

## **BCCT Annual Report 2013**

**presented to the AGM on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

2013 was a momentous year for BCCT. Thanks to the work of member company GSBI we have a new logo and the BCCT magazine was rebranded The Link. The new logo represents the link between the British and Thai business communities, and an organisation that is about people and equality.

Furthermore, much behind-the-scenes activity was devoted to preparing the groundwork for the Overseas Business Networks Project with UKTI. This is described in detail below.

However, the main priorities were in support of members. BCCT continued its three-pronged operational mission of delivering:

- an advocacy strategy based on members' needs
- events based on members' needs and the financial needs of the Chamber
- services designed to help members develop their businesses

**Advocacy** has followed a mix of direct lobbying and joining forces with like-minded groups:

- In 2013 negotiations began in earnest on a Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the Thai government. Industry feedback was taken for EU positions across all sectors. The European ASEAN Business Centre's (EABC) advocacy groups played a key role in formulating industry positions. BCCT is a key consortium partner in EABC and takes an active role for the benefit of BCCT members. BCCT is represented on all EABC advocacy groups and in 2013 the BCCT board received briefings from the Healthcare & Pharmaceutical, Cross Sectoral, Intellectual Property, ICT, Insurance and Energy & Energy Efficiency groups. BCCT Treasurer, John Sim, is also EABC Treasurer and Executive Director, Greg Watkins, is in regular contact with other chambers and the EABC directorate.
- Members' feedback stressed the continuing importance of visa and work permit issues, the Foreign Business Act and property ownership as key issues where the Chamber may be able to help. These views have been reflected in EABC's Annual Position Paper and in meetings with key Thai private sector and government contacts.
- UK members also raised the inconvenience of the UK passport renewal system. This is being addressed in a joint lobbying effort with Britain in South East Asia. BCCT Executive Director Greg Watkins leads on the issue and has established contact with HM Passport Office in the UK. The improved response times are a positive outcome of this effort.
- In addition, BCCT has permanent representation on the Board of Trade. Chairman Simon Landy is also the only non-Thai representative on the Board of Trade's Executive Board.

**Events** continue to be the lifeblood of the Chamber and the principal form of interaction for the membership:

- BCCT and the Events Group under Simon Matthews successfully organised the core events that are important to the financial health of the Chamber: the Annual Lecture by Khun Yingluck Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand, the Masters Football Tournament and Dinner and the Christmas Lunch. Several other high profile events were well received, not least the Life & Style Party at the Embassy. Overall, the Chamber organised 81 events in the year, slightly down on 2012 but continue to focus on quality and variety for our members.
- We organised our 2<sup>nd</sup> Member Feedback session and now are in the process of working on feedback that is specific to the events the BCCT holds. We are also planning to hold a similar session in the Eastern Seaboard in the first quarter of 2014
- BCCT and many of our groups were active in organising other informational and training events that have been well received – the CSR Group, Eastern Seaboard Group, ICT Group, Management Development Group, Professional Women’s Group, Property & Infrastructure Group and SME Group have all been active in this.
- Networking and social events have continued to be popular, especially the Third Thursday events, the regular ESB events hosted with other chambers and our Pub Nights.
- Prominent speakers from the UK and Thai political scene are regularly invited to give major addresses. Last year, these included Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint (Minister of State for Trade and Investment), Lord David Puttnam (Film Producer) and Khun Suraphon Svetasreni (Governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand)
- In 2014 we will continue to listen to our members by the use of our feedback survey after each event so we can improve in the quality and variety of our events. We will also continue with our major events.

**Communications** was key in 2013.

- BCCT’s rebranding process was completed with the launch of our new logo in the presence of the Thai Prime Minister at the BCCT Annual Lecture and Dinner on 21<sup>st</sup> March.
- In mid-2013 with effect from issue 4, The Brief was renamed The Link. Members continue to feedback positively on the editorial content of The Link and more members are now contributing editorial articles and news items.
- Already strong Handbook revenues increased again for a publication that remains crucial for many members.

- The weekly email newsletter continues to keep members up to date on forthcoming BCCT activities and other events, latest reports added to the website, member discount offers and other news.
- The website and use of social media remain a work in progress. The website is being redesigned to make it more engaging and to accommodate Overseas Business Networks project activity. This should be re-launched early in 2014.

## **BCCT/UKTI OVERSEAS BUSINESS NETWORKS PROJECT**

### **Summary**

In June 2013, as part of BCCT's ongoing mission to expand services, BCCT and UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) signed a contract to establish the UKTI/BCCT Overseas Business Network Project. The Chamber will deliver some of UKTI's services to those UK SMEs that are considering exporting to, or investing in, Thailand.

