

Press release

Minister-President Armin Laschet visits BPW, a recognised role model for e-mobility and Industry 4.0

- The family enterprise and hidden champion of transport and logistics in North-Rhine Westphalia is at the forefront of developments in electric vehicles and digitisation
- Armin Laschet puts vehicle dynamics to the test with BPW's electric drive for a variety of vehicles
- Running gear manufacturing operation now fully digitised – and interconnected with the transport process for the first time

Wiehl 25.04.2018 --- Minister-President Armin Laschet sees North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) as a leading centre of innovation in e-mobility and of Industry 4.0, and as a trailblazer for success. On the recommendation of the state parliamentary representative Bodo Löttgen of the CDU party, he visited BPW in Wiehl to familiarise himself with novel drive concepts and production methods, and the emerging digitally interconnected world of logistics. BPW Group is seen as an archetypal hidden champion and typical of the SMEs resident in NRW, which are shaping the digital transformation of industry while accepting responsibility for man and the environment.

Road congestion and poor air quality in city centres, both of which are to some extent attributable to the growth in delivery traffic, are matters of concern for both the state government and the minister-president himself. Armin Laschet therefore took the opportunity last Friday to travel to Wiehl to visit one of the companies widely recognised as a pioneer of electric and digitally interconnected transportation.

BPW Group, which was founded as a forged axle manufacturer 120 years ago, is now spearheading innovation in the transport and logistics segments. As a typical hidden champion (7,000 employees worldwide, sales of more than 1.3 billion euros in 2016), BPW engages in researching, developing, producing and marketing practically everything needed to propel, safeguard, illuminate and digitally interconnect trailers, and to enhance their intelligence. BPW's business segments range from axles and running gear to plastics technologies and telematics systems; it also maintains one of the largest spare part wholesaling operations for commercial vehicles in Europe. BPW personally liable managing partner Markus Schell welcomed the minister-president on his arrival and then took him on a guided tour of the innovations produced by the company, which ranks among the largest employers in the district.

Together with the state parliamentary representative for Oberberg South, Bodo Löttgen (CDU), and alongside the Mayor of Wiehl Ulrich Stücker and his deputy Sören Teichmann, Armin Laschet took a closer look at the electric axle drive eTransport developed by BPW. The electric drive, which has already won numerous innovation awards, is suitable both for converting utility and special-purpose vehicles, and for installation as standard in new commercial vehicles. Giving

The brands of the BPW Group:



consideration to their operating profiles, municipal utility vehicles are ideal candidates for electrification. Armin Laschet put the driving dynamics of a test vehicle equipped with the drive axle to the test on the works site. “BPW is demonstrating how industrial companies in North Rhine-Westphalia can utilise their traditional skills to develop forward-looking solutions,” he remarked. “The drive that has been built by BPW is also good news for the local authorities in the state that are seeking to give their fleets of special-purpose diesel vehicles a new, electric lease of life.”

The state government is explicitly committed to developing NRW as the leading provider of future-proof and dependable Industry 4.0 solutions and innovative business models capable of driving the digital economy, and as the foremost market in this domain. BPW belongs to a select band of role models for Industry 4.0 named by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. All of its processes in quality assurance, maintenance, production and logistics are already digitally interconnected.

BPW is now extending the reach of its digitisation initiative well beyond the factory gates to encompass the long-distance road network as well. The in-house Innovation Lab has developed a solution which, for the first time, facilitates the digital synchronisation of delivery vehicles and even the cargo itself with the associated production and logistics processes. To make this happen, BPW is drawing on the expertise of its innovation centres for mechatronics and the internet of things, and the know-how of its subsidiary idem telematics, which is the European market leader for interconnected transportation by truck and trailer. The integrated solution promises to achieve substantial efficiency gains and is to be offered to hauliers and shippers for the first time later this year.

Armin Laschet was also visibly impressed by the way in which the family enterprise translates its values into practice. All of the power consumed by BPW, for example, some of which it generates itself, originates from sustainable sources. Apart from solar panels on the roofs of the factory buildings, electricity is also generated by a hydropower plant – on the site where the company was originally established as a hammer mill 120 years ago. BPW has won multiple prizes for its sustainability concept and in recognition of its role as a responsible employer and training company.

Armin Laschet remarks, “BPW is living proof that businesses can uphold their values while vigorously pursuing innovation at the same time. Its commitment to the next generation, through training courses that offer not only professional qualifications, but also personal development and political education, could serve as an inspiration for other companies as well.”

Markus Schell says, “Although the media usually gives them less prominence than the major industrial corporations in the Rhine/Ruhr region, SMEs such as BPW make a telling contribution to fostering business innovation in NRW. For this reason we are especially delighted to welcome the minister-president as our guest. His visit is doubly significant because it also reflects the state government’s appreciation of our home region’s industrial strength.”



Picture caption: Together with the state parliamentary representative for Oberberg South, Bodo Löttgen (second from left), and alongside the Mayor of Wiehl Ulrich Stücker (right) and his deputy Sören Teichmann (second from right), Armin Laschet (centre) joined Josha Kneiber (left), Business Development Inner City, to learn more about the electric axle drive eTransport developed by BPW. (Photograph: BPW Bergische Achsen KG)



Picture caption: In-house senior management consultant Katja Boecker (fourth from left), who is an expert in electromobility, explained the ways in which existing commercial vehicles can be retrofitted with BPW's electric axle drive eTransport. (Photograph: BPW Bergische Achsen KG)



Picture caption: The prominent guests were also greeted by the young team working in BPW's Inner City business unit. (Photograph: BPW Bergische Achsen KG)



Picture caption: Armin Laschet joined the BPW Managing General Partner Markus Schell to put the driving dynamics of a test vehicle equipped with the drive axle to the test. (Photograph: BPW Bergische Achsen KG)

**About BPW Bergische Achsen KG**

BPW Bergische Achsen KG is the parent company of the BPW Group. With more than 1,600 employees, including around 120 trainees, the family-run company has been developing and producing complete running gear systems for truck trailers and semi-trailers at its headquarters in Wiehl since 1898. BPW's technologies include axle systems, brake technology, suspension and bearings. BPW's trailer axles and running gear systems are in use in millions of vehicles around the world. An extensive range of services also provides vehicle manufacturers and vehicle operators with the opportunity to increase economic efficiency in their production and transport processes. www.bpw.de/en

About the BPW Group

The BPW Group is the dependable international mobility and system partner for the transport industry. The globally active group of companies offers innovative solutions from a single supplier. Its portfolio extends from axles, suspension systems and brake technologies (BPW), locking systems and body structure technology (Hestal), lighting systems (Ermax) and composite technologies (HBN-Teknik) to user-friendly telematics applications for trucks and trailers (idem telematics). The coordinated BPW Group technologies and services enable manufacturers to benefit from economical production processes and provide maximum transparency in loading and transport processes for efficient fleet management by the vehicle operators. The owner-managed BPW Group encompasses 70 companies worldwide and employs around 7,000 people. www.wethinktransport.com

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