

Ambitious plans for the future of the FBC

Armed with a seven year track record of success in bringing European funded projects to fruition, the FBC is proposing three major projects to run to the end of 2003. Once again, the focus is very much on SME needs and partnership with relevant organisations to avoid duplication of activities and ensure the delivery of effective, practical help.

The first proposal for ERDF funding is to take Club Sophia UK (CSUK) forward and further develop links with Sophia Antipolis. CSUK will also link-up with regional clustering initiatives in the fields of biosciences, software, new media and environment, thereby creating useful synergies.

CSUK will not just concentrate on supporting the high-tech high-growth sector with links to the south of France. It will start extending its activities to other knowledge-based hubs around the world.

Although funded through the French Business Council, CSUK will continue to operate autonomously with a board reflecting the partnership basis on which the organisation was founded.

The second proposal for funding is for the Cit@del project. It will offer SMEs in the North East the opportunity to work with major Anglo-French programmes in the aerospace and defence industries. Cit@del will help internationalise SME market strategies and established manufacturing capacities, accelerate the cluster development process, and link traditional economic strengths with the e-procurement strategies already being developed for these international programmes.

Finally, with the Accord project, the FBC proposes to support the Region's creative and cultural industries, a key cluster group identified by the Regional Economic Strategy. The project will provide creative SMEs with access, networking and marketing potential to the French speaking states of the EU.

The project builds on a special initiative sponsored by the FBC in 2001, developing business opportunities between the Region's glass industry and the Limoges area. Through consultancy, missions and the facilitation of exchanges, residencies and performances in and from France, the FBC will help deliver export initiatives which will stimulate the international growth and competitiveness of the sector.



Club Sophia UK, the new knowledge network piloted by the FBC, was officially launched at Central Square in April with a keynote address by Sir Frederic Holliday (pictured above).

Read more on Club Sophia UK activities on page 3.

France leads on attracting manufacturing investors

France's share of international manufacturing investment in Europe is rising fast, according to Ernst & Young's annual study of global foreign direct investment flows.

The report shows that France's share of new manufacturing projects rose by 75 per cent last year, which strengthens its position as Europe's top location.

France is benefiting from the availability of skills, its infrastructure and access to western European markets, and the stability of its currency.

The rise in new manufacturing projects was only 7 per cent in the UK compared with 44 per cent in Europe as a whole.

However the UK remains Europe's top inward investment location for projects of all kinds, with 2,592 projects and a 27 per cent share in Europe. France is second in front of Germany, with 1,473 projects and 15.4 per cent (1998-2000).

Ernst & Young pointed out that the UK's market share was below the level of two years ago, and was becoming more reliant on US investment, which could become a cause for concern.

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Orders in the aerospace sector in France have risen by 40% in 2000, with an increase of 53.2% for civil aviation.

French cinema produced 140 films last year, with investment increasing by 16%.

French exports of paper bags have increased by 30% in 2000, with production up by 6.8%.

Mission accomplished

Lyon visit creates good business for North East SMEs

Four North East companies are busy pursuing leads they made with France's second largest industrial centre last April, following a mission organised by the French Business Council. The multi-sector mission aimed to help regional SMEs to develop contacts and trade in the Lyon area.

With excellent support from the local development agency ADERLY and the British Consulate, the FBC ensured all practical arrangements were in place to enable the companies to concentrate on the purpose of the trip. Meetings were booked in advance of the mission. Transport and translation were arranged for every meeting. The delegates even managed to fit a guided tour of the beautiful city of Lyon within their busy schedule.

The outcomes of the trip have been extremely positive, proving once again that the FBC's experience and expertise in running missions to France helps deliver relevant, productive, and cost-effective projects.

Ron Jamieson, Managing Director of the Regional Centre for Innovation Engineering & Design, was particularly interested in promoting his virtual prototyping service for the chemical and packaging industries. He said "The organisation of the mission was the best I have come across. The result for the RCID is positive."

Ged Lee of Ford Motor Components agreed that the mission was "extremely well organised and supported", adding "This ensured that as much of our time available as possible was used looking for opportunities."

Oberlin Filter, which produces filter systems for process fluids used in manufacturing, chemical and beverage industries wanted to meet managers from local manufacturing and chemical industries to increase local awareness of their equipment. Four out of the five meetings arranged provided good leads which Oberlin are now following up. John Turtle, Director of European Development, said "This is a good result and justifies the cost of making the trip to Lyon. Additionally, much more detailed knowledge of industry in the Lyon region has been gained, which will be valuable as we develop our European business."

For Ian Southworth, Sales and Marketing Manager at Diffusion Textiles, the mission to Lyon was "a very good trip". The manufacturer of waterproof breathable textiles for outdoor clothing, tents etc., held meetings with a number of potential agents. It also created a strong lead with Lafuma, a leading supplier of outdoor apparel who own the Millet brand.



FBC Chairman Andrew Robinson with Diane-Marie de Montoriol and Jonni Murphy

It's Frenchtastic! the E-Generation way

A website where you can enjoy all things French is one of 18 projects being developed under the E-Generation initiative run by the Foundation for SME Development and Newcastle City Council.

Frenchtastic.com is the brainchild of Diane-Marie de Montoriol. She plans to deliver "the broadest travel service, the most complete shopping environment, the most up-to-date hotspots, educational programmes and news information and the most fantastic selection of properties to rent, buy or swap."

The E-Generation programme provides help and support to students with entrepreneurship workshops, mentoring, networking and access to incubators.

