

GOOD PRACTICE

Trade Mission to China

ORGANISATION: Wakefield Council

TOPIC: Creating and sustaining of cross regional/international partnerships

TOPIC OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

This BP example is concerned with the following area of interest; The creating and sustaining of cross regional/international partnerships. This best practice is an example of the creation of international partnerships founded in civic and cultural similarities, leading to economic cooperation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

Following the UK exit from recession in 2012 Wakefield Enterprise Partnership (WEP) was investigating and identifying routes to develop and diversify the local economy. The Wakefield economy has historically been overly reliant on one-two key sectors. The impact of this is that the district has suffered from wage suppression and a large concentration of employment in elementary occupations that require low to no distinct skills.

Working in partnership with the national Department for International Trade, Wakefield Council and the WEP began to identify different areas of the world where it was felt there would be significant opportunity to develop sister city agreements to deliver culture and economic benefits to the region.

One of the identified countries was China, however it was clear forming long term relationships was going to be difficult due to the significant cultural difference.

Why Xiangyang?

The WEP board was very clear that if Wakefield was to identify a long-term economic and cultural partner, it would be important that the two areas had strong economic and cultural similarities. Xiangyang was chosen for the following 3 key reasons:

1. Location

Wakefield - One of the key strengths of the Wakefield District is its location at the heart of the UK with easy transport links to major cities and surrounding areas. The Wakefield District is located at the centre of the UK motorway network and within an hour's drive of 3 international airports. Wakefield's location is one of its key economic drivers, which explains its relative strength in logistics, warehousing and transportation.

Xiangfan and Xiangyang - Located in central China and on the strategic middle reaches of the Han River. Xiangfan consists of the historic city Xiangyang and the ancient wharf Fancheng that stand on the southern and northern sides of the Han River. Three urban districts, three counties, three county-level cities and three development zones cover a total area of 197,000 square kilometres, with a population of 58 million. Xiangfan is an important transportation hub in China today and is referred to as 'the strategic passage of the north and the south' and 'a thoroughfare of seven provinces'. The Han River, the two airports, the three railways and artery highways radiating in all directions, have constituted a comprehensive transportation network in Xiangfan.

2. Culture

Wakefield - Has a growing reputation as a cultural destination with international tourist attractions in the form of The Hepworth Gallery and Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Traditionally Wakefield was the de facto seat

of regional government in Yorkshire for two centuries and became the county headquarters of the West Riding County Council created by the Local Government Act of 1888.

Xiangfan and Xiangyang - There are over 700 historical relics and scenic spots in Xiangfan: the state-level tourist attraction - Longzhong Tourist Zone; the state-level nature preserves - Lumen Temple in Xiangyang district, the ancient wild wintersweet in Baokang County and the summer resort - Xieshan Mountain resort in Gucheng County; the exotic Xiangyang Wall and Xiangyang City Moat, Xiangyang Mansion of Ming Dynasty, the Wall of Green Screen, Zhaoming Tower, the multi-Buddha Pagoda in Guangde Monastery, the Cheng-en Buddhist Monastery, Lumen Temple Natural Scenery Reserve, the natural wintersweet reserve in Baokang County, and so on.

3. Industry

Wakefield - With a background of coal mining and heavy industry, Wakefield now has high proportions of specialisms in manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, health care and the motor industry. Wakefield has an ambition to attract more high technology and scientific industry to the area and the district has a growing population of high tech industry in manufacturing and computer based design.

Xiangfan and Xiangyang - Also an ex mining area, Xiangyang and the wider Xiangfan is a thriving heavy vehicle and light vehicle production base and has an automobile development zone - the only one in China. This includes the largest vehicle testing yard in Asia. There are 253 motor vehicle enterprises in Xiangfan, with the motor industry output value accounting for 60% of the total output of the city. New high technology industries have been developing rapidly, with over 300 scientific institutes and 4 state-level scientific institutes. Xiangfan is the largest textile production base/printing and dyeing base in the Hubei Provinces and over 500 foreign investor enterprises have been established as a result of its geographical location and favourable investment environment.

Xiangyang possesses large water energy resources, whilst its mineral deposits include rutile, ilmenite, phosphorus, barite, coal, iron, aluminium, gold, manganese, nitre, and rock salt. The reserves of rutile and ilmenite rank highly in China. Textile production is the mainstay industry of Xiangfan followed by machinery manufacture, chemical processing, electronics and manufacture of construction materials. Agricultural resources are significant with Xiangfan's chief farm products including grain, cotton, vegetable oil crops, tobacco, tea and fruit.

Civic mission to China

In order to ensure a successful visit, the selection of participants was carefully managed to ensure representation from the key areas of interest;

Civic/Cultural Partnership - We arranged for the leader of the Council and the leader of the oppositions to attend with key local authority representatives

Educational Exchange - The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Leeds Metropolitan University and Trade Mission Co-ordinator, Hull University Institute of Logistics and the Assistant Principal, Wakefield College

Industrial Strategy and Investment Strategy - Service Director of Economic Growth and Housing, the Inward Investment Manager, and key WEP representatives

Private Enterprise - In order to finance private sector involvement in the initial visit we arranged for financial support from the Department for International Trade (DIT). To ensure the initial meeting was productive we brought representatives from some of Wakefield's target sectors including ICT, Manufacturing, Food and Drink and Textiles. Representatives included:

Manufacturing - ICW (UK)

Margaret Wood MBE is the founder and Managing Director of ICW (UK) Ltd, manufacturers in Wakefield of innovative and bespoke glazing systems with multiple applications. Margaret has a science and engineering background and is a supporter and mentor for industry, manufacturing, women and young people.

