

BCIMO and Higgs form partnership

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The Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation, a recently formed company based in Dudley with a vision of transforming the UK rail industry, has appointed a leading Midlands law firm as its official legal partner.

Higgs & Sons, based on the Waterfront in Brierley Hill, has begun the process of implementing corporate governance procedures for the Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation (BCIMO) and will continue to advise on all legal matters.

The BCIMO is aiming to develop a new Very Light Rail (VLR) industry, creating demand and supply of VLR solutions, with manufacturing centred in the Black Country to help improve local and regional rail connections.

Construction is underway on a new £25m state-of-the-art Very Light Rail (VLR) National Innovation Centre at the old Dudley Train Station in Castle Hill, featuring research laboratories, conference and seminar rooms, offices for 45 people, exhibition spaces and an auditorium.

A test track for trialling prototype integrated VLR systems is also being created at Dudley, with Coventry planning to be the first city to implement a low-cost battery powered VLR tram solution by 2024.

Testing on the Coventry VLR shuttle prototype vehicle, which has been developed by Coventry City Council in partnership with WMG, is due to start in February this year.

Dr Nick Mallinson, Chief Executive of BCIMO, said: "We are delighted to have appointed Higgs & Sons as our official legal partner after an extensive tender process.

"As well as developing a new form of low-cost rail-based transport with low or zero emission solutions to supplement existing systems, we are excited at the opportunities that this will create for SMEs across the Black Country, both in terms of innovation and the manufacturing supply chain.

"We want to work collaboratively with a range of partners and, where possible, we are keen to build those agreements with Black Country organisations, so Higgs & Sons provided the perfect fit.

"It has a full complement of legal services which I'm sure we will utilise as the BCIMO continues to develop and a very knowledgeable, experienced and forward-thinking team."

Richard Griffiths, Head of Corporate at Higgs & Sons, said: "This is an extremely exciting partnership to be involved in.

"It's a ground-breaking project which will place the Black Country at the forefront nationally of transformative works in the rail industry, with numerous economic and environmental benefits for the region.

"Many of our clients are from within the manufacturing sector in the Black Country and the BCIMO presents numerous opportunities.

"Our first priority is to provide the best possible legal solutions to the BCIMO but we are also keen to play our part in maximising the benefits for the entire Black Country manufacturing SME community."

The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (BCLEP).

Photo credit: Black Country Innovative Manufacturing Organisation