



LEICESTER SHIRE
economic
partnership

SPRING 05

newsletter

Leicester Shire Economic Partnership - LSEP

TRADE MISSION TO CHINA

The LSEP was represented on the successful trade mission to China, which took place towards the end of last year. The Chief Executive, Kishor Tailor, and Programme Manager Andy Rose were amongst the official party of 16 delegates led by Councillor David Parsons the leader of Leicestershire County Council.

Leicestershire County Council have a long standing twinning arrangement with the Sichuan Province and in December 2003 an agreement was reached with the Sichuan Provincial Government that led to the setting up of the Leicester Shire Sichuan Trade Bureau. During the week long Trade Mission a "Leicester Shire Day" was held in Sichuan's provincial capital Chengdu where a Sichuan Trade Bureau was officially launched to work with its sister office in Leicester.

Since its launch, the Leicester Shire Sichuan Trade Bureau has provided assistance and support to over 100 businesses. It was established with funding from the LSEP and is also supported financially by the County Council, Business Link Leicestershire, Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce and UK Trade and Investment.

Kishor Tailor the Chief Executive of the LSEP commented "the visit was a great success and opened up a number of potentials for companies in this sub-region to exploit the opportunities created by the great economic boom of the Chinese economy. The economy is growing at 8% per annum and in some regions the growth is in double figures at around 16%. We also promoted the sub-region as a base for Chinese companies as a gateway to Europe."

Min He, the coordinator of the Leicester Shire Sichuan Trade Bureau assesses the potential of the China boom.

Ask what has been the most stunning economic wonder of the last century, many would think of China and China is increasingly becoming a buzzword in our newspapers. The trend centres around China posing challenges to the UK's manufacturing capacity, however it also offers tremendous opportunities. The question is: can the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Leicestershire, benefit from the economic boom of China?

Leicestershire County Council has been twinned with Sichuan, a province in China the size of France with a population of over 85 million, for more than 16 years. The present leadership, led by Councillor David Parsons, has decided to utilise this twinning link to unlock the business potential for Leicestershire's businesses.

The truth is that - you don't have to be BIG to benefit from trading with China. For most SMEs, to overcome its misconceptions of China and make the first step are the start for the potential success.

SMEs should be aware of their strengths: more flexibility, decisions can be taken quicker, administration is less expensive and there is greater commitment to smaller projects, which appeals to Chinese companies. With broadened and open vision, readiness to overcome the differences, and support available from us, I can't see why our SMEs won't be able to compete with international corporations and grow their profits with China.

I would particularly like to invite our SMEs to look at the Western regions of China. Geographically, there are three areas in China that are most economically developed and prosperous: Beijing-Tianjing zone, the Yantze River Delta neighbouring Shanghai and the Pearl River Delta around Guangzhou.

The Central governmental of China has in recent years invested hugely in the under-developed regions in the west of China, which is called 'Go West Strategy'. There are a number of benefits by trading with the west region of China: This area has comparatively less international competition, it has great potential due to resources and vast markets and there are strong governmental links with Sichuan Province and Chongqing, who are taking the lead in the economic development of the western regions. This helps our SMEs to set their foothold in their entry into the new market.

If you would like to consider the potential of the Chinese market please contact me at the Sichuan Trade Bureau:

t: 0116 258 7312 f: 0116 285 5951
e: min.he@lleics.co.uk.



NO GLOSS, NO HYPE, JUST FACTS

Government Relocation

'No Gloss, No Hype, Just Facts' is the theme of Leicester and Leicestershire's bid to attract civil service jobs away from London and the South East to the County. The Public Sector Relocation Support Team, including representatives from the LSEP, Invest Leicestershire, Leicester Regeneration Company and Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce are taking up many opportunities to put across Leicestershire's selling points. They have been meeting with chief policy makers in London and inviting civil servants to attend local events.

The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP) now has the findings of a study by Ecotec a consultancy that have produced a 'Case for Leicester and Leicestershire as a public sector relocation destination'. Ecotec carried out a wide ranging study and matched the findings against relocation criteria set by the Government. The underlying conclusion is that Leicester and Leicestershire represents a 'location equilibrium'. This recognises the unique balance between its proximity to London and central UK location and its competitive cost base relating to office rental values, wage rates and house prices.

The Public Sector Relocation Support Team is managed by Steve Dibnah, who believes the case for the area is gathering momentum. "You can spend a lot of time talking up projects like this but we're now into the most crucial stage of discussing specifics with interested parties. The ability of the area to deliver, in terms of good quality office space and people with the right skills, will determine how successful we are ultimately."