ICT - Network Brands Ltd

Established since 1977, Network Brands is a leading distributor for the world's leading automotive lighting manufacturers - Philips and OSRAM. Based in Wakefield they supply customers across the world with quality Philips & OSRAM automotive bulbs and ship to over 60 countries worldwide. Over 50% of their business is export. Network Brands use innovative and bespoke ecommerce technology which allows them to serve customers in both B2B and B2C markets.

Media Displays Limited (MDL)

Media Displays commenced trading in November 2004 and designed, developed and built the first mobile TV advertising vehicles in the UK. In 2010 the company launched its innovative TV Bikes designed for pedestrianised areas. To date over 1800 client campaigns have been completed. In 2012-13, they launched a new business, importing components from China to build static LED screens in small cabinets, aimed at the retail and corporate sectors.

The initial visit led to the signing of a friendship agreement which effectively tied each party to further civic and cultural missions. These meetings took place over the period 2013-15 with two separate delegations into Wakefield.

The successful development of the cultural and civic links has ultimately resulted in the signing of a sister cities agreement that allows a greater integration of both cultural and economic interests

Trade mission 2016

Following the successful signing of a sister city agreement, the Local Authority financed key strategic businesses to travel and meet with suitable businesses to develop agreements for further trade and exchange of best practice.

Wakefield Business Profiles:

Backstage Academy

Founded in July 2009, Backstage Academy specialises as a centre of excellence for backstage training of various levels from short courses to higher education degrees and is based in the largest purpose-built production rehearsal arena complex in Europe

The following activity has been agreed;

1. Encouragement of Chinese students to come to Backstage Academy to study
2. Offering short courses to be delivered in China promoting the industry (Live Events) as a career pathway. Establishing quality assurances based on international expectations in terms of competence and H&S
3. Possible development of a Backstage Academy in China

Tileyard

Tileyard is fast becoming known as London's most exciting new creative hub. Situated in Kings Cross Central, the 105,000 sq ft complex is the permanent home to some the creative industry's top names and is very much the place to be for creative businesses. The Owner of Tileyard recently bought a development site in Wakefield (Rutland Mills, Wakefield Waterfront) and there are hopes to regenerate this area into a similar project.

Tileyard are exploring the following opportunities;

1. Student exchange programmes through Tileyard Education
2. Cultural linkages, possibly hosting an exhibition at Tileyard's new studio space at Wakefield Waterfront

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP)

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park spans over 500 acres and over the past two years, the visitor figures have more than doubled, estimated at reaching over 700,000 visitors this year, hosting some of the finest exhibitions of outdoor sculpture in the world. YSP was the 2014 winner of Museum of the Year and last year hosted the Wave section of the poppies from the Tower of London.

YSP are now exploring an exhibition exchange programme, potentially hosting some art/sculpture from Xiangyang next year to celebrate their 40th Anniversary.

Double Two

Founded in 1940 by Isaak Donner and Frank Myers, Double Two is a well-known clothing manufacturer originating from Wakefield. The company was very proud to be amongst the 2013 winners of The Queen's Award for International Trade. Double Two now exports 42% of its production to over 40 countries around the world. Double Two have an on-going concern with Uranus Garments Ltd that is being progressed.

Wakefield College

Wakefield College is the largest college in the district and has an impressive track record, having provided education and training in Wakefield and its surrounding area since 1868. The College is home to over 10,000 students, of all ages and abilities, studying a broad range of courses, from pre-entry level through to higher education and professional qualifications.

Wakefield College are exploring a student exchange programme and promoting their wide range of courses to potential students in Xiangyang.

ROLE OF ACTORS

As outlined above, each key actor had a clearly define role to play. The key actors were as follows;

- DIT (Department for International Trade)
- Local Authorities (Wakefield Council)
- Education Providers (both parties)
- Private Sector Businesses (both parties)
- Mayoral Office Xiangyang

BENEFICIARIES

There are a number of clear beneficiaries that include public sector organisations, cultural offerings and private sector organisations.

Some direct benefits are outlined below;

A number of enterprises have developed supply chain opportunities including Double Two and Uranus Garments Ltd.

Relevant departments and organisations from both parties are creating links and developing a student exchange programme.

Relevant departments and organisations from both parties are creating links and developing a teacher exchange programme.

Further exchange visits have been agreed, with the next one scheduled to take place in September 2017.

A Xiangyang culture exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

An exchange exhibition planned at the The Hepworth Gallery.

Further development of trade to benefit both parties, through the creation of an opportunities portfolio based on local intelligence from the respective Economic Development departments.

CULTURAL ASPECTS: POSSIBLE KEY LEVERAGES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION PROCESSES

As outlined in the detailed description of the best practice.

INNOVATION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE, POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT AND REPLICABILITY

The approach to the development of the on-going relationship can be considered innovative due to the following aspects;

- The joining of cultural and economic concerns to develop a long-term relationship
- The careful selection of potential partners based on historic, cultural and geographic similarities
- Public funding for private sector trade missions

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPACT AND RESULTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

The following evidence is in place:

- Multiple exchange visits by both parties
- The signing of contractual agreements by multiple private sector parties
- Exchange visits agreed between cultural organisations
- Education exchange programmes have been agreed
- The signing of sister city agreements

There are a number of case studies written and available concerning the exchange successes for business.

CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Joseph Quinn
Organisation	Wakefield Council
E-mail	jquinn@wakefield.gov.uk
Website	www.wakefieldfirst.com