

Helping the region talk with the world

Would you like your company literature translated into Spanish? Are you planning to go abroad on business in Italy and need some cultural background information? Would you like to know whether there is some funding available to exhibit at an international trade fair in Germany?

Although these questions have very little to do with the French market, the French Business Council (FBC) is now providing this type of advice and guidance to NE companies after winning a major contract as sub-regional partner of the Regional Language Network North East (RLN NE).

The RLN NE was established by One NorthEast and the Languages National Training Organisation in March 2002 to increase language and cultural awareness in the region. This followed an audit in the region in 2000 that showed that one in five companies had lost business abroad because of poor international communication skills.

Since December 2002, the FBC, as part of the RLN NE Team, has been contacting businesses in County Durham and Northumberland to find out more about their language needs and international communication skills, and to provide useful information about available grants, language training, cultural training, translation agencies, staff with language skills in the region, etc.



Colin Dunbar, Company Training and Development Manager, Rhodia Pharma Solutions; and Sylvie Larocque, Project Manager, FBC.

Together with two other RLN NE sub-regional partners offering similar assistance to Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley companies, the FBC is helping to raise awareness of the importance of international communication skills in the North East and is identifying best practice examples in the region. Two examples are Rhodia Pharma Solutions in Northumberland and PPG Industries International in County Durham who are both working closely with



Members of the Regional Language Network's "hit squad", from left: Fiona McQuillan, Teesside Business School; Stan Abbott, whose firm Stan Abbott Associates covers Tyne and Wear; Zélie Guérin, Coordinator of the Regional Language Network North East; Wibke Baumann and Andrew Robinson of the French Business Council.

French colleagues and supporting French language training for their staff.

The FBC organised two RLN NE events in County Durham and Northumberland, at Seaham Hall and Longhirst Hall respectively, and 30 businesses and language service providers attended to learn about the support available, to exchange ideas and to network. Speakers included Geoff Young and Joyce Rawlings, International Trade Advisers from Durham and Northumberland Business Links, who presented services offered by Trade Partners UK; Andrew Robinson, Chairman of the French Business Council; and Zélie Guérin, Coordinator of the Regional Language Network North East.

Zélie Guérin highlighted the success of the first stage of the project: "This has proved to be an invaluable part of the RLN NE's first year of operations, yielding a cohort of North East businesses keen to develop international communication skills for business success."

Having entered the second stage of the RLN NE project, the FBC will organise other workshops and events throughout the year and will continue to visit companies in the region. Should you have any questions about the RLN NE, support available for your business, cultural/language training or upcoming events in your area, please feel free to contact either Sylvie Larocque or Wibke Baumann at the FBC. The Regional Language Network's website can be found at www.rln-northeast.com.

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One NorthEast and the FBC: a growing partnership

Investments by French companies in the North East of England are of prime importance for the Region. Forty French companies, employing over 13,000 people, have chosen the North East of England as the location for their business. This makes it one of the largest international group of investors and a major contributor to the Regional economy. Major French investors include Sanofi Synthelabo, Rhodia Pharma Solutions, Électricité de France (London Electricity), Faurecia, AXA Insurance and Renault (Nissan).

Since 2002, the FBC team has been working closely with One NorthEast's European Inward Investment Team to promote the North East at key business events in France and to attract further investment from across the Channel. Recent events have included 'Sitef', a major aerospace and new technologies fair in Toulouse, 'CeBIT', the world's largest ICT event in Hannover, and 'Biosquare', an international biotechnology partnering event in Lyon. The FBC undertook desk research for each of these events and arranged a series of meetings with French companies and key support organisations. Sylvie Larocque, Project Manager at the FBC, attended each event representing One NorthEast's inward investment team and has been active in the follow-up activities.

New staff



Wibke Baumann



Pierre Scotto Di Freca

Creating a European centre of business culture

Wibke Baumann, a German national who graduated with a Masters degree in Cultural Studies and History at the University of Bremen in Germany, joined the FBC team in September 2002. Having organised cultural events in Bremen during her studies, Wibke added a course in International Project Management to her qualifications shortly before moving to the UK.

Wibke is currently involved in a major project with the Regional Language Network North East and is assisting One NorthEast with their inward investment

strategy for the German market. As the FBC is gradually branching out to cover a wider European market through a joint initiative with the German-British Chamber of Commerce and the Italian Chamber of Commerce, Wibke has also started to manage German projects. She has taken on a secretariat role for the German-British Chamber in the North East and has recently launched the 'German Circle', an opportunity for Germans in the region to meet regularly. The Circle is similar to the highly successful French Club 'Bienvenue en France'. Wibke is looking forward to creating and strengthening commercial, cultural and social links between the North East and Germany.

Pierre Scotto Di Freca, a French graduate from Marseille, joined the FBC team in October 2002 and recently completed his Masters degree in International Business Administration at the University of Northumbria.

Although Pierre's expertise is in e-commerce and web-research, he recently helped to organise South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council's second trade mission to Paris and provided interpreting services to participating South Tyneside companies during business meetings. Pierre is also a member of the Regional Language Network North East team and is providing consultancy services to North East SMEs trading with the French market.



From left: Wibke Baumann, FBC; Clare Copesey, One NorthEast; Sylvie Larocque, FBC; and Denis Besnard, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, at CeBIT in Hannover.