The Project team will eventually have 5 full-time staff to provide basic market research, arrange seminars and webinars, provide advice and support to UK companies, in both the UK and Thailand and to those visiting. To complement these new activities, the BCCT offices have been expanded to accommodate the British Business Centre, providing users with state-of-the-art wireless technology and seating for 60 attendees. These services will gradually be integrated into the wider work of BCCT. BCCT is seen to be at the vanguard of this Project by UKTI following rapid progress in meeting targets and delivery of services.

### **Progress to date**

BCCT is at the forefront of the Overseas Business Network project. We will meet or exceed the targets set by UKTI for 2013-14. BCCT's rapid rate of progress and value for money, benchmarks very well against similar projects worldwide. Some of these organisations have a much larger facility and much greater numbers of staff (eg Poland and China) and other have less services and facilities to offer (Singapore). We believe that we have the right balance at present.

### **Highlights:**

- Completion of the British Business Centre, to be officially opened by HMA Mark Kent on 11 February 2014.
- MoU with Hull & Humber Chamber of Commerce to promote BCCT services and the Thailand market . Currently In discussion with a number of other Chambers about a similar arrangement.
- Participation in UKTI Roadshows in the UK – one of the few overseas Chambers to do this. This promotes BCCT and brings in potential business.
- Recruitment of Project Team of 4, with mix of UKTI and private sector experience.
- From December 2014, provision of assistance to UKTI to support its services to UK companies.

## **Benefits to BCCT**

Apart from taking on services and activities from UKTI, that will be directed at UK companies, there will also be a complementary expansion in the benefits available to all BCCT members. These include, inter alia:

- BCCT members in services industries such as law, accounting, advertising, real estate, publishing, can benefit from selling their services to UK entrants into the Thailand market. A significant amount of follow-up work could fall to BCCT member service companies eg legal – drawing up or checking agency or joint venture contracts, real estate – locating office, industrial or residential space, publishing – printing new corporate brochures, etc.
- The development of fit-for-purpose office with an adjacent British Business Centre will mean that BCCT members will benefit directly from better hot-desking, meeting facilities and ICT infrastructure.
- The British Business Centre will allow BCCT to organise a greater number of boardroom briefing events. The British Business Centre will be available for private hire.
- Briefings for UK companies can be conducted via webinar or similar.
- An expansion of membership as BCCT becomes the de facto organisation for UKTI services to UK SMEs, both UK and locally-based. UK companies commissioning work under this Project are required to join BCCT's 'Headstart' initiative. These new overseas members will contribute to BCCT income.
- Greater collaboration between UKTI and BCCT in future to ensure cross-fertilisation of knowledge and joint events.
- Greater connectivity with British Chambers of Commerce in the UK and overseas and with UK Trade Associations.
- Greater use of social networking to publicise and promote BCCT services and members

Thanks are due to Directors of the Board for their strong support and inputs; in particular, those who have either stood down during the year or are unable to stand for re-election: Joe Barker-Bennett, Sriram Narayan and Gary Biesty. The Board has also had strong support from the Embassy and UKTI, especially from Ambassador Mark Kent and the Trade and Investment team led by Bradley Jones and Ben Raby.

## **BCCT GROUP REPORTS**

### **COMMUNICATIONS & PR**

After meeting informally during 2013 in response to specific issues, the Comms & PR Group met formally in October. Terms of reference were agreed as follows:-

1. To monitor the BCCT website, social media postings, The Link and the Annual Handbook to make sure information is accurate, timely, well-presented, consistent across all channels, and of value to members
2. To develop and implement an effective social media strategy, based initially on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter

3. To develop a public relations plan, using BCCT's new branding, to promote the chamber's services and to enhance its reputation
4. To organise events on media, communications and public relations topics of interest to members
5. Each group member to produce one article per year for publication in The Link or on the BCCT website

David Armstrong was elected Chairman of the group supported by two Vice Chairs - Richard Ellis of Market Edge Asia and Patrick Gauvain of Shrimp Asia.

