Ford to drive electric transformation at UK car plant

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Ford's Halewood plant in Liverpool will make power units for the company's electric vehicles.

US auto giant Ford on Monday unveiled plans to convert a UK factory into its first component assembly site for electric vehicles in Europe.

Ford will invest £230 million ($316 million, 273 million euros) in its Halewood plant on Merseyside in northwest England, the carmaker said in a statement.

Production will start in 2024 in a move expected to safeguard hundreds of jobs.

"This is an important step," said Stuart Rowley, president of Ford of Europe.

"It strengthens further our ability to deliver 100 percent of Ford passenger vehicles in Europe being all-electric and two-thirds of our commercial vehicle sales being all-electric or plug-in hybrid by 2030."

The investment includes state support via the UK government's Automotive Transformation Fund.

"Today's announcement, backed by government funding, is a huge vote of confidence in Britain's economic future and our plans to ramp up electric vehicle production," added Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng.

He added that the government was eager to ensure Britain "reaps the benefits" in the global race for electric cars.

Ford earlier this year pledged that between 40 and 50 percent of its global vehicles would be fully electric by the start of the next decade.

British trade union Unite on Monday said that Ford's new investment would protect 500 jobs and potentially create up to 700 new positions.

"This investment is excellent news for the highly skilled workforce at Halewood as it secures the future of the plant," added Unite general secretary Sharon Graham.

Britain plans to ban sales of high-polluting diesel and petrol cars from 2030 as part of efforts to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.