

VLR test track facility opens

May 28, 2021



Dudley town centre's Very Light Rail project has officially opened a test track facility for rail vehicle and infrastructure testing.

The new test track runs from the foot of Castle Hill to Cinder Bank Island and supports Dudley's ambition of being an international centre for rail innovation.

It will soon be home to the Coventry VLR prototype vehicle, which will undergo extensive testing this year. The track will also be open to other clients.

In August last year the West Midlands Combined Authority supported a £13million bid to bridge the remaining funding required for the scheme. The combined authority has also supported the VLR scheme as part of its wider vision for the West Midlands.

Councillor Simon Phipps, cabinet member for regeneration and enterprise, said: "Dudley Council continues to work closely with Coventry and BCIMO to drive this fantastic project forward.

"The opening of the track puts Dudley one step closer to becoming a global leader in rail innovation and greener transport solutions. It is an important part of our £1 billion regeneration programme that's transforming our borough."

Nick Mallinson, CEO of BCIMO, said: “Our new test track will provide is a major step forward in the delivery of a world class innovation centre and I am pleased that we already have several clients ready to start using the facility.”

The centre aims to develop a new Very Light Rail (VLR) industry, encouraging market demand, developing new solutions and creating a UK manufacturing supply chain centred on the Black Country. VLR offers a new, lower-cost, public transport solution that is set to transform the rail industry, providing integrated VLR systems as an alternative to heavy rail and traditional Metro transport.

The new centre, to be completed early next year, will sit next to the test track and is being delivered by the council. The centre will boast a triple-height engineering hall, research laboratories, conference and seminar rooms and offices for 45 people. There will also be public areas, including exhibition spaces and an auditorium.

Photo credit: Dudley Council