The group agreed that each member should volunteer a proportionate amount of time to group activity in 2014 and not rely on the Chair or Vice Chairs. Accordingly the following activities were earmarked:-

**Events** – liaising with all group members for ideas on topics and/or speakers and then informing the BCCT office which will then issue invitations, schedule and organise the events

**Articles/Reports** – liaising with all group members to each produce one article or report on a relevant topic per year. The article can be written by the group member or sourced externally with the permission of the original author

**Social Media** – working with the BCCT office to develop a social media strategy for the UKTI Overseas Business Networks Project and BCCT

**Branding** – ensure BCCT branding is consistent across all media

**Public Relations** – develop BCCT's PR exposure using the website and unutilised media channels. Develop a BCCT App.

**Website** – develop and upgrade BCCT website to utilise new technologies and social media

**BCCT Board/ICT Group liaison** – reporting back to the ICT Group and vice versa to ensure Comms & PR Group activity is consistent and to secure technical input on key issues. Reporting to BCCT board on group activities.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Helping the Needy**

BCCT's CSR and charity activity has traditionally focused on children and/or education and is reflected in support for the needy in Thailand in four ways:-

#### **1. BCCT Charity**

BCCT makes small charity donations each year from the proceeds of the raffle and auction at the Annual Christmas Luncheon.

Students' Education Trust (SET) - SET supports more than 500 students at university and college, sponsors young teachers from the UK, organises drug prevention camps, English language camps, job-training for students and a host of other education related projects in Nakhon Sawan province. BCCT provides funds for two British gap

year students, assessed for SET by Project Trust in UK, to teach English language in schools in Nakhon Sawan province.

The Beaumont Partnership (TBP) Foundation - TBP Foundation was established by BCCT member company The Beaumont Partnership to construct a school for the underprivileged on 70 Rai of land in Chaiyaphum Province. The school formally opened on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013 and was established to offer a high standard of free education to children from needy rural communities with a commitment from their families to contribute at least ten hours per month to the running of the school.

## 2. **British Community in Thailand Foundation for the Needy** (BCTFN)

Charity activity by members of the British community began in 1941. In 1957 a committee was formed to organise the first charity fair – the Ploenchit Fair. Foundation status was secured from the Ministry of Interior in 1999 under the name British Community in Thailand Foundation for the Needy (BCTFN) which today continues to organise the annual Ploenchit Fair. Members of the BCTFN board are entirely voluntary.

Priority is given to self-help projects that benefit and enable a community to become self-sustaining. Assistance has also been given in the provision of basic necessities and equipment to improve healthcare, nutrition, education, agricultural projects and the disabled throughout Thailand. BCCT organises the Grand Raffle at Ploenchit Fair – traditionally the largest income generating activity in the Fair. In 2013 the Grand Raffle generated THB 939,596 an increase of 20% compared to 2012. The BCCT Executive Director serves on the BCTFN board as Vice President.

## 3. **Thailand Business Coalition on AIDS** (TBCA)

TBCA was formally established in 1993 to promote private sector awareness of the spread of AIDS and organise activities to prevent AIDS in the workplace. It also coordinates with related government bodies and NGOs in support of activities to control and prevent the spread of AIDS.

Major funding is provided by the Global Fund through the Thailand Ministry of Public Health for two key project areas – HIV/Aids and tuberculosis (TB). The BCCT Executive Director serves as Chairman of the TBCA board.

## **BCCT Child Protection**

BCCT works in partnership with UK police's National Crime Agency - Child Exploitation and On-line Protection Centre (NCA-CEOP) with the aim of engaging the business community in Thailand in order to raise awareness and educate communities in which member companies operate. Working together CEOP and BCCT developed a corporate engagement plan and a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed at the first child protection conference in Bangkok in 2010.

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011, a new animated film jointly developed by NCA-CEOP and BCCT was officially launched. Entitled 'The Tales of Mai and Tam: Mai and Tam Take Control', the film has been created in Thai and English and focuses on issues of child trafficking and sexual abuse by someone outside the family. It was developed with THB 180,981 in sponsorship from the British Council, Shrewsbury International School, Property Care Services and Spirit of Soccer.

In March 2014 NCA-CEOP and BCCT will jointly launch The Tales of Mai and Tam in the form of a comic.

