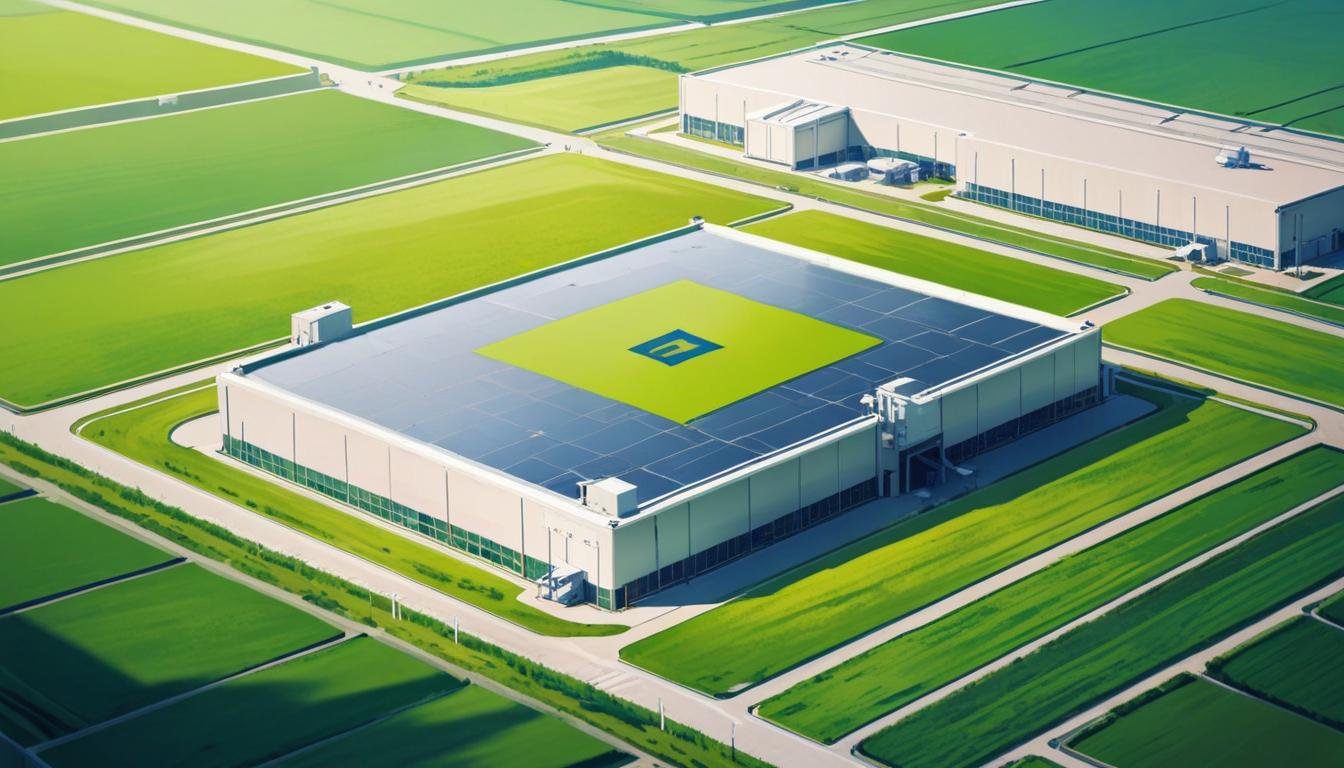
# Somerset’s Gravity site pushes for AI status alongside £4bn battery factory



Somerset is emerging as a national hub for green technology and AI, anchored by the Gravity Enterprise Zone and a planned £4 billion electric vehicle battery gigafactory. The facility, led by Tata subsidiary Agratas, will occupy the former Royal Ordnance Factory site between Puriton and Woolavington and is expected to supply nearly half the UK’s automotive battery demand by the early 2030s. Production is set to begin in 2027, creating around 4,000 skilled jobs.

Alongside this major investment, Somerset Council and Bridgwater MP Sir Ashley Fox are lobbying for part of the site to be named a designated AI growth zone. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has responded positively, with decisions expected by late summer 2025.

The Gravity site benefits from a Local Development Order, in effect until 2037, which streamlines planning for compliant developments. This, combined with established infrastructure and power connection plans, makes it a strong contender for further government support.

The National Grid is building two interim 33kV connections for the site’s early stages, although a permanent 400kV substation won’t be complete until 2028. Local communities will not be affected by the temporary arrangements, officials say, and work on the site continues steadily.

Additional infrastructure, including a new ring road and M5 junction, is planned to support expansion. Somerset Council is also considering borrowing up to £150 million for local upgrades and skills training to ensure residents benefit directly from new employment opportunities. Loan repayments are expected to be covered by business rates from the gigafactory.

The development aligns with national goals to electrify transport and advance clean energy. Energy Minister Michael Shanks said the factory would boost both the economy and local communities, while Industry Minister Sarah Jones welcomed dialogue with Somerset leaders on the AI zone bid.

If successful, the Gravity site would become a rare convergence of large-scale manufacturing and AI innovation, backed by strong local leadership, ready infrastructure and national policy alignment.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/somerset-council-mp-push-gravity-10268525> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk/news-and-events/latest-news/we-start-work-on-connection-for-uk-s-biggest-ev-battery-factory> - National Grid has initiated a significant engineering project to connect the UK's largest electric vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing facility to the national grid. The facility, located at the Gravity Smart Campus near Bridgwater, Somerset, is being developed by Agratas, a subsidiary of the Tata Group. Scheduled to open in 2026, the 40GWh factory aims to supply nearly half of the batteries required by the UK's automotive industry by the early 2030s. To meet the facility's power needs, National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) is constructing two interim 33kV connections, with plans for a high-voltage 400kV substation by National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) to be completed in 2028. This infrastructure project is expected to create 4,000 highly skilled green tech jobs in the region. Energy Minister Michael Shanks highlighted the project's significance in revitalising industrial areas and bringing economic growth to communities. NGED President Cordi O'Hara emphasised the role of upgraded networks in driving growth and supporting the electrification of transport across the country. Jefferson Weber, Head of UK Construction for Agratas, stated that the electrical connection is crucial for the operation of the new facility, ensuring a reliable energy supply for the UK's largest battery manufacturing plant. Site preparation at the Agratas Somerset facility is progressing steadily, with the completion of all piling operations and the establishment of key infrastructure, including a dedicated construction access road and fully operational site cabins. Groundwork and pile cap activities are also well underway, marking significant progress in the development of the facility. This project underscores the collaborative efforts between National Grid, Agratas, and local authorities to support the UK's transition to electric vehicles and sustainable energy solutions.
3. <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/gravity-enterprise-zone/> - The Gravity Enterprise Zone, established by This is Gravity Ltd in 2017, is a 620-acre smart campus located near Bridgwater, Somerset. In 2023, This is Gravity Ltd sold part of the site to Agratas, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, which is investing £4 billion to build a 40GWh electric vehicle (EV) battery manufacturing facility on the campus. The facility is expected to create up to 4,000 jobs and aims to supply nearly half of the batteries required by the UK's automotive industry by the early 2030s. The Gravity Local Development Order (LDO), in place since December 2021 and valid until 2037, streamlines the planning process for developments that comply with specific conditions, allowing for more efficient approvals. Agratas began initial groundwork in the summer of 2024, with the first phase of the facility expected to be operational by late 2027. The development is anticipated to have a significant positive impact on the local economy, providing numerous employment opportunities and contributing to the growth of the green technology sector in Somerset. The project also aligns with the UK's broader industrial strategy, aiming to boost jobs and growth through advanced manufacturing and sustainable energy solutions.
4. <https://www.wsfp.co.uk/news/substation-to-power-ps4bn-gigafactory-wont-be-operational-until-end-of-2028-784701> - A new substation intended to provide power to Somerset's £4 billion 'gigafactory' is facing a delay and is not expected to be operational until the end of 2028, one year after the first phase of the site is expected to be finished. Agratas announced in late-February 2024 that it would be investing heavily in the Gravity Enterprise Zone, between Puriton and Woolavington, creating around 4,000 well-paid jobs and delivering one of the largest single employment sites in the whole of Somerset. Revised plans for the first phase of the new complex, known as 'Building One', were recently showcased to the public, including the design of the new ring road surrounding the site and the proposed location of a new M5 junction. National Grid has confirmed that it intends to begin work on a new substation within the site by September, but it won't be operational until the end of 2028. Until this point, the first phase of the gigafactory will be relying on two 'interim' connections to the power grid, with National Grid stressing there will be no impact on power to Bridgwater or the neighbouring villages. The new substation will be constructed at the eastern edge of the Gravity site, south of Stoningpound Rhyne and a short distance from the built-up edge of Woolavington. National Grid is currently working to connect the Gravity Enterprise Zone to the power network, with Woolavington Road being closed in several phases between the village and Enterprise Way from Monday (April 14) for up to five months. To reduce long-term disruption, work to install telecommunication cables and gas mains into the site will be carried out at the same time. Councillor Richard Wilkins, portfolio holder for transport and waste services, expressed gratitude for the community's support and patience during this time of unavoidable disruption. He assured that efforts are being made to consolidate necessary connectivity work to prevent the need for additional closures in the future. Upon approval of the revised 'Building One' proposals by Somerset Council, the initial phase of the gigafactory is expected to commence operations by late 2027.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-growth-zones/ai-growth-zones-open-for-applications> - The UK government has announced the opening of applications for AI Growth Zones, inviting regions to apply to become designated hubs for artificial intelligence (AI) development. The application process is open indefinitely, with a deadline of 31 May 2025 for consideration in the summer of 2025. Somerset Council and Sir Ashley Fox, the Conservative MP for Bridgwater, are advocating for the Gravity Enterprise Zone to be designated as an AI Growth Zone, aiming to attract additional high-skilled, well-paid jobs to the local area. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has expressed openness to discussing the potential use of the site, with a final decision expected by late summer 2025. The application process requires regions to demonstrate how they meet specific criteria, including technical feasibility, delivery feasibility, local impact, and the level of government support requested. Somerset's bid highlights the Gravity site's unique advantages, such as the existing Local Development Order (LDO) and its connections to the grid, making it an ideal location to boost jobs and growth in the AI sector. The Gravity LDO, in place since December 2021 and valid until 2037, grants planning permission for developments that comply with specific conditions, streamlining the approval process for suitable projects. The government's assessment of AI Growth Zone applications will consider factors like the availability of National Grid capacity, local support for the scheme, use of low-carbon energy, and potential improvements to local facilities. The decision on Somerset's application is anticipated in the summer of 2025, with the possibility of reapplying if not selected in the first wave.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-somerset-68534677> - Somerset Council is considering borrowing up to £150 million to invest in infrastructure and skills training related to the UK's largest electric vehicle (EV) battery factory, being developed by Agratas, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, near Bridgwater. The £4 billion facility, located on a former Royal Ordnance Factory site at Puriton, is expected to create 4,000 jobs and aims to supply nearly half of the batteries required by the UK's automotive industry by the early 2030s. The council plans to use the loan to fund infrastructure improvements around the site and to support skills training for the future workforce, collaborating with local colleges and schools. Additionally, the council is in discussions with the government about a £55 million grant to cover its costs related to the site. The loan repayment would be covered by the business rates the battery factory will pay in the future. Councillor Ros Wyke, executive member for economic development, highlighted the opportunity for Somerset and the UK economy, expressing eagerness to be part of this development. The government's Department for Business and Trade spokesperson described Agratas' investment as "fantastic news for Somerset" and reaffirmed the commitment to making the UK a leading destination for automotive investment.