Diane-Marie says: "So far, Frenchtastic has received a lot of support from entrepreneurs, internet specialists, lawyers, the people behind E-Generation, and above all my mentor, Jonni Murphy, Director of New Media at Leighton." So it looks like we may soon be able to browse a very useful francophile site. Diane-Marie strongly believes in the concept: "I declined a once in a lifetime offer from one of the biggest five firms in the world to stay focused on turning my vision into reality."

Le Bourget Airshow - June 2001

The FBC is visiting Le Bourget Airshow near Paris in June. For further information please contact Emmanuelle Deplanche on 0191 284 2213 or emmanuelle@frenchbusinesscouncil.co.uk

60% of the internet is in English (75% in 1998). Spanish is second (4.5% from 2,5%), French third (4.4% from 2.8%).

42% of the French speak English, 16% Spanish, 9% German. 27% speak at least two foreign languages.

19% of Europeans speak French as a foreign language, whilst 41% speak English as a foreign language.

Sophia Antipolis leads by example

The success of Europe's largest science park, Sophia Antipolis, is attracting the attention of economic development agencies all over the world. When representatives from Newcastle City Council attended Europe's most important international property and investment exhibition, MIPIM, in Cannes recently, they didn't just stay at the International Relocation Stand.

Prior to the trip, Ian Brayford, investment marketing manager at Newcastle City Council, contacted Club Sophia UK to help him meet the development organisations that have been instrumental to the commercial success of Sophia Antipolis and the Côte d'Azur.

Estelle Chatard, the project manager for Club Sophia UK, advised Ian on the most appropriate contacts in the area and liaised directly with her contact at Méditerranée Technologies. A programme of visits was developed for two days in Sophia Antipolis and one day in Nice. In all seven organisations INNO JSD, SAEM, CICA, CICOM, Méditerranée Technologies, Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie and Côte d'Azur Développement were visited.

These visits created a better understanding of how things work in Sophia Antipolis, what the philosophies of the area are as well as the drivers for success both in the past and for the future.

The past ten to twelve years have seen such rapid developments in Sophia Antipolis that demand now exceeds supply. This has led directly to the development of five "sons" of, or "brothers" to Sophia Antipolis in the Côte d'Azur. Here the model for Sophia's success will be replicated by cluster development through a segmented sector approach. An ideal business location is developed and then the external environment is harnessed to deliver the companies to the sites. This philosophy has a great synergy with that of Newcastle in its strategy for economic development "Competitive Newcastle".

A striking aspect of the visit to this area was that the message regarding the business opportunities in Sophia, the sons of Sophia and the Côte

d'Azur was consistent at every meeting that was attended. This illustrates the cohesion that is evident in the development agencies in this region.

A further element of the success story for the region is the multi-language presentation facilities available in the resource centre of Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie and this is complemented by the provision of multi-language promotional material available through Côte d'Azur Développement. This professional care for potential customers is a simple and effective tool that Newcastle and other UK cities could learn to use easily.

Ian Brayford stated "An abiding memory of my visits to Sophia Antipolis and the Côte d'Azur is the courteous and friendly treatment that was afforded to me and the professional manner exhibited in every meeting. It was a pleasure to visit this area and the organisations that I met."

For more information on Club Sophia UK contact:

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or visit the website:
www.clubsophiauk.com
which contains full details of events and projects, including the Video Conference taking place on 7 June.

Tour de Force for Bastille Day

An organisation dealing with France could not be taken seriously if it ignored the most important date in the French calendar, 'le 14 juillet', otherwise known in this country as Bastille Day.

For the last seven years, the French Business Council has organised special lunches or dinners befitting of the occasion. This year, the 14th July celebrations will be bigger, better and we believe the most entertaining event in the Summer calendar.

Held at Durham Castle on Saturday 14 July, the evening will start off with two short plays by the acclaimed Hexham-based theatre company, Théâtre Sans Frontières. This will be a unique chance to enjoy a sneak preview of their new production entitled 'Tour de France'.

The performances will be followed by a black tie dinner. By the end of the evening you'll believe you are fully bilingual and will have no problem cheering: Vive la France!

For further information and tickets contact Emmanuelle Deplanche at the FBC office.



Théâtre Sans Frontières

case study

Tecform wins contract with the Louvre in Paris

Workers from Tecform are producing work on custom-made display equipment, which will display Objets d'Art based on many of the priceless exhibits in the Louvre. The Louvre museum in Paris is home of the Mona Lisa painting, amongst other masterpieces.

Tecform is a trademark and a sales division of The Bend it Shape it Company Ltd (BISICO), which specialises in point-of-sale display and already works with top French names like Euro-Disney and the most well known perfume houses in Paris who demand high quality products and service.

The South Tyneside company appointed a Distributor for France in 1996, based in Rue des Archives, Paris. The Distributor trades as Tecform France Sarl; the Managing Director is Marc Delmatto. Marc said "There is a good synergy between our office in Paris and Tecform in

South Tyneside and our clients benefit from that".

Tecform began as a general fabricator of plastics in 1979 but moved quickly into point-of-sale manufacturing back in 1982. Today the company, which employs 26 people, operates its point-of-sale activity alongside its original operation using the "Tecform" and "Bisico" trademarks as sales divisions.

Tecform, who participated in the first ever French Business Council mission to Paris, has always taken the French market seriously. Most recently the South Shields Company cultivated its French links with a visit to Paris and attended client meetings together with Mr Delmatto.

Councillor Jim Harper, Lead member for regeneration with South Tyneside said recently "Tecform is an excellent example of a company that has adapted over the years to its advantage and it's a testament to its competitiveness and the quality of its work that it retains such high quality customers on the continent".

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Tecform gets a taste for continental business.
Managing Director George Miller with Fabricator
Ian Wilson and Export Manager Caroline Porter

