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# NEWS

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## NEW CAR INDUSTRY FOR WEST BELFAST

3 August 1978

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND,  
THE RT HON ROY MASON MP

It is splendid news that the De Lorean motor car is to be assembled in Northern Ireland. This major new investment is a tremendous breakthrough for us and all of us in Government are delighted at Mr De Lorean's decision.

It is very many years since Northern Ireland has had such an exciting industrial announcement.

On Monday of this week I spoke of the improved prospects for investment in Northern Ireland and how we were catching the tide.

This major new investment will in the short term provide employment for up to 800 people who will be involved in the construction of the 500,000 sq ft factory which will be built on the Twinbrook Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Belfast. There will then be the jobs in the project itself - 600 initially but building up fairly rapidly to some 1,500 and holding out the longer term prospect of around 2,000 jobs in fabrication and assembly operations.

With us today is the man behind the project, Mr John De Lorean, one of the best known figures in the American car industry. He has held several top-level positions with the General Motors Corporation, including that of chief engineer and later head of the Pontiac and Chevrolet divisions and a Vice President of the Corporation. He was mainly responsible for the development and marketing of the Chevrolet Corvette, currently America's best selling sports car.

Mr De Lorean has a strong team working with him on the project - many of them senior executives in the American automobile industry.

The car itself is a very exciting proposition and the first new American sports car for 25 years - since the Corvette. It is a two-seater gull wing sports car designed by the famous Italian designer de Giugiaro. It therefore has the outstanding styling, one would expect, plastic body construction and outer surfaces of stainless steel, all combined with advanced safety features and good performance. The prototypes have been well received by the motoring press in the United States and I have every confidence that the car will be attractive to purchasers in a number of world markets.

The research and development work which has gone into the project has been immense and this will be brought to completion over the next few months with the building and testing of further prototypes and the engineering of the product. As soon as this is complete, production will start. It is intended that cars will be rolling off the line in Belfast within two years.

One of the most significant aspects of the project is the choice of site for the factory. It is a key element of Government's policy on industrial development to disperse opportunities as widely as possible in relation to job needs. Don Concannon and I and our officials are particularly pleased that Mr De Lorean has chosen to locate his project in an area where there is one of the highest unemployment levels in Northern Ireland and where job needs are exceptionally acute.

The new company joins major international names which have already established themselves in West Belfast very successfully - firms like Ford and Grundig. I have no doubt that the new project can match the fine track record of the mass of companies which have already found Northern Ireland an excellent location in which to do business. We are already big in the automotive products industry with tyres and tyre valves, exhaust systems, plastic components, carburettors and so on.

The latest addition to the range was General Motors, which only a few weeks ago decided to set up a 600-worker seat belt operation here. Some day, someone was bound to see our potential for the final product, car assembly - and that day has arrived.

This is the fourth American investment to opt for Northern Ireland in the last 5 months. The four - AVX, General Motors, Coronary Care Systems and De Lorean Motor Company - hold out the promise of nearly 3,500 jobs. When you consider that the average number of jobs promoted annually in brand new projects from outside Northern Ireland in recent years was 500, you get some idea of the extent to which the tide has really turned.

There are at least 3 solid reasons for this. First of all, we have been marketing very vigorously Northern Ireland's tremendous potential as a location for industry. We have had an excellent story to tell in terms of industrial stability and an excellent track record by the companies already here. Those who have come to look - and they are coming in encouraging numbers - have liked what they saw. I will repeat again my phrase of crossing the threshold of disbelief. Of course Mr De Lorean's associates have been in and out of Northern Ireland for some time.

Second, we can offer companies an attractive and competitive deal. Third, there are more projects on offer world-wide.

These will continue to be the conditions for sound growth. But let me emphasise that we are not merely looking for investment opportunities from outside Northern Ireland. We are actively cultivating our own garden - and precisely the same incentives are on offer to projects from firms already inside as from outside Northern Ireland.

This project has been won in competition with other areas - and there will be acute disappointment elsewhere that the project has opted for Northern Ireland. We can understand that disappointment since we have experienced it ourselves on too many occasions in recent years.

This investment offers Northern Ireland a tremendous industrial opportunity. I am sure that all concerned will seize it and do everything possible to make it a success.

The Government will continue to pursue relentlessly every opportunity for economic growth. Only thus can we wipe out the social misery, economic waste and sheer frustration of unemployment. It is a task which challenges not merely Government but the whole community and every responsible citizen within it.