

Going global launch: Thames Valley – open for business

With the Chamber expecting 2017 to be another record-breaking year for exporting, international trade service users, members, importers, foreign owned companies and those looking to set up in the UK, attended the Thames Valley Open for Business launch.

Opening to a packed audience at Ascot Racecourse, Paul Britton, CEO, Thames Valley Chamber welcomed the audience: "We know that companies that trade globally are more resilient and scale up faster. While we are proud that one in three Chamber members trade internationally, only 1 in 11 companies in the UK trade overseas.

"Whatever the national or local politics, our role is to help international companies to understand the merits of locating in the Thames Valley and to help local businesses to go global. Today the Chamber team and our partners, COBCOE, will share how we are mobilising the global network of hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries. This is a business to business, Chamber to Chamber channel to market for our members and



Paul Britton welcomes delegates

customers."

Pushing forward the Chamber's message of local engagement, regional representation and global opportunity Head of International Trade Anne White continued. She strategically mapped out the region's ongoing success including being one of the 'highest performing regions in Europe'; 'home to 11 of the world's top 15 tech companies' and being within the 'top five for economic potential, cost effectiveness, quality of life, infrastructure and business friendliness'.

Strong statistics shared with the audience included how the Thames Valley is the 'leading exporting region valued at a staggering £42bn' showing that it truly is the powerhouse of the UK.

Attendees were given an outline of the key priorities for the Chamber on not only trade but also inward investment which continues to play a crucial role in the region. Indeed, foreign direct investment is the highest in the UK (outside of London) with a staggering 119 companies choosing to move into the Thames Valley in the last 12 months alone.

A further breakdown of core statistics showed the type of investments being made and whether they were new, expansions and acquisitions and mergers as well as projects by industry and the number of jobs that had either been safeguarded or newly created. With full analysis and information audience members were advised on the types of businesses that were moving into the region and helping secure companies into the region. Support, information and insight as well as introducing newcomers to likeminded and similar organisations that can

assist from the start is part and parcel of the Chamber's global offering.

The importance of retaining a strong position is, of course 'paramount to the long-term success of the Thames Valley' and vital to growth. With the region flourishing, new organisations choosing to make it their home, and others readily expanding premises and offerings, its popularity and powerhouse status is 100 per cent understandable.

A major initiative launched and key drivers identified includes the Chamber's highly popular 'Made in' campaigns. Focusing on regions and towns across the Thames Valley it promotes local, national and international success stories. With Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Slough already successfully launched over the last six months, other areas including Bracknell are in the pipeline.

The importance and ongoing benefits of the new global membership package was highlighted to attendees explaining not only why it was developed but also how it will continually add value to members. Anne promptly provided a quick overview of services and benefits available including inward investment soft landing services, participation onto trade and policy investment agenda, trade related training and coaching as well as market entry support including free advisory sessions from Japanese and Chinese country specialists.

Dr Kegang Wu, Market Specialist, China Desk, Thames Valley Chamber discussed how those looking to enter the marketplace could seek support, strategy input and briefing, commenting: "Both the Thames Valley region and China, particularly Guangdong, have much to offer each other. The Desk, as a part of the Chamber's Global Membership, will help businesses in the area to tap into



Kegang Wu, Glynis Whiting, Masako Eguchi-Bacon, Anne-Marie Martin, CEO, COBCOE, Anne White, Paul Britton