

News Release
3 June 2013

Libya trade mission exceeds all expectations, says English UK

An English UK-led trade mission to Libya has become one of the organisation's most successful events, attracting more than 160 business leaders and 600 prospective students to two days of events in Tripoli.

Twelve English UK members and three training providers took part in the Government-funded trip, which had to be postponed for several months because of concerns about the security situation in Tripoli. At least one of the English UK members returned to the UK with a confirmed booking, and all are planning return visits.

Annie Wright, deputy chief executive of English UK, who co-led the trip with senior international manager Jodie Gray, said: "It was really worthwhile and exceeded all our expectations. We just weren't expecting this much interest, because it was hard to tell how well our publicity had worked and we hadn't known how far the message would have penetrated. There is clearly huge demand in Libya for all kinds of training, and English language teaching in particular.

"It was one of the most beneficial things we've ever done. The people we met were so pleased we were there. It was quite humbling that they were so keen to talk about what we could offer."

Delegates not only met valuable contacts within Libya, including a Government minister and oil industry representatives, but also got a great deal of insight into the potential demand from those rebuilding the country.

Mr Khaled Gsis, at the Petroleum Training and Qualifying Institute, which trains hundreds of young workers for the oil industry each year, told the visitors: "We need an army of English language teachers," while the HR general manager for the National Oil Corporation, representing 20 different companies, said he had a training budget of \$50-60m and it was a "golden opportunity". Learning English was a "goldmine" for oil company employees, he said.

Welcoming the delegation and Libyan guests to a reception, HM Ambassador Michael Aron said: "Libyans need English and you can help them."

Jodie Gray said the student event in particular was astonishingly popular, with sample lessons led by John Paul Smith and Simon Hayward "absolutely packed" with people enjoying the UK's more interactive teaching methods.

Whilst concerns about security proved unfounded, the delegation received mixed messages about the ease with which Libyan students can get UK visas. These will be included in the report which Ms Gray will compile for UK Trade and Industry, which funded the trip.

John Paul Smith, Languages for Business Manager of Live Language in Glasgow, said: "I am very glad that the trip went ahead, that my experience there was very positive and that the potential for our industry there would appear to be huge. Students seeking IELTS,

General and Business English were all in abundance, and the agency scene appears to be expanding rapidly. The demand for teachers and teacher training is huge. From a UK point of view, we'll be much better placed to take advantage of this once the visa problems are ironed out, as I'm sure they will be, be it next month or next year."

He added: "We have several active leads with students, agents and teacher supply and training. I look forward to going back there as soon as I can to capitalize on these opportunities,"

Troy Blankenship, executive director of WE Bridge International in Cardiff, was also in Libya for the first time and agreed with Smith about visa problems. "I was delighted with the hospitality and openness of the Libyan people and businesses. There are opportunities on many fronts. Those that I will be pursuing are local English language training, cooperation with oil companies and the NOC for industry specific language training, Teacher training in collaboration with my English UK colleagues, and possibly training within infrastructure rebuilding among government entities, also in collaboration with English UK colleagues."

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with more than 450 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. For more information, please contact Jodie Gray (Senior International Manager, English UK) on jodie@englishuk.com.