

As we enter 2007 I thought this would be a good time to reflect on the bilateral trade relationship between UK and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to flag up some of the work being done by the UK Trade & Investment network.

UK Trade & Investment is the Government organisation that supports companies in the UK doing business internationally and overseas enterprises seeking to set up or expand in the UK. Its role is to help companies realise their international business potential through knowledge transfer, and on-going partnership support.

UK Trade & Investment is an international organisation with headquarters in London and Glasgow. Across its network UK Trade & Investment employs around 2,300 staff and advisers, including overseas in UK Embassies, High Commissions, Consulates and Trade Offices, and in the nine English regions. In Saudi Arabia we have three trade teams : at the Embassy in Riyadh, the Consulate General in Jeddah and the British Trade Office in Eastern Province. As Director Trade & Investment, it is my role to oversee the activities of the three teams and to produce a co-ordinated strategy for our trade development work in Saudi Arabia.

We are really pleased that the healthy growth in two-way trade between UK and Saudi Arabia continues and commercial partnerships are flourishing. Saudi Arabia is the UK's largest market for goods and services outside the OECD, worth over US\$ 7bn a year – not including substantial UK exports via the UAE, estimated at a further US\$1bn. UK investment in Saudi joint ventures now stands at around US\$ 14bn. Saudi Arabia is UK's 25<sup>th</sup> largest export market, and largest trading and investment partner in the Middle East.

UK takes over 50% of Saudi non-oil exports to the EU, and is a major destination for Saudi investment overseas, especially in the equity markets and in real estate but also, increasingly, in the manufacturing and service sectors.

Recent major boosts to bilateral trade and investment have included Foster Wheeler's \$800m EPC contract for the Khurais Gas plant and SABIC's \$700m purchase from Huntsman Corp. of the former ICI ethylene cracker complex at Wilton in England's North East. SABIC has announced £100m new investment at the site.

The UK remains a popular destination for Saudis with over 100,000 visits per year. The excellent one day service provided by my colleagues in Visa Section certainly helps.

So what are we doing to support British business ...

Across the UKTI network, individual trade officers lead on specific sectors. It is their role to gather information on potential business opportunities and engage with key players within the sector. We have identified a number of sectors where we believe there are real opportunities and, importantly, the UK has the capability to respond to those opportunities. Our current priorities include water, environment, education & training, healthcare, oil & gas, security, rail, airports and financial services. For each of our priority sectors we produce sector overviews and organise a programme of activities aimed at raising awareness of the opportunities and supporting UK companies that wish to enter the market.

We also take part in events in the UK aimed at helping businesses to better understand Saudi Arabia and the business environment. Challenging the many misperceptions that exist is key to encouraging business to take advantage of the huge opportunities in this the giant economy of the Middle East.

How can UKTI and the RGBB help each other ....

The Embassy really values the relationship it has with the RGBB. The support given by the RGBB Board and membership to eg visiting trade delegations is always welcome and I know that UK companies find it immensely useful to have the chance to talk to business on the ground. But I am sure that there is more that we could be doing.

Please read the UKTI events calendar when it is circulated. If there are any activities taking place that relate to your sector we would love you to be involved so please contact the relevant sector lead.

We are also always interested to find out about what is going on in different sectors. If you are ever near the DQ do drop in for a coffee and a chat to bring us up to speed on your area of business. Of course our particular interest is identifying opportunities for UK plc so please tell us if your company is looking for goods or services from the UK and we would be keen to help.



**UK TRADE & INVESTMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA**



**Sharon Wardle**  
Director of Trade & Investment Saudi Arabia

RGBB Members and guests at one of the Trade Mission receptions in 2006