## **EASTERN SEABOARD**

### Mission Statement:

To serve the needs and promote the development of BCCT members on the Eastern Seaboard and, as 'Partners in Progress', contribute directly to the economic advancement of the Eastern Seaboard, which, in this case, are the provinces of Chonburi and Rayong

### Objectives:

- (a) To promote trade, industry, investment and economic relations between the United Kingdom and Thailand, especially when pertaining to the Eastern Seaboard
- (b) To assist members of the British Chamber of Commerce Thailand (BCCT) in the promotion of trade, industry, investment and economic relations between the United Kingdom and Thailand, especially when pertaining to the Eastern Seaboard
- (c) To provide advice, ideas, and suggestions for BCCT members' business interests on the Eastern Seaboard, in the field of trade, industry, insurance, investment and in other related matters and to provide a business forum for members to consult one another
- (d) To compile news, information and statistics on trade in general, on industrial and commercial affairs, and on legal and financial matters worthy of interest, for distribution to members

### Committee Activities 2013:

1. The committee for 2103 started with BCCT board member Joe Barker-Bennett chairing the group and heading into 2013 with a number of initiatives to be put in place. However, towards the end of the first quarter, Joe and a number of his committee were re-located by their companies. David Cumming, BCCT Board member and former ESB Group chairperson then stepped in to fill the void going forward. A number of committee members also departed thus a meeting was held to co-erce a new committee to represent and drive ESB Group matters. This proved unsuccessful and therefore great energy and drive will be required for 2014 to ensure the ESB group and service to its members are driven forward.
2. The current committee is: David Cumming Amari Orchid Pattaya, Dr. Iain Corness Bangkok Hospital Pattaya, Mr. Pratheep S. Malhotra Pattaya Mail Publishing Co., Ltd., Mr. Simon Philbrook MBMG Group ., and Brendan Daly Amari Orchid Pattaya . There is a need for both manufacturing and SME's to be represented and for events to be focused to the needs of the members based there.

3. 4 BCCT Eastern Seaboard Group meetings were held in 2013 and the minutes recorded
4. Currently 56 members of the BBCT are based on the Eastern Seaboard with a further 7 Bangkok companies having provincial offices in the area
5. 12 Monthly Networking events were held on the Eastern Seaboard all in conjunction with AMCHAM, AUSTCHAM and the SATCC.
6. 12 Eastern Seaboard Group monthly reports highlighting the development of the region have been posted to date on the BCCT website in 2013
7. Events planned for the ESB in 2014 include:
  - A members night to ascertain feedback on how the BCCT on the Eastern Seaboard can better serve them (February 2014)
  - Panel Event focused on the needs of the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Sector
  - A dinner with the Chonburi Governor
  - A meeting with the Pattaya Mayor to focus on the development of the Cities infrastructure issues
  - Event with HE Mark Kent, the British Ambassador to Thailand
  - Support for the Jester Care for Kids Event in September
  - A SME focused event
  - Training courses on the Eastern Seaboard in conjunction with the BCCT management development group
  - Panel event on Education

## **EDUCATION**

BCCT's Education Group has gone through many transitions in the last few years and is still struggling to come to terms with what education means in the context of a Chamber of Commerce.

The focus has to be on the needs of our member companies and so the following areas of focus that are important to consider for BCCT are:

1. Education as it relates to business (making the future Thai workforce more "fit for purpose"). This means vocational education, higher education (degree/diploma level) and in schools and other places of education, tackling the problems of preparing students for a modern business environment (creativity, willingness to question, challenge ideas, put forward new ideas etc.). Promoting Enterprise so that Thai students and adults are both capable of independent thought and actions and have the interest and ability to consider starting their own enterprises. To provide support and services to develop Thailand's basic educational needs (basic skills, skills based curriculum, vocational training, new technologies).
2. Linkage into the UK educational network and promotion of UK Educational services and best practices.
3. Education at school level - promoting the teaching of English as a language.
4. Inclusivity - education as a right and the development of an education system that is not exclusive but inclusive.

5. Long-term commercial success in a global market place cannot come without addressing these issues in a sustainable and effective manner.
6. Encouragement and support for the development of leadership skills within the Thai workforce to increase the country's ability to provide the necessary leaders in the future.

**These areas are the key areas for developing the work of the Education Group and they will be discussed during 2014.**

## **HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT**

BCCT's Health, Safety and Environment Group was established in August 2013 to enhance the professional awareness relevant to health and safety issues. Equally important is to minimise the environmental impact of our operations on the local communities and on a global scale. The Group's objective is to promote best practices, create awareness and discuss solutions to related issues facing community at specific time.

The Group has arranged a regular discussion to encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience among its members, for example, an up to date source of information on the ever changing health, safety and environmental scene and a survey to BCCT's members of preferred activities.

According to the survey, the BCCT's members are particularly interested in seminars with guest speakers, site visit/best practice sharing, newsletters/website content. The Group committee, therefore, plans the first site visit, followed by inviting Guest speakers to give presentations on current health, safety and environmental issues at BCCT events.

