

### Saudi's business community warmly welcomes the Best of Welsh Business during a nationwide International Business Wales roadshow

Building on the success of recent visits to regional tradeshows such as Arab Health and the Big 5, the Saudi business community was treated to the Welsh Dragon this May. Led by International Business Wales Vice President for the Middle East, Lee Jennings, eight companies and their international representatives touched down in Jeddah during the second week of May to start off what many hope is a strengthening of the Welsh business community among the Kingdom's public and private sectors.

International Business Wales (IBW) is the investment and trade arm of the Welsh Assembly Government that promotes Welsh goods and services abroad, whilst also pursuing foreign direct investment opportunities from companies looking to the UK and Europe as a business location.

With firms focusing on a diverse mixture of industries, from agriculture to education, human resources and training, farming, construction, and oil and gas related industries, the Welsh delegation were keen to highlight the strength of their industries across the board. Each and every member of the group was keen to discover more about the desert Kingdom and how links could be forged to drive bi-lateral trade.

Touching down in Saudi Arabia's second largest city and trading hub, Jeddah, the IBW trade delegation were warmly hosted by the British Consulate in the city, by Cecille El Beledi, Deputy Consul-General and Head of Trade and Investment Section and her team. Once the largest British, and Welsh, expatriate population in the Gulf, Jeddah still has strong links with the UK and delegates were keen to listen to advice from both Saudi and British businessmen and KSA residents as to how to network and do business with their Saudi counterparts.

The IBW trade delegation was also addressed by prominent Saudi lawyer Dr. Majid Garoob and British resident Saudi marketing expert Andrew Mead as to the ins and outs of Saudi networking, and the meaning of the word 'sheikh', especially in relation to developing Saudi business partners.

Following the networking breakfast at the Consulate, IBW was warmly welcomed by National Commercial Bank, the largest commercial bank in Saudi Arabia, and its chief economist, Dr Said Al-Sheikh. Plotting the economic relationship between the two countries, Dr Al-Sheikh was keen to emphasize the changes that the Kingdom is experiencing with its recent entry into the World Trade Organization and how foreign direct investment is changing the business landscape of the country.



## Enter the Dragon

by  
Alex Malouf

With the rest of the day set aside for business development, the trade delegation got set to explore Jeddah. Described as the bride of the sea, delegates discovered downtown Jeddah, its phone market in Palestine Street, as well as the teaming souqs just off the corniche. Joined by IBW's representatives, one company got a taste of how one should expect the unexpected!

Believing that she'd be talking to a television presenter from a prominent news channel, Encapsulated Wildflower Seeds' Sharon Haydney was instead asked about a potential business venture for the Kingdom's rural communities. With a possible partnership in the pipeline, one should never discount anything in Saudi Arabia. However, thanks should also go to IBW's Lee Jennings for spending the morning preparing for the interview!

After an eventful two days in Jeddah, the delegation made the two hour flight over to the Kingdom's capital, Riyadh. Rising from the desert over the past 40 years and the seat of government for the country, Riyadh is increasingly attracting British businesses. With demand outstripping supply in many industries in the Central province, IBW's delegation was eager to uncover more about the seat of government and the people of the desert.

