types of business support that WORK for companies. What kinds of interventions would be helpful for YOUR business, how can the council and the Welsh Government support you to expand and grow?

- Why is Neath Port Talbot a great place to locate an engineering or manufacturing business?
- What types of property or land are currently available in the area?
- What are the property development aspirations of your businesses?
- What are the challenges related to finding, building and developing industrial space in the area - and what support would be beneficial?

Contact Helen Bowden for more information, to suggest themes and topics, and to register your interest, by emailing [helen@4theRegion.org.uk](mailto:helen@4theRegion.org.uk)

## **Perspective from Adil Pirmohamed, NPTCBC**

Neath Port Talbot has a unique position in terms of location, especially with accessibility and transport infrastructure (road, rail.) We have key strategic business parks including Harbourside, Baglan Industrial Estate, the Enterprise Zone and locations further up the valley such as Resolven.

There's a range of areas where businesses can set up and we've had similar soundings where businesses have set up at Baglan Energy Park because of links to existing skills. One business that was particularly driven to set up in this area was MM Engineering, which started with 3 people and now they're in a 20,000sq ft manufacturing facility.

We've got elements of links to skills but also to academia, with close proximity to key innovation centres of excellence. Ranging across Cardiff University, Swansea University, the University of South Wales and FLEXIS.

We would be interested in hearing from businesses about the on-going needs and requirements in terms of properties and land. A lot is going on in the area, with development projects coming forward from the Swansea Bay City Deal including the Bay Technology Centre offering lab and office space. This is a unique offering because there isn't any combined lab and office space potentially available across South West Wales, bar one location.

There are many things in the pipeline that we're working on, so it'll be good to get perspective from businesses to find out what they're looking for and what they need.

## **The Safety Letterbox Company, Alison Orrells**

[The Safety Letterbox Company](#) is an established award winning British manufacturer, who for over 36 years, have been designing, manufacturing and supplying mailboxes and parcel boxes from their location at Metal Box at Milland Road Industrial Estate. The Safety Letterbox Company is the only manufacturer of their type of products in the UK and they sell internationally.

The company currently occupies four sites on the industrial estate. Alison explains that they haven't found the ideal solution for the business and as this has become an issue, they felt that the only way to expand to the next stage was to move their sales and marketing team to the recently refurbished [Metal Box](#) site.

The new Metal Box location allows The Safety Letterbox Company to have a small showroom and an ideal space to host visitors, making their other three locations dedicated to manufacturing. Alison explains that this can be challenging as she needs to plan her meeting days around what building she needs to be in.

Being spread over four locations is not a long-term plan for the business. Their options are to fully move into another Metal Box suite, which isn't an immediate solution as the factory space is not ready and requires large investment or continue on their 5-year search to look for a suitable location.

The Safety Letterbox Company is looking to double their turnover over the next five years. Alison has been speaking to colleges and universities about upskilling, digital acceleration, about their net-zero commitment and everything needed to future-proof the business. While being in Metal Box is a great story, the lack of space is holding them back as a business.

Alison feels that being dictated by space is a dangerous position for a business to be in. The business employs 60 people with a low turnover, but they want to attract new people. They can't move outside of the Neath Port Talbot area as they need to keep existing staff and feel that they have a strong link to our community.

The accessibility of Neath Port Talbot is very straightforward in terms of road and rail, allowing visitors to easily come to the business. Alison feels that the challenges of what is available practically in the area is the main concern.

## **Hybrisan, Chris Mortimer**

[Hybrisan is a](#) company focused on technology in the healthcare sector, bringing products to market for a range of medical, industrial and environmental applications.

Hybrisan is based behind Port Talbot Train Station and has been there since their formation in 2013. Initially starting in an office space, they moved to a unit in 2020 which they fitted out with two R&D labs, a production facility and the UK's first and only large scale electrospinning machine to produce nanofibers.

Chris explains that they chose their location due to the accessibility to the train station and the M4 corridor. Chris feels that it's an up and coming area for technology business with all of the new developments happening. However, he feels that the image of the surrounding area is an issue and needs more investment.

Hybrisan has had great support from the council and has benefited from many collaboration opportunities in both Wales and the rest of the UK. Chris explains that they're keen to collaborate with other businesses, diversify the business and Hybrisan is also open to apprenticeships.

## **Development Bank of Wales, Rob Good**

[Development Bank of Wales](#) is one of the organisations that businesses can look to for support and they have funded industrial and office speculative and non-speculative developments. Rob explains that the Development Bank of Wales can support where traditional finance is not available and can lend government-backed funds.

One frequent barrier they see with the development of commercial and industrial property is the cost-value gap, which can be a barrier for getting property built and available for tenants. In these scenarios, there is some top-up grant funding available in some eligible cases from the Development Bank of Wales that runs alongside the loans they offer.

Development Bank of Wales is available to provide funding where conventional finance isn't available. The structure that one bank offers may not fit the needs of businesses.

Please see the following link for information regarding our [Commercial Property Loans](#):

In summary, through the Wales Commercial Property Fund, they can provide repayable loan funding for new office and industrial developments in Wales:-

- Loan sizes from £250,000 to £5 million;
- Loan terms of up to five years;
- Speculative and non-speculative schemes (i.e. with or without pre-lets/pre-sales) are eligible;
- Finance for up to 100% of building costs;
- Interest allowed to roll-up throughout the loan term;
- Grant funding may be available alongside repayable loans (i.e. where there is a viability gap);
- Quick decision making from a dedicated Property team;
- A single point of contact to help you navigate the entire process;
- In our financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, we invested over £7m into seven developments for 126,729 sq ft of commercial space.
- Small business loans from £1,000 to £50,000 for both Start-ups and Existing Businesses.
- Loan terms 1 to 10 Years.
- Large business loans from £50,000 to £10 Million pounds.
- Dedicated Local Account Managers to provide ongoing Business Support
- Simple Application process
- Quick decision making with Fast Track Loans available for existing businesses up to £50,000
- A strong network of other funders and business advisers
- Other teams include - Equity, Tech Ventures, Angel Invest Wales, Property Development, Micro and New Investments.

## **Glamorgan Engineering, Darren Joslin**

[Glamorgan Engineering](#) are specialists in fast-turnaround steel, alloy, acrylic, wood and plastic CNC machining. Based in Neath Abbey, Wales and formed in August 2021, they have a 9000sq ft workshop with state of the art extraction and machine separation booths and a large finishing station

Glamorgan Engineering took on their space knowing that they had the capacity to grow by 100%, so they have the option, space and planning available. The business is in a unique position in that they can quadruple their turnover in the space available. They currently have 4 other businesses based on their trading estate.

Darren explains that the shortage of business property available isn't only in Neath Port Talbot, but is also an issue in Swansea and the surrounding area.

## **Bay Technology Centre, NPTCBC, Brett Suddell**



[Click here to view the video shared with the forum](#)

Funded by the Swansea Bay City Deal, the 25,000sqft state of the art [Bay Technology Centre](#) will host different size units for start-up companies, local businesses and inward investors looking for a base to set up and grow their operations. This development will support innovation, diversification and the growth of the regional economy.

This building is the first completed stage of the City Deal's [Supporting Innovation and Low Carbon Growth](#) programme.

Based on Baglan Energy Park, the flexible office space will use excess energy from solar and other renewable technologies and convert it into hydrogen at the nearby Hydrogen Centre to be used to fuel hydrogen vehicles.

## **Open Comments:**

**Ian, AV Coatings:** We're based up in Cwmgors next to the Parc Howard Industrial Estate, with about 2 acres of land, some to be developed. We're located here because of the open cast background of the area.

We've got plans for new buildings on the land, but I'm worried that because we're further away from the M4 that it may deter people from renting the building. I'm interested in hearing everyone's thoughts on this: Would this be a deal-breaker for businesses?

**Alison, Safety Letterbox Company:** Getting more people into the region and raising our profile would require improved infrastructure. We talk a lot about decarbonisation and encouraging people to use the train. Neath Railway Station isn't the best first impression to high profile developers who come to visit. It's something fundamental that needs to be looked at if we're talking about regeneration in this region.

**Jeremy Hurley, Cllr:** This forum is another eye-opener for me and to realise what we have in the area, what work the officers are doing in the council and to also listen to the issues that businesses have got with expansion.

I agree with Alison with the issues with the train station and it needs to be a priority for the council to sort out. The video that Brett shared is what we're aiming for, with the links to Swansea University and to have an energy positive building in the area and is such a great thing.

**Nathan Goldup-John, Cllr:** It's so welcoming to see all of these companies wanting to be in Neath Port Talbot and to see all the great work that allows these businesses to remain here, grow and put Neath Port Talbot on the map.

We know the challenges and the station comes up all the time, connections to these places and how people get here. My background is in planning, so it was interesting to see what Darren said about the uses for each different space. It's quite innovative and seeing how it could be developed.

**Dawn Lyle:** There's so many opportunities for the county and businesses to grow and expand. We're working hard to get those positive messages about successful local companies, new companies coming into the area and huge growth sectors for renewables, the expansion of the port and new technologies and innovations that are happening. There's a really positive story to tell about Neath Port Talbot and it needs to be amplified more.

## **Represented Organisations**

- **Amey Consulting** - Sam Doyle
- **AV Coatings** - Ian Rigden
- **Development Bank of Wales** - Donna Williams, Rob Good
- **Hybrisan** - Chris Mortimer
- **Glamorgan Engineering** - Darren Joslin
- **NPT Council** - Adil Pirmohamed, Brett Suddell, Claire Roach, Jeremy Hurley, Julie Davies, Nathan Goldup-John, Oonagh, Sarah Fowler, Steve Grey,
- **Pelatis Online** - Nigel T Packer
- **Rhino Systems Ltd** - Jon Walter
- **Safety Letterbox Company** - Alison Orrells
- **Veltech UK Co Ltd** - Simon Lucas

## **Links, References & Resources**

- [4theRegion - NPT Innovation Exchange Project Page](#)
- [Eventbrite - NPT Innovation Exchange Events](#)
- [Port Talbot Waterfront Property Development Fund](#)

## **Upcoming Meetings - Dates for your diary**

Wed 22nd June	<a href="#">Supply Chain Opportunities with the MoD</a>	13:00 – 14:30
Wed 8th July	<a href="#">NPT Innovation Exchange Summer Party</a>	14:00 – 17:00