

SOUTHERN Daily Echo

INTERNET EDITION

Hi-tech park may attract 200 jobs

THE POWER source of the future, a TV screen that can be rolled into a tube and cutting-edge DNA testing equipment will all soon be developed in Southampton, thanks to a new hi-tech business park.

Called Millbrook Technology Campus, the project could ultimately attract as many as 200 high wage, high skill jobs to the area, with typical salaries in the sector averaging £45,000.

Already four firms have signed up and a further three are in advanced negotiations for a space on the campus, which is based in vacant ground on the 16-acre NXP Semiconductors site, formerly known as Philips.

Businesses can take advantage of computer chip maker NXP's resources on the site, including advanced testing equipment as well as conference facilities, a gym, restaurant and common room.

Equipment available for use on site is valued at around £55m, including NXP's £1.5m micro- chip test centre.

It is officially launched by Sir Digby Jones, former director general of bosses group the CBI, tomorrow.

Already on board is Innos, a computer chip specialist founded to exploit research from Southampton University, which has made the park its headquarters and is investing millions in developing new facilities.

They are joined by Bac2, which is developing fuel cells that generate environmentally-friendly power that is widely seen as the best alternative to petrol.

DNA testing firm Prima Design is producing equipment that wouldn't be out of place on hit US crime show CSI Miami and also promises huge healthcare benefits.

Youth employment agency Solent SkillQuest, which employs 40 staff, is the final one of the first four organisations to move in.

Gary Munro, managing director of NXP, aims for the site to buzz with ideas. "It's not just about buying space and shutting the door behind you," he said. "I want the engineers here to be interacting. I don't want a closed set of companies, I want a vibrant technology environment. I want them to share the gym and use the restaurant and talk to one another.

"You've then got an environment where people will share and exchange and be a lot more creative - good things can come from it."

He says the technology campus, which has £400,000 support from SEEDA and backing from Southampton Partnership and the city council, is the right project at the right time.

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By Gareth Lewis

[Back](#)