"We have been working closely with Leicester Shire Promotions and have the documentation and marketing tools to continue improving the profile of Leicester and Leicestershire. Our key aim now is to continue to ensure the bid gains momentum. We are now looking forward to the exciting projects outlined in the Leicester Master Plan coming to fruition and investigating further opportunities in the County area."



(From left to right) Nick Townsend, Kishor Tailor, Neil Morris, Keynote Speaker Karren Brady (of Birmingham City) and Martin Taylor

LEICESTER SHIRE DAY

The first Leicester Shire Day was held on 6 October 2004, and it brought together nearly 300 key stakeholders to consider and debate the issues that matter to the sub-region.

The aim of Leicester Shire Day was "to bring together businesses, public sector organisations, representatives of the voluntary sector and other agencies to look at issues affecting Leicester Shire and how they can best be addressed by working in partnership." 300 delegates and exhibitors attended the event at the Walkers Stadium; many were from the business community. Overall the event was considered as a great success and many positive comments were received. The event also identified a number of key issues that need to be addressed by partners.

An LSEP Steering Group, led by Neil Morris, have been assessing the event and the feed back. They considered that the event was a good start and that it should now form part of an annual event. They also concluded that in future it would be useful to extend the invitation to other stakeholders and have agreed to specifically target the community and voluntary sectors who were under-represented on the day. The LSEP Board have reaffirmed their commitment to take the October event forward and planning has begun for the second Leicester Shire Day this autumn.

On the positive front there was a great deal of enthusiasm and support for the regeneration efforts that were taking place in the sub-region. Delegates felt that at last the region was now beginning on the process of economic revival.

Physical regeneration has began and there are more cranes in the skies of the sub-region that alone provide the evidence of investment that is now being drawn to the region. There is quite a buzz and positive commitment to get behind the efforts of partners to market the positive image of the sub-region.

The challenge is now to ensure that the physical regeneration provide the benefits for sustainable social regeneration so that the quality of life of people who live and work in Leicester Shire is improved.

One of the re-occurring themes from the feedback was the perceived lack of cohesion and leadership. Delegates were concerned about multiplicity and duplication and some delegates thought that leadership was weak in the sub-region. This challenge has been picked up by the leaders of the LSEP, Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council. The matter is now under consideration and we expect that the next Leicester Shire Day will highlight the wide range of joined up work that is currently taking place and the commitment of the leaderships to work together to drive forward the economic development of the sub-region.

The Chairman of the LSEP Nick Townsend is confident events like Leicester Shire Day will make an impact. "I was personally very committed to the aims and objectives of the first Leicester Shire Day and I think the energy and enthusiasm was very evident. If we can carry that momentum forward into another event and more importantly deliver on the actions that come out of it then we can make a real difference to the sub-region."

The Conference Chairman Neil Morris was delighted with the response and gave his commitment to guide and plan the next event. "I am happy to work with partners to plan and support the next event. We need this event to be part of Leicestershire's calendar to allow for stakeholders to debate key issues that matter to the sub-region. We believe the next event should be held over half a day to allow busy delegates to attend and take part in the showcase event. We will also be considering the programme and speakers so that people feel that they truly benefit from the day."

The Chief Executive of the LSEP Kishor Tailor is a member of the steering group and believes that the LSEP has a key role to play. "The LSEP is a strategic partnership for the sub-region and we have a role in bringing together key stakeholders, so that the outcomes of the event influence future policies and programme of partners. Our public sector partners in the sub-region have a spending power of £2.5 billion per annum, we must use this leverage to grow our economy and open up new opportunities for our local companies."

Leicester Shire Day 2005 will be held in the autumn, watch out for further information in our next newsletter.



Neil Morris

Business Awards 2005

The process of selecting outstanding businesses in the sub-region has begun. The Leicestershire Business Awards 2005 were launched in October and businesses invited to apply for awards in eight categories.

The LSEP has become a corporate sponsor for the awards, in recognition of the importance of the competition to the Leicestershire business community. The awards will be made on May 20 at a gala dinner.

The managing director of the 2004 Business of the Year has described winning the title as "the most wonderful moment I've had in business". Chris Corbin is Managing Director of Ashfield Healthcare which is based in Ashby.

Mr Corbin started his venture in 1997 and last year won the personality and business of the year awards. He has won a number of awards and says, "It's one thing for me to tell clients and potential clients that I think we are a good organisation, it's a very different thing if the community you work in reckons you're good."



Launch of the 2005 Business Awards

Broadband coverage for Leicestershire

The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership's Broadband Business Fund has selected BT as their preferred supplier to fill the remaining broadband coverage gaps in the county whether it is for business or private use. This has been achieved through partnership working with the lead provided by the LSEP and Leicestershire County Council.

