

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."