

Trade mission to Lyon: France's other centre of industrial activity

Now is the time to register your interest if you would like to participate in the Trade Mission to Lyon organised by the French Business Council next April. The mission will give you a unique opportunity to develop business in France's second pole of industrial activity.

A meeting place of ideas, men and goods, at the point where the North merges with the South, Lyon is a truly exceptional city shaped by two thousand years of history.

Today, the ease of access to the city - a crossroads at the heart of Europe - and its strong industrial as well as cultural heritage mean that Lyon scores heavily over other European cities.

Lyon is the second largest city in France and the capital of the Rhône-Alpes region, which is the second largest region in France and the eighth largest in Europe, in economic terms. With 2 million inhabitants, the 30 mile metropolitan area around Lyon includes all the facilities and infrastructures of a large urban region of European dimensions. Its size and economic power is similar to that of some European countries such as Denmark, Norway and Ireland.

Only a century ago, English visitors to Lyon were struck by its unusual working organisation. No factories were to be found, but instead the city's economy revolved around the 25,000 silkwormers' houses; in 19th century Lyon, home-working was already a reality!

Now the looms have fallen silent and the workshops are sought after as fashionable flats. But in the vast plains surrounding the city, factories are hard at work maintaining the region as the world centre for textile design, supplying top Parisian and foreign couturiers.

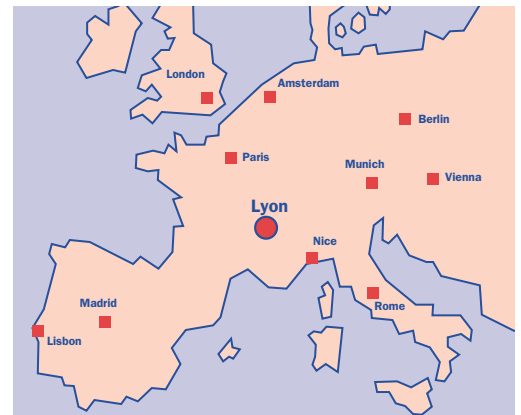
Lyon has succeeded admirably in adapting its centuries-old expertise to the demand of the modern world. Little did the Gillet family realise, when they set up a modest dyeing workshop in 1843, that they were laying the foundations of a chemical and pharmaceutical empire which has made Lyon, notably in the shape of Rhône Poulenc, one of the chemical centres of the world.

The silk industry has also been instrumental in the development of another field in which Lyon is a world leader and boasts a number of internationally renowned companies. The weaving

looms used in the textile industry have helped the emergence of a strong mechanical engineering industry.

New sectors, such as nuclear energy, new materials, biotechnologies and environmental controls, are also vibrant in the area.

Productivity levels are particularly high due to the presence of sectors with high capital investment. Whilst some sectors, such as the chemical industry, are dominated by multinational corporations, others, such as the automotive sector,



are made up of smaller companies. These SMEs employ half of the total workforce in the area.

R&D activities are important and supported by a strong presence of national and international research institutes. Lyon has four universities and a dozen graduate schools.

With the help and support of the French Business Council, you will be able to make the most from the trip. Business culture, language, networks and training are crucial elements of making an export visit a success. The FBC is also able to identify sources of funding to help eligible SMEs minimise the cost of the mission, with travel and accommodation grants. Tailored support will be available to arrange meetings ahead of the trip, and ensure you can meet French companies in the sectors of your choice.

To book a place on the mission, or for further details, contact Aurélie Liraud or Emmanuelle Deplanche on 0191 284 2213, or email info@french-business-council.co.uk.

Nov - Dec 2000

Inside

Anglo-French
Innovation Relay
Centre

Milia 2001

Go to the theatre
and improve your
French

Case study:
Clarkson
Brothers

The French eat 22kg of cheese every year, the equivalent of 85 camemberts. This compares with an average consumption of 7kg per person per year in the UK. The French have cheese before dessert, whilst the British prefer cheese on crackers after dessert.

50% of French households have a garden (a total of 13.5 million) and spend 1450FF per year to maintain it.

Newcastle opens door to Montreal's multimedia marketplace

MIM 2000, the first international trade show on digital convergence, was held in Montreal from 4-6 October. Through a contact made at the FBC visit to MILIA 2000, Newcastle City was invited to exhibit as the only UK region. Newcastle gained a high profile amongst government and development agencies and was able to position itself as an attractive location for North American companies wanting a foothold in Europe.

Montreal is home to over 2,000 multimedia and software businesses. Due to its bilingual nature it has a strong history in creative content, but is weaker in PR and marketing. Companies therefore are now actively looking for commercial partners with complementary skills in the Franco-British market.

The exhibiting companies included Grierson's Consultancy, promoting a bilingual software package for legal firms, Insite Environments, a landscape architecture practice specialising in virtual reality and Seahorse Creations with a CD rom to promote the Caymen Islands. Newcastle City also represented a further six, including Beaumont Coulson, TNL, K-Class, Beck Design and Leighton, gathering useful leads and promoting the region's universities.

The parallel conference programmes at MIM 2000 covered new media trends across internet, telecommunications, cinema, television and games.

The theme of convergence extended to the current state of the Quebec infrastructure. Not only are Quebec's 105 cities undergoing a major process of political convergence, but three of Quebec's new media business support networks are joining up operations to provide a new platform, which would be very interested in joining up websites with parallel North East networks.

The British Consulate hosted an event in a Downtown Electronic Café close to Montreal's Multimedia City for Newcastle as UK guests of honour. Over 25 senior public and private sector guests welcomed the City and conversations over the wine and buffet proved extremely productive and inspiring.

There will be further opportunity to strengthen these links at MILIA 2001.

Polly Moseley or Mary McCann at Newcastle City will be pleased to provide further info on this recent visit.

Contact by e-mail: polly.moseley@newcastle.gov.uk
mary.mccann@newcastle.gov.uk
 or telephone: 0191 277 8902.



Théâtre Sans Frontières marry "text and action so well we're convinced we're bilingual" – The Guardian

French language theatre hits northern stages

Have you heard the curious tale about the little theatre group in darkest Northumberland who perform in French and other foreign tongues, and who are busy working on a new Franco-African project?

Strange and improbable, but true nonetheless. And while the storylines from the multi-lingual world of Théâtre Sans Frontières are rooted more firmly in fantasy, the enjoyment that everyone will take from their shows is real enough.

The pioneering Théâtre Sans Frontières was set up in Hexham in 1991 with the aim of "breaking down the barriers of language between European cultures". Since then, they've performed in English, French, German and Spanish, taking their highly visual brand of theatre to all corners of England, Scotland and Ireland.

Their latest production, *Le Chat Noir*, kicked off at Hexham's cosy Queen's Hall Arts Centre in September and returns to the region for eight performances at the Gulbenkian Studio Theatre, Newcastle, from November 14-18.

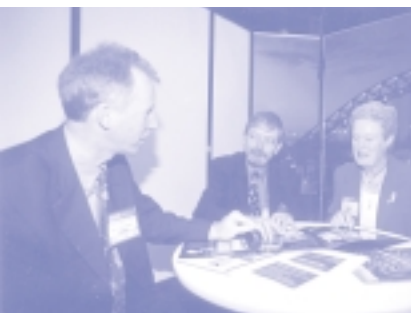
If you never set foot in a theatre again this year, you should go to see *Le Chat Noir*. If your French is so poor that don't even expect the play to have something to do with a black cat, you should still put this at the top of your list of shows to see.

Le Chat Noir's intriguing tapestry is woven from the oft-bizarre strands of a Breton folk tale and, like all the group's work, is highly visual – and very funny.

What's more, Théâtre Sans Frontières is based right here, in a region that increasingly looks towards France in a world of developing international business ties. Théâtre Sans Frontières' up-coming projects include an ambitious joint venture, *Into Africa*, with a theatre group in Paris and plans to take one of their recent successes to next year's Edinburgh fringe.

Meanwhile, a sight of that mysterious Celtic black cat will hopefully tempt you to an earlier taste of théâtre français Hexham-style at the Gulbenkian. What better way to persuade yourself that, yes, you really can communicate in French? [Stan Abbott]

Gulbenkian box office: 0191 230 5151.
www.theatresansfrontieres.co.uk



Peter McGuckin, Inside Environments, John Dobie, Grierson Consultancy and Carol Willey, Seahorse Creations at MIM 2000.

Half of the French never drink wine, compared with 39% in 1980. Instead they drink 103 litres of mineral water per year, among the highest in the world. Wine consumption has decreased by half in the last 30 years.

75% of British people engage in DIY at least once a year, compared with 50% of French people.

Transnational Anglo-French Innovation Relay Centre

IRC North is a new Anglo-French Innovation Relay Centre (IRC) made up of French partners in Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Haute Normandie and Picardie and UK partners covering the whole of Northern England. The IRC network is a European Commission funded initiative, which aims to increase the competitiveness of SMEs by assisting their exploitation of research results, providing direct help with technology transfer and maximising the benefits of Community R&D. One of the aims of the partnership is to encourage transnational technology transfer between all IRCs in the network, and in particular between the North of England and North of France.

To facilitate collaboration and to promote links between the two regions, a full time Anglo-French

Coordinator has been appointed. Barbara Allen, a graduate of the University of Northumbria, and a fluent French speaker, will be working closely with the UK and French partner organisations, including the French Business Council, to encourage technology transfer and to develop further links between French and British companies. In addition, resource centres will be set up in France and the UK and a database of Anglo-French links will be compiled with the aim of assisting companies to work more effectively with their counterparts over the Channel.

IRC North can help SMEs find European partners to work with, represent them at partnering and brokerage events, carry out audits of companies to assess their capacity for technology transfer. In addition, with the focus on Anglo-French relations, IRC North can work closely with companies on both sides of the Channel to facilitate access to technology transfer.

Contact: 0191 516 4400
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barbara.allen@rtcnorth.co.uk
Website: www.ircnorth.org

Milia 2001

Milia 2001, the world's leading event for interactive entertainment, broadband internet, interactive TV and wireless media, is taking place in Cannes from 11 to 14 February 2001.

Following the successful participation of North East companies in the exhibition in the last three years, the FBC is organising a regional stand again this year.

Of his visit at Milia 2000, Jonni Murphy from Leighton said "We actually did substantial business at the event itself, it was more than worthwhile." He added "For any company working in this sector, I would highly recommend this exhibition."

The stand for the North East delegation has been booked at an excellent location within the UK village, close to the international meeting area. This should help our delegates to get the most from Milia 2001.

If you would like to book your place for Milia 2001, as a visitor or an exhibitor on the regional stand, please contact Aurélie Liraud or Emmanuelle Deplanche on 0191 284 2213 or at info@french-business-council.co.uk

FBC on track to exceed performance targets

Between March and September 2000, the French Business Council has helped 114 companies. We have dealt with a wide variety of enquiries, ranging from opportunities in the French fishing tackle industry, to information on the French legal system.



Anglo-French Coordinator
Barbara Allen

Export Forum

A strategy for international trade promotion has been drafted by the region's Business Links, One NorthEast, the North East Chamber of Commerce and other business support organisations. The strategy will enable the Export Forum to identify the needs of North East businesses and focus on the regional expertise to encompass starter and advanced EU markets and target long-haul markets where opportunities exist in addition to promoting key sectors.

As a member of the Export Forum, the French Business Council welcomes the partnership approach of the group. It will ensure that the region has a relevant and coherent programme of export events, and that clashing or 'bunching' of events are avoided. In short, the Forum will coordinate action and encourage compatibility and complementarity of specialist events.

The French connection - a first for IIP recognition



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Clarkson Brothers Limited, already recognised as being one of the U.K.'s leading shipping agencies took the bold step towards becoming a major international player in November of last year when the company established an operation to service all of the ports of Northern France by opening a French Office, which is based in Le Havre.

This office is headed by Managing Director Jean-Jacques Poulain and is supported by Jean Colas as Agency Manager, together with Séverine Biard - Administrator, Serge Boulay and David Langlois as Agency Operators.

After only 5 months in operation, Clarkson Brothers, which operates out of most major UK ports, became the first independent company of any kind to actually gain Investors in People accreditation in France. While some companies lay claim to IIP status under a global banner, Clarkson Brothers' wholly-owned subsidiary, Agence Clarkson Brothers France SARL, located at Le Havre, successfully underwent an audit by a British Government-appointed assessor.

Announcing the cross-channel achievement, Chief Executive Kevin Shakesheff said, "We were driven not merely by a desire to put the IIP badge on our logo in France, but by a need to transfer the best practices which have been fundamental to the development and improvement of our company in the UK. Mr Shakesheff said its ability to gain IIP status so quickly was a tribute to the efforts of Managing Director Jean-Jacques Poulain and his team in the French port.

Clarkson Brothers recently took the unusual step of incorporating IIP into its quality-accredited management system. This means that, should it fail to fulfil its duties to its staff according to its IIP charter, it risks losing its prestigious ISO 9002 kitemark, which it has held since 1987.

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case study

Translation grant

Did you know that the North East Chamber of Commerce offers translation grants?

If you are an SME within the Objective 2 area, you can get a grant to assist you with the necessary costs of translating into a foreign language materials which if not translated would inhibit the proper implementation of your international trade strategy. The grant covers up to 50% of the translation cost up to a maximum of £500 per application.

For further information contact the FBC office.



New contact

Emmanuelle Deplanche has joined the French Business Council as Project Officer. She is a graduate from Buckingham College and has worked for ADIL, the economic development agency for the Loire region and a subsidiary of DATAR.

Soirées françaises

How's your French conversation? Do you find yourself struggling for words in that business meeting in Paris? Do you come home kicking yourself for that awful faux pas committed in terribly polite company? Worst of all, do you find all your old fluency maddeningly coming back just as you're boarding the flight home?

If this is you, or even if you reckon you're better (or worse) than that, how do you fancy the idea of giving your brain a regular date with the French language?

The proposed format would be a monthly evening for 20 or more, with a buffet meal at the Malmaison Hotel, Newcastle. Subject to the level of interest, evenings might also feature a French speaker from the local community (business, sport, or politics for example), with a question-and-answer session.

If this would be of any interest, please send your details to Aurélie Liraud at the FBC office at the above address, or e-mail info@french-business-council.co.uk.

[Stan Abbott]

Coming soon in
Communiqué 23:
The North East
in Toulouse - full
report on SITEF
2000

Forthcoming highlights

February
Biovision - Lyon
Milia - Cannes

March
Interprise - Durham

April
Trade mission to Lyon

June
Paris Airshow - Le Bourget



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