## **ICT**

We are blessed to have an active and passionate group for ICT who regularly take part in monthly meetings, activities and initiatives. My very sincere thanks go to the members of the group whom are: Robert Wagner, Bob Marchant, David Quine, Alex Taverner, Khun Nipapat Hamilton (Khun Sao), Jamie Helm and last but definitely not least, Chris Thatcher.

During 2013 we have worked very hard on collaboration as the following notes show. The intent of this collaboration is to provide more choice, more value, and more opportunity for BCCT member companies around ICT.

Following on from the start of this project in 2012, our ICT Group member Robert Marchant (Bob) continued to spearhead a closer working relationship between the BCCT members and British ICT companies wishing to do business in Thailand.

During 2013 a number of meetings took place both in the UK and Thailand to understand how the ICT Group, and BCCT members, can better understand the companies and capabilities that are in the UK and how they could be "matched" and partnered with the significant ICT opportunities that exist in Thailand. These included Bob attending meetings in

the UK with the UKTI to follow-up on their work for example on “Smart Cities”, and meetings with the UKTI in Thailand.

This has been further assisted by Khun Sao who works at the UKTI in Thailand on ICT matters. This has greatly enhanced this conduit and one which will be further enhanced as the BCCT ramps-up its “Overseas Network Project” which further hard-codes the relationship and work between the UKTI and BCCT.

As part of this initiative we met with John Davies who leads the efforts of the UKTI team on Technology Partnerships which “will deliver £20m worth of new business for UK high-growth, high technology SMEs by April 2014 by working with UKTI’s UK and global network and industry to build relationships to accelerate access to qualified global value chain opportunities in high growth areas relative to the UK’s best technology SMEs.”

The segments that the ICT team at UKTI are focussing on are:

1. Big Data
2. Cloud Computing
3. Internet of Things / M2M
4. Smart Infrastructure
5. Digital Economy / Social Media
6. Design & User Interface
7. Life Sciences - Healthcare and Biopharma
8. Enabling Technologies

The ICT Group had several meetings with John and this will be further developed in March 2014 where a team representing the Smart Cities initiative in the UK will come to Thailand with about 19 companies, which may represent partnership opportunities with BCCT member companies. We intend to have a VDO conference with them before we come so that interested parties can prepare for potential opportunity.

In terms of events we had another very successful seminar in May, where we hosted guest speakers TIM VEROUDEN, Head of online, Marketing Group, Dtac and also ROB DE JONGE, General Manager, Venda Software Development who talked about “CONVERGENT COMMERCE - WORLD-WIDE TRENDS WITH A FOCUS ON "SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT" THAILAND”. The event received praise for its quality of speakers and the interaction in the Q&A and afterwards.

During the year the ICT Group discussed the fact that there were several chambers who had an ICT interest and quite possibly it would make more sense to partner more actively with AmCham and AusCham on ICT events. This would give more critical mass to the events themselves, provide further weight requesting high-quality speakers, as well as providing more choice and networking for members with other like-minded companies and individuals.

As a result of this Alex Taverner who is on the BCCT ICT Group but also a member of AusCham is a key conduit to AusCham on ICT matters, and Andrew McBean has become a

co-chair of the ICT Committee of AmCham, thus providing a very strong link between the chambers.

An excellent example of this collaboration was the very successful Gadget Night which was held in November. At that event were 14 different vendors including Apple, Microsoft and Nokia and over 300 attendees on the night.

For 2014 this will most certainly result in much more choice for BCCT members. Working with AmCham there will be events around the following activities:

1. NTBC speech
2. State of internet coverage in rural Thailand
3. Seagate factory visit
4. Big Data
5. Cloud Computing
6. Internet of Things / M2M
7. Communications and Collaboration
8. How to protect your identity online (with Law)
9. Your online brand (with Marketing)
10. Gartner Top 10 predictions
11. Economist Intelligence Unit

However, as well as wanting to provide more choice to members in 2014, the ICT Group would also like to ensure that specific points of special interest are covered for BCCT members. And thus the BCCT ICT Group will also be working on the following activities in the first few months of 2014:

1. The Computer Crime Act and what it means to business
2. Web Conference with the UKTI's Smart Cities team
3. Business Continuity – globally and in Thailand

We continue to be interested in attracting new active members to join our passionate and friendly Group. The most important qualification is passion for ICT! Please email Andrew McBean at [andrew.mcbean@th.gt.com](mailto:andrew.mcbean@th.gt.com) if you are interested in this.

