

Plan revealed for £20m industrial research facility in Port Talbot

Plans for a new multi-million-pound industrial research facility in south Wales have been submitted.

The proposed facility, named the South Wales Industrial Transition from Carbon Hub, or Switch, would be located in the Harbourside area of Port Talbot if given approval by Neath Port Talbot council, and is a part of the Swansea Bay City deal.

It would see the creation of a £20m facility, designed and built by Morgan Sindall Construction, for a purpose-built research centre for de-carbonising the metal and steel industry.

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The project will be led by Neath Port Talbot council in partnership with Swansea University, with the proposed facility described as being an “open-access centre establishing a collaborative network of expertise across academia, industry and government, aiming to accelerate the region’s transition to net zero”.

Once completed, plans say the building will contain a number of facilities such as workshops and welding zones, with mechanical testing zones and laboratory space, as well as offices, reception and breakout spaces for staff.

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The plans read: “The new facility is a collaborative innovation centre working with academia, namely Swansea University as a key stakeholder, to help end users from the steel industry to decarbonise the steel industry towards a net zero carbon future.

“The core theme of the Switch programme is to assist decarbonisation of the steel and metals industry, to strengthen collaboration between industry and academia and to future-proof the steel and metals industry in Wales and the UK.

“The construction will consist of a mix of office space, laboratories, research and production area, storage areas and external works.”

The submission, which was received in November, comes just months after the closure of the two blast furnaces at Port Talbot’s Tata steelworks site, which could result in the loss of more than 2,000 jobs.

It also comes just weeks after the submission of further plans by Tata Steel for a new £1.25bn electric arc furnace to be built at the site.

The multi-million-pound plans for the research building will now go before the council's planning department for a decision in the coming months before any work can go ahead.