The LSEP have secured EU funding to enable Broadband to be introduced into three further telephone exchanges this spring. At Hungarton, Tilton and Tugby, BT will install ADSL Broadband technology and then sell wholesale services. This will enable businesses and residents to use an internet provider of their choice.

Broadband service availability has improved recently following the extended reach announcement from BT, which means that previously out of reach areas, some originally targeted by the Broadband Business Fund, now have broadband available.

Other areas originally targeted by the project fall within the BT exchange enablement programme and will therefore have service availability by summer 2005 or sooner.

New Report from Leicester Shire Intelligence

Leicester Shire Intelligence (LSI) has recently published the Economic Baseline Study for Leicester and Leicestershire. The aim of the study is to present a comprehensive, robust and unbiased review of the economy and labour market in Leicester Shire. Data was gathered from across the areas of Leicester City and Leicestershire County Councils.

The study concludes that for the economy to improve there is a need to diversify the economic base, invest in workforce and skills development and nurture the local enterprise culture.

emda board

The LSEP Board member Professor Philip Tasker has now joined the emda Board.

Councillor Gary Hunt previous cabinet lead on Regeneration at Leicester City Council also joins the board, which will now have four Leicestershire representatives.

AROUND THE COUNTY

Leicestershire communities benefit from £40,000 grant

A partnership working in rural Leicestershire has been awarded a grant towards improving community life in some of the more isolated areas of the county. The Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, working together with Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and the Rural Community Council (RCC), led the successful bid for national funding. The three organisations are all members of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP). The Countryside Agency made the £40,000 funding available to learn, share and assess the delivery of rural services.

The projects include adapting a rural Church at Orton on the Hill for a range of services for its local community, providing the village of Norton Juxta Twycross with a children's play area, installing outdoor facilities in Ratby, Twyford and Thorpe Satchville aimed at encouraging exercise and recreation for young people and offering support, training and work opportunities for people with disabilities through Brooksby Melton College.

Mrs Lesley Pendleton, Chairman of the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and Leicestershire County Council cabinet member for rural affairs, said: "We are pleased to be able to offer help to some of the more isolated and needy communities in rural Leicestershire. I am also pleased that we have been able to join forces and work in partnership with both the LSEP and the RCC in order to better deliver all these exciting new facilities."

The Chief Executive of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, Kishor Tailor is delighted with the news. "I'm especially pleased that we have secured a national pilot and I am aware that there will be a lot of interest in the outcomes. We know that funding like this can make such a big difference and it is a further example of our commitment to helping rural communities develop and become more attractive places to live and work."

Jeremy Prescott, RCC Director, said: "The Rural Community Council is delighted to have played a part in identifying community projects for the successful LSEP bid to the Countryside Agency. The links between the RCC, LSEP and LRP are very strong and this excellent partnership has ensured that grass roots needs in rural communities have been identified with funding now available to turn aspirations into reality."

The Leicestershire Rural Partnership comprises 19 organisations, including the county, district and borough councils along with the LSEP and the Rural Community Council who deliver a wide range of services to rural Leicestershire. For further information visit the Partnership's website at www.oakleaves.org.uk



Pupils of Orchard Community Primary School with David Taylor MP at the opening of the new boiler

School boiler gets the Green Light



The LSEP helped to fund a new environmentally friendly boiler for Orchard Community Primary School in Castle Donington. The school now has a boiler operating on fossil fuel. Wooden pellets provide the school with heating and hot water reducing the amount of carbon dioxide being released in the atmosphere. A similar system has already been installed at Newbridge High School in Coalville also in North West Leicestershire. The idea of wood heating comes from Finland and £30,000 was granted for the project through the rural energy trust. The staff at Orchard Community Primary School are also using the new system to look at the effects of different types of energy on the environment.

Official Recognition

The LSEP has been welcomed as a new member of the Rural Charter by the East Midlands Rural Affairs Forum (emraf). Emraf recognise organisations that add real value to rural communities and now acknowledge the importance of the LSEP in supporting the development of the rural economy in Leicestershire.

During the first year the LSEP spent 4.5 million pounds in the sub region and supported 18 projects working directly in rural communities. Many other projects benefited rural areas, as they are county wide. The aims of the LSEP coincide with those of emraf including: the need to strengthen and rejuvenate market towns, achieve high quality facilities, improve accessibility for rural businesses, promote sustainable economies, meet the needs of all and recognise that every rural environment is distinctive and diverse.

Looking ahead to 2005/06...

It has just been announced that the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) have set aside ten million pounds for the LSEP to complete its work programme in the next financial year.