

Chinese Business Association of the London Chamber of Commerce



The CBA has four Founding Partners



The purpose of the CBA is to:

- Provide a voice for the Chinese business community in London and represent their views to the media, and local and central government
- Provide Chinese-origin businesses with introductions to LCCI members and other companies and give them access to opportunities to enhance their commercial skills and business competitiveness
- Give new Chinese investors in London an understanding of the London business set up and help integrate them into the business community.

For further information about the CBA contact Michelle Shi at LCCI
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Chinese investment

In 2009/10 China was the 6th largest investor in the UK by project numbers – 74 mainland projects, and over 1500 associated jobs. The UK is now home to over 400 mainland Chinese companies attracted by access to the EU market, a world class business environment and a large local Chinese community. The Government continues to welcome Chinese investment as China has welcomed investment from the UK – the UK is now the second largest EU investor in China (behind Germany) with a total realised investment value of over US\$17 billion.



WORKING LUNCH

Yintong Betser meets Agnes Allcock, director general of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London

I HAD met Agnes Allcock before and was impressed with her straightforward and decisive approach, as well as her warmth and her personable character. This made particular sense when I discovered that she used to be an Inspector of Police for the Royal Hong Kong Force, and was also once in a rock band!

On this occasion we met at China Tang at the Dorchester Hotel, one of the most prestigious Chinese restaurants in town and a fitting environment, given its association with renowned Hong Kong entrepreneur David Tang. Agnes favoured small portions of dim sum while I treated myself to a plate of lobster noodles, a classic Cantonese dish which did not disappoint.

Mutually beneficial

I am a great fan of Hong Kong, and not just its food. I have visited a few times but have only really got to know it through its people. When many joint venture hotels were being built and opened in the 80s in Mainland China, I worked with people from Hong Kong who were skilled construction specialists and senior managers – guiding and training the local staff. As China developed and trained its own people, the knowledge gap shrank and Hong Kong's involvement with China on this front became less noticeable.

With Hong Kong being handed over in 1997, the relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China has evolved into an even more mutually beneficial one. Agnes emphasises this development: "Not only has a dedicated chapter been devoted to Hong Kong in China's latest National Five-Year Plan to clearly position Hong Kong as the premier international gateway to China, but a series of preferential policies have also been introduced to foster this status. For example, through a Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) – basically a free trade agreement between Hong Kong and Mainland China – all Hong Kong service and goods suppliers, including UK companies, can enjoy preferential treatment in entering into the Mainland market in various service areas." This is because CEPA rules are nationality-neutral.

Close links

The government's strategy on promoting Hong Kong is clear. But could Hong Kong's role as a critical business platform be fading with the rise of cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen?

"There is no doubt that one of the most important markets is Mainland China, and Hong Kong not only has a close link to Chinese culture, but also has an international outlook and experi-

ence which gives it an edge and complements other cities in China. At the same time, given Hong Kong's historical links with the UK, it provides a friendly business environment with a high level of comfort to Western companies: English is widely spoken, its common law and independent judiciary ensure our success. Our supporting services such as legal, accountancy and intellectual property protection are of world class standards, and there is a free flow of information, capital and talent in Hong Kong."



by Hong Kong's strength in its 'soft' offerings such as its general commercial awareness, service ethic and abilities in marketing. I believe that these are great indicators of a sophisticated marketplace, although it shouldn't come as a surprise given the fact that service industries contribute some 90 per cent to Hong Kong's GDP.

"Business ties between Hong Kong and the UK are as strong as ever" Agnes notes: "Its ever-increasing direct investments in major British sectors amount to

Agnes Allcock

- had a six year stint in the Royal Hong Kong Police Force as Inspector of Police
- was District Officer in the former City and New Territories
- has worked across a wide range of Hong Kong departments including Home Affairs, Education and Manpower, Transport, and Social Welfare
- became a Deputy Secretary for the Hong Kong Civil Service in November 2009.
- has been Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London since September 2010.
- is married with two children.

"There is no doubt that one of the most important markets is Mainland China."

In short, Agnes believed that Hong Kong was a favoured gateway for overseas business to get into Mainland China and vice versa, as well as the central point for the Asian region. She also made the point that from Hong Kong, one could reach half the world's population within five hours flight time.

I mentioned that some companies that enjoyed long standing business relationships with Hong Kong initially extended their business into the Mainland through their contacts in Hong Kong while other companies set up headquarters or regional offices to manage their businesses throughout Asia. "Furthermore," Agnes added, "from this creative Special Administrative Region of China, many Western companies also use Hong Kong as a platform to launch their brand and marketing strategies." Personally, I am especially impressed

£6 billion, and membership of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong is greater than anywhere else in Asia. In fact, there are well over 1,000 British companies in Hong Kong, making up ten per cent of its workforce."

However, Agnes points out that the UK's exports to both China and India last year were just 3.2 per cent of its total exports. As the director general of the HK Economic and Trade Office, with eight other offices including Scandinavian countries, Baltic States and Russia to look after, Agnes is well aware of the tasks ahead. However, with her passion, energy and enthusiasm, I am confident that she will play a key role in Hong Kong's progress in the years to come. It is apparent that with the right cultural blend of the West and East, its flexible business environment and a stable political structure, Hong Kong is perfectly positioned to bridge the gap between China and Europe. In Hong Kong, which has been guided by the 'One Country Two Systems' principle for the last 14 years, businesses can enjoy the best of both worlds

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