The relationship is strengthening and moving into the German market. Through a new joint initiative between the FBC and the German-British Chamber of Commerce in the North East, Wibke Baumann, a German national, is now also supporting One NorthEast's inward investment activities. Together with Clare Copesey, Senior Executive for Europe at One NorthEast, Wibke visited 'CeBIT' in March and the 'Hannover Fair' in April. The German team met with a number of companies looking to develop business in the UK.

Steve Wilson, Inward Investment Manager – Europe at One NorthEast, said: "I have been very pleased with the partnership. The knowledge and expertise of the FBC staff has enabled us to achieve much more than we would have done trying to do everything ourselves."

Sylvie and Wibke are now talking with One NorthEast to develop further initiatives to identify and encourage French and German companies to set up in the North East.

Award-winning Alliance Française lecture sponsored by the FBC

On the 27th of November 2002, the Alliance Française de Newcastle upon Tyne invited John Ardagh, the eminent freelance journalist and writer on European Affairs, to give a fascinating public lecture at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in the University's 'Insights' Public Lecture series entitled 'The Attitudes of the French towards Europe and the Rest of the World'. The event was sponsored jointly by the French Business Council and the Open University, and was attended by an audience which filled the Curtis Auditorium to near capacity.

John Ardagh's wide-ranging talk in English covered the development of France's relationships since the second world war with its present-day associates in world affairs, Germany, Britain and the United States.

It is pleasing to note that the lecture won the Newcastle Alliance Française an award for Best Partnership Project at the Annual General Meeting of the Alliance Française in the UK on 10 May 2003 in London. On this occasion, Alain Marqueur, Director of International

Relations at the Alliance Française in Paris, commented that he would like to see more events of this kind within the Alliance!

The Alliance Française in Newcastle welcomes suggestions for another joint activity with the French Business Council on the occasion of the celebrations of the centenary of the 'Entente Cordiale' in 2004.



John Ardagh, freelance journalist and writer on European Affairs

Bienvenue Tyne & Wear

It's not every day of the week that a French delegation heads for the UK to see if they can learn from us.

But that was the aim of a high-level French government delegation on a whistle-stop tour of Tyne & Wear in October 2002.



François Riahi, Inspector of Finances in the French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry; Sylvie Larocque, Project Manager, FBC; Claude Trink, Senior Adviser in the French Ministry; and Alain Gaugris, Commercial Attaché at the French Embassy in London.

The visit was co-ordinated by the French Business Council in response to an approach from the French Embassy in London. The three-strong delegation met representatives of regional development agency One NorthEast, Business Link Tyne & Wear and Northern Enterprise Ltd. The only other UK cities visited were London, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Chairman Andrew Robinson said: "That we were asked to facilitate this visit shows, I think, the respect afforded to the work of the FBC, both in the region and in senior circles in France."

North East glass exhibition in France

A group of seven North East glass artists who participated in a French Business Council mission in 2001 are exhibiting in France this summer, with support from Trade Partners UK, Outline and Newcastle City Council.

Convergences/ Divergences is the title of the show which runs from 1 July to 31 August in Saint-Yrieix near Limoges. From small lead crystal sculptures to large scale flat glass installations, the exhibition presents over forty pieces in a 300sqm space.

David Hardman of Two a.m., the organisers of the exhibition, says: "Glass is one of the most interesting sculptural media of the moment and a new force on the contemporary art scene. Because of a lack of exhibition opportunities, this movement is still fairly confidential and limited to keen followers. It is therefore a fantastic opportunity for these artists to show their work on an international stage."



Jessamy Kelly's 'On the Spot', one of the sculptures exhibited in France this summer.

Bienvenue en France or German Circle?

Are you a French or German national living in the North East? Did you know that there are fun and informal French and German events organised in the region? If you would like to find out more or receive invitations to the next events, please contact Sylvie Larocque or Wibke Baumann at the FBC on 0191 233 6315.

Photo: clockwise from top left, Mayor of South Tyneside, Councillor Joan Jackson; George Miller, Tecform International; Sylvie Larocque, French Business Council; and Mike Jessop, South Tyneside Council.

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.



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."

Bastille Day @ Baltic Sold out event

On the 17th July 2003, the FBC is organising its annual Gala event to celebrate the French National Day (Bastille Day) in the North East.

Last year's event, at Eversheds' offices on the Quayside, featured an exhibition by seven top North East glass artists and French ceramist Patrick Audevard, organised by Outline. Live musical performances were arranged by North East company A.M. Live, and French canapés and wine were served throughout the evening. Prizes awarded on the evening included a champagne dinner and overnight stay for two at the Copthorne Hotel, dinner for two at Fisherman's Lodge, theatre tickets from Théâtre Sans Frontières, tickets for a Musikh Concert at Durham Cathedral, and a language training pack by the Regional Language Network North East.

This year's soirée, sponsored by One NorthEast and easyJet, is taking place in the Rooftop Restaurant of the Baltic with stunning views over the Tyne. The French evening will include a three-course dinner with wine. Guests are encouraged to arrive early to take advantage of the Baltic's late opening hours and to view exhibitions by Antony Gormley and Sirkka-Liisa Kontinen prior to the dinner.

We look forward to seeing you on the 17th July!

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".



easyJet backs Bastille day event

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