

RGBB members need no reminder about the impact of the current security situation on our work. One obvious difficulty is that UKTI cannot give financial support to trade missions to the Kingdom while the FCO advises against non-essential travel. But the commercial team in the Embassy, and in our other posts in the Kingdom, has been working hard to develop new ways to support UK companies.

For example, since the last RGBB news we have organised four successful inward missions of Saudi companies to UK exhibitions on: fire & safety; leisure and tourism; oil & gas and water/wastewater. We have others planned for the rest of the financial year. We have also arranged networking opportunities at exhibitions in Dubai and Bahrain for British companies to meet potential Saudi customers and briefed UK companies at the exhibitions on the Saudi market. Our door is also always open to visiting UK companies.



Syed Zaman from the British Embassy in Riyadh escorts potential Saudi Buyers to a UK exhibition venue earlier this year.

Keith Young, from Thames Water, completed his six month attachment to the Embassy at the end of September. His report on opportunities for British companies in the Saudi water sector has been sent to the UK for distribution to trade associations, companies and appropriate government agencies. It is a very useful tool for UK companies. As part of our overall strategy for the Saudi water sector, British Water (a leading trade association) are planning to bring out a trade mission of UK companies to the Kingdom in early March 2004, to follow up on the opportunities identified in Keith's report.

Any readers who delegate the household shopping might not have spotted that UK dairy products are now appearing on the shelves of local supermarkets. This follows the recent lifting of the Saudi ban on UK dairy products and agreement between the Saudi and UK authorities on a health certificate to accompany them. Heinz cream of tomato soup and Walkers shortbread biscuits are apparently selling well. We're hoping for some traditional UK cheeses in time for Christmas. We're working on the Saudi ban on British meat (which also affects the rest of the EU).



Overall, UK visible exports to Saudi Arabia have held up well so far this year - up 26% in the first 8 months compared to the corresponding period last year.

On 22 November, we hosted a short visit by Brian Wilson MP, the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Trade Opportunities for British Business. He was here for the official signing ceremony of the major gas deal involving Shell, Total and Saudi Aramco. The deal is an important development in the Saudi oil and gas industry and we hope it will open up other avenues of opportunity for British companies.



Barry Lowen

Any readers who have been following the evolution of our corporate identity over the years might be interested to know that we are now UK Trade & Investment (formerly known as British Trade International and its operating arms Trade Partners UK and InvestUK). The new identity reflects a more integrated approach to trade and investment work and our commitment to deliver business opportunities through a global network. Initial reactions suggest that no-one mourns the loss of the busy little bee from our business cards!

Whatever it's called, the Commercial team in the Embassy is committed to providing the best possible service to British companies and to continuing our excellent relationship with the RGBB. We welcome your feedback. In particular, we are currently in the process of drawing up our business plan for next year, in conjunction with London, and are considering new ways to assist British companies here and to attract potential Saudi partners to do business with or invest in the UK. Your ideas would be very welcome.



Rob Lock from Wales Trade International addresses a group of international visitors to the International Fire & Security Exhibition at the NEC. The audience included a party of 20 from Saudi Arabia led by Syed Zaman from the British Embassy.