## **LEGAL & TAXATION**

During 2013, the BCCT Legal & Taxation Group advised the BCCT Board on matters referred by the Board, and discussed changes or proposed changes to Thai law that impact on BCCT membership. Amongst these were changes in Thai law that may take place when AEC 2015 is implemented in December 2015, the current negotiations Thailand and the European Union for a bilateral free trade agreement, changes to the Foreign Business Act, the BOI's plans to revise the categories of business eligible for promotion and also revise the incentives available, and other matters. Other matters that impact on BCCT members, including delays in obtaining UK visas for their Thai staff to attend training courses in the UK, and inconvenience arising from passport renewal application only being available in Hong Kong or the UK, were also discussed. During the year, the Committee organised three BCCT

events on the impact of AEC 2015, changes to the Foreign Business Act, and recent developments in intellectual property law. It is intended to organise further events in 2014.

## **MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RESOURCES**

During 2013, after 3 years, the Chairmanship, under Richard Greaves, was taken over by another BCCT Director, Joe Barker-Bennett but later replaced by Sukhavichai Dhanasundara, Honorary Adviser to the BCCT Board, as Acting Chairman due to relocation of Joe to Myanmar. The remaining members are Greg Watkins, Executive Director of BCCT, Simon Matthews, BCCT Director, Khun Bubphawadee Owararinth, Standard Chartered Bank (Thai) plc and Khun Anong Anantachina, Human Resources Director, PCS.

BCCT MDG/HR activities in 2013 have included:

MDG/HR Events in 2013 : February – Panel Event: Overall Impact of AEC with following Keynote Speakers  
Overview Perspective: Kirida Bhaopichitr – World Bank  
Legal Perspective: Cynthia Pornvilai – Tilleke & Gibbins  
Moderator – Stephen Frost

### **English Classes**

- May - Effective Presentation Skills – SmartWorld Asia
- July - Train the Trainers – Smart World Asia
- December – Business Writing – Smart World Aia

### **Thai Classes**

- February: Personal leadership and productivity – Pac Rim Group
- April: Problem Solving & Decision Making – PCS
- June: Professional Grooming – Standard Charter
- October: How to handle negotiation with confidence – Standard Charter Bank (Thai)
- November: Service Leadership – Tesco Lotus

### Plans for 2014 activities

Panel discussion on HR Issues related o the AEC

English Classes (5 are planned)

- Train the Trainers
- Business Writing
- Procurement into the future
- Smart Communication skills
- TBD

Thai Classes (5 are planned)

- Finance for non-financiers
- Logical Framework Approach for Investment decision
- Winning customer service

- TBD
- TBD

## MANUFACTURING

Following on from the good work of Roger Wilson of GKN, David Wilkinson, then of The Wood Group, held a meeting of BCCT member manufacturers in the Eastern Seaboard in May 2013. The main area of interest from this meeting was to support and encourage the vocational training of the Thai labour force leading to skills based qualifications. In this regard through Justin Barnett of Grayling there was an opportunity to engage with the Director General of the Thailand Professional Qualifications Institute (TPQI) in order to test whether its brief for setting qualifications standards could enable it to become another channel through which to make the case for closer industry liaison with educational institutions. There was also talk of locating training facilities within industrial estates or finding a nearby location where the close cooperation with vocational institutions and industry could be advanced. Unfortunately, this initial thinking did not bear fruit.

In October 2013, AustCham initiated a new multi-chamber approach to a Manufacturing Group. The initial chambers are Australian, American, British, Canadian and South African.

The objective of the group is to: share knowledge, ideas, lessons, best practises and partnership opportunities to its members. It will also provide feedback when requested to its constituent chambers on areas where the group would ideally like to see general manufacturing related policy changes or adjustments in the region.

The group held its first meeting in January 2014 on the Thai government's anti-drugs policy. Topics for future meetings are:

- **Infrastructure:** issues impeding growth (roads to from main highways , traffic management , telecoms etc.)
- **Labour:** Issues in Thailand ( Best Practises, lessons learned , sharing of knowledge, problems/solutions of migrant workforces)
- **Finance:** For SMEs in particular, possible areas providing access to Capital (working cap etc)
- **Logistics:** Customs, Import/Export Issues in Thailand ( Best Practises, lessons learned , sharing of knowledge on what to do, how to solve problems etc.)
- **Education:** Vocational education in Thailand

## MEMBERSHIP

The BCCT held a Membership