INTERNATIONAL LEEDS – JULY 2004 (ABOVE) AND JULY 2009 (RIGHT)

Glass cleaning company ready to shine in France

An international business group trade mission to Lille offered an opportunity for a Yorkshire company, The Protechnology Group, to supply beer line cleaning and glass washing chemicals to the potentially huge French market.

Major contracts in the UK with Carlsberg, Tetley, Heineken and Bucknells breweries; Arthaus-Busch, mean that Protechnology is a market leader in the food and beverage retail sector but the company has not yet broken into continental Europe. Administration Manager, Tracey Burrow, said: “We were very keen to go on the French trip because Lille is a key centre for food and beverage production. The organisation was first class and everything was arranged, including appointments with potential customers and distributors.”

Leeds gets the French vote

Over 1000 French expatriates came to Leeds in April and May to cast their votes in the French presidential elections.

Leeds was one of only three cities in the UK approached by the French embassy to host the elections, which was held in two rounds. All French expatriates across the north of England – stretching down to Birmingham – were eligible to come and vote.

The first round of voting was held on Sunday 22 April and voters were asked to choose between 11 candidates. The second round was then between the two leading candidates, the socialist candidate Segolene Royal and the right wing UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, who subsequently became the new president.

Leeds artist shows her mettle in Lille

Leeds photographer Bukkyide (Bukky) visited Lille’s partnership city in June for the opening of the prestigious biennial of Barak. Bukky’s work features in the biennial exhibition, which focuses on the work of African related photographers. The exhibition begins in Bamako, the capital of Mali, and proceeds to tour four continents around the world.

Bukky was born in the UK, but received her early education in Nigeria. It was while studying photography at the University of Leeds that she realised her true talent as a photographer. She trained at Leeds College of Technology and she has also received support from British Arts in Leeds, Bukky’s current work focuses on life in Nigeria and she aims to show a more contemporary Africa.

Bukky was excited about the opportunity to visit Lille for the opening: “Not only does it give me work significant European exposure. It also provides a great opportunity for me to network with the photographers, gallery curators and other representatives of the visual media industry. I hope that I can put Leeds on the photography map with my work.”

During her visit to Lille, Bukky met the Mayor, Martine Aubry, and officials from the French Association of Artistic Action. Her work is on display until 30 July alongside the work of Guy Tillim, Helga Kohl, Jean Luc Daguaque and Mark Lewis.

Leeds shows its joie de vivre

The people of Leeds celebrated the city’s long-standing links with Lille, and Lille’s status as European Capital of Culture in 2004, with an array of diverse events from 8 to 12 April. “Strato 04”, a prestigious fashion event at the Corn Exchange, launched Leeds French Week on 8 April, exactly 100 years to the day from the signing of the Entente Cordiale between the United Kingdom and France.

People and organisations across Leeds get involved and sampled French culture through the range of events. Visitors to the festival of the Multiplace, a European marketplace at Millennium Square, enjoyed street performances by Lille’s artists and were able to experience a taste of Belgium through the specially imported beers in the Bierfest beer tent. Star Century Cinema and Hyla Park Picture House screened French films, and visitors to the Light encountered Lille through a wonderful photographic exhibition.

During the week, University of Leeds undergraduates talked to Leeds schools about their experiences of life in France on placement. In addition, the city launched the Leeds French schools project, which aims to introduce French to Leeds schools.

Counsellor Judith Blake, Executive Board Member for Learning and Leisure, said: “It was brilliant to have a taste of France in the heart of Yorkshire. Leeds City Council was delighted that local people could experience such a wide variety of French society here in Leeds.”


Leeds and Lille

The twinning relationship between Leeds and Lille dates back to 1968, but links between the two cities were already in place before the war. Since then, the number and nature of links between organisations and individuals in both cities has multiplied, and there is now contact between young people, businesses and academics in both cities.

For more information, visit: www.leeds.gov.uk/internationalrelations/

More details on page 5

Leeds artists Men in Lille

The Leeds Morris Men visited Leeds’s partner city of Lille in April to give the French city a taste of this English tradition. The team of 11 dancers spent two days in Lille dancing at a number of central points around the city. They received a warm reaction from the French public, as well as British, Spanish and Belgian visitors, according to Rob Baker, Director of Leeds Morris Men.

The trip was financed mainly by the Morris Men, with some assistance from Black Sheep Brewery and Timothy Taylor Brewery. “We had an excellent time dancing for the people of Lille,” said Rob. “We were warmly welcomed everywhere and would certainly like to return.”

Fostering partnerships

A group of elders from Leeds black and minority ethnic (BME) communities visited Lille from 21-24 July to share information about minority ethnic food and cooking projects.

The trip was part of the EDF II project (“Services for Bihari from Ethnic Minorities’”, a partnership between Leeds City Council and other European organisations. The EU funded project aims to improve health and social care for BME elders and to foster links between BME elders organisations across Europe.

Odelia Sossou representing the Federation D’Habitat was enthusiastic about the visit: “EDF II is a great project. We see things here from one side of the coin. But seeing into other cities in other countries, we see the other side. Then we can sum up and compare, and we know that Leeds are trying their best. I hope that our visit has helped Lille people to work better together. The welcome we were given was really special.”

Sharing social responsibility

Leeds social enterprises were represented at a conference in Lille, Leeds’s French partner city in November. Frances Jones, from Leeds-based SLAB Furniture Store, attended to outline the innovative work of Segulls (pallet recycling), Angels Homeware, Together (who run Hillside in Beeston as a community and business centre) as well as her own project. The conference was attended by representatives from social enterprises, trade unions, employers’ organisations and interested consumers. Frances has written a report urging the council to recognize the valuable role played by social enterprise in the Leeds economy.

She said: “It was interesting to see French social enterprises tackling the same issues as us and working out how to combine a commercial business with environmentally sustainable and socially responsible practices. This time in economic crises and climate change, the principles of social enterprise are really relevant in all sectors of the economy. This was one of the main messages to come out of the conference.

Visits were arranged during the conference to various enterprises such as an electronics recycling business, a second-hand clothes shop (a charity in France), a fair trade shop and an organic tea shop. Transport in town was provided by bike rentals.”