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# Bombardier planning major expansion at Belfast factory after C Series trade battle win



Bombardier's wing factory in Belfast

By Andrew Madden  
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Aerospace giant Bombardier is going ahead with plans for an expansion of its wings factory, prompting renewed confidence in its C Series aircraft.

The firm, headed up by Belfast-born Michael Ryan, will be holding a public information event next week to discuss the expansion, which could see increased production and jobs at the plant.

The factory at Airport Road West covers an area of 52,567sq metres.

The proposals would see it extended by 17,000sq metres - roughly a third.

Bombardier refused to comment on the plans, which were originally mooted in 2011.

Ernie Arvai, co-founder of aerospace consulting firm AirInsight, said the move had the potential to ramp up C Series production as well as other projects.

"The expansion of the Belfast facility not only bodes well for the C Series, but also the potential that the expertise in resin transfer moulding and advanced composite wing manufacturing will be useful for other Bombardier business jets and potentially other Airbus commercial programs in the future as well," he said.

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Bombardier employs around 4,000 in Northern Ireland, including 1,000 working on the C Series.

In January staff were relieved after a US court unanimously backed the plane manufacturer against rivals Boeing in a long-running trade dispute.

The firm had been facing a 292% tariff on the sale of its aircraft to the US, which would have put hundreds of Belfast jobs in jeopardy.

Following the ruling, Bombardier announced a huge 57% rise in profits.

Its earnings before interest and tax for the whole of last year rose from \$427m (£304m) to \$672m (£478m).

Last October it was announced that Airbus and Bombardier were to become partners on the C Series programme.

Airbus will provide procurement, sales and marketing, and customer support expertise to the C Series Aircraft Limited Partnership (CSALP), the body that manufactures and sells the C Series.

At closing, Airbus will acquire a 50.01% interest in CSALP. Bombardier and Investissement Quebec will own approximately 31% and 19%, respectively.

In its latest results, Bombardier said: "We are moving ahead and making progress obtaining regulatory approvals for the announced partnership with Airbus for the C Series aircraft.

"We expect to obtain all approvals for the partnership in 2018, and in the meantime, we are conducting site visits and planning for the operation of the US final assembly line in Mobile, Alabama".

The expansion has the potential not just to ramp up C Series production, but also other future commercial projects

Belfast Telegraph

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