

SOUTH TYNESIDE COMPANIES ON FRENCH MISSION

In November 2002, the French Business Council organised a trade mission to France for South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council bringing six South Tyneside based companies to the Paris region.

Since 1999, South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council has been running a German and French Export Trading Programme to strengthen links with its German and French twin towns and to allow South Tyneside companies to increase their business in Europe.

To organise this year's mission, the FBC worked closely with Mike Jessop, Senior Economic Development Officer, South Tyneside Council; the Paris Chamber of Commerce; South Tyneside's two French twin towns, Epinay-sur-Seine and Noisy-le-Sec; the Plaine Commune business development centre; and the British Embassy in Paris.

Here are some of the most positive outcomes of the trade mission:

- Prestige Seating Technology Ltd, a South Tyneside based manufacturer of high quality chairs for the casino industry, secured a lucrative contract with a French casino group.
- Ford Component Manufacturing Ltd, a precision engineering company, expects its orders from France to double for the forthcoming year as a result of the trade mission. The company received several enquiries from a major French client and also recruited a French stagiaire for an 8-week period.
- Tecform International, a manufacturer of point of sale display products, received an enquiry from a major French company and expects to increase its business in France over the next 6-12 months.

George Miller, CEO of Tecform International said that the mission provided "excellent opportunities to develop new and existing business in the French capital".

South Tyneside companies also benefited from a cultural briefing session organised by the FBC to raise their awareness about cultural differences in terms of business practices. This session was held at the Town Hall in South Shields and was attended by Councillor Joan Jackson, Mayor of South Tyneside.

Tanja Kuehme, International Sales, Ford Component Manufacturing Ltd, said: "The efforts made by the Council and the FBC were of a great deal and very useful. The support and assistance given before and during the mission were of a very high standard and are hardly able to be improved."

Participants also received market reports and translation services from the FBC, as well as French Language Packs sponsored by the Regional Language Network North East.

The FBC is now providing follow up services to companies requiring further assistance with potential new French partners.

Mike Jessop concluded: "Our Companies and the Council benefited from this Mission. Using the FBC was an excellent choice, they handled the programme impeccably and all our businesses praised their professional and thorough approach."