



£125m investment boosts town's Mini Plant

A MAJOR £125 million investment in a new range of more efficient and accurate technologies at the town's BMW plant ahead of the launch of the new MINI generation has been warmly welcomed. The overhaul is part of a £750 million cash injection across the BMW Group, which will safeguard 800 jobs in Swindon and will also benefit its two other plants in Oxford and Hams Hall. The Stratton Plant's facilities have received a huge upgrade including the installation of a trio of new body technologies to allow the company to offer more innovative designs and increase the volume and variety of the MINI model line-up. Tactile laser welding, a technique used to weld together the eight different pressed parts that make up the car's complex bonnet will eliminate the risk of corrosion. Another innovation is the development of a remote laser that can produce long continuous joints of greater precision, a process that is also quicker than spot-welding and a first for the BMW Group. Also new is a facility which enables up to five different door designs to be created in the same production cell by the same set of robots using a new fixture-holding system? A linear change system for switching the tooling from one model to another has also increased efficiency. North Swindon MP Justin Tomlinson said he was delighted with this boost to Swindon's economy. "It is yet more fantastic news from BMW to continue to invest significant funding into Plant Swindon, helping secure a long-term sustainable future," he said. "This is a major boost to our local economy and the sign of a growing confidence in our economy." A Swindon Chamber of Commerce spokesman added: "It's excellent news. It's very good for BMW and positive for the local community." Harald Krueger, BMW Group's board member for production, said: "In our Oxford plant's centenary year, we are continuing the MINI brand success story and starting production of the third model generation. "Our total investment of £750 million in our British production locations of Oxford, Swindon and Hams Hall between 2012 and 2015 underscores the importance of the MINI production triangle within our global production network. The UK is the heart of MINI production – thanks to the experience, competence and strong commitment of all our employees." With its market launch in Spring 2014, the new MINI will offer an extensive range of options including higher comfort levels and comprehensive safety technology including pedestrian protection. Longer and wider than its predecessor, the new model provides more interior space for both the driver and passengers.

Evening Advertiser 20th November 2013