

Ford considering major expansion in Portugal

BY JIMMY BURNS IN LISBON

FORD IS considering a major expansion of its operations in Portugal which could include the building of a new \$650m (£286m) assembly plant.

This has emerged after a visit to Lisbon by a delegation led by Mr. Robert Lutz, the chairman of Ford Europe. Although Mr. Lutz's talks with Portuguese Government and industry officials have been conducted in secret, it is understood that discussions on the project will continue.

"Mr. Lutz has come away with a very favourable impression of Portugal," Mr. Patrick Ryan, chairman of Ford Lusitania, the U.S. company's Portuguese subsidiary, said yesterday.

He stressed, however, that it

was still too early to "get too excited" since Portugal was only one of a number of countries being considered for the project.

Earlier this week Sr Alvaro Barreto, the outgoing Industry Minister, said that he hoped Ford would choose to make a major investment in Portugal.

In a statement issued by his Ministry, he said the visit by Mr. Lutz and a team of Ford executives had been "very positive" and that there was "much to be discussed" between now and the autumn.

While in Portugal, the Ford team visited the new industrial complex at Alentejo, 100 miles south of Lisbon, and Setubal, the capital's industrial suburb. Both areas have been suggested as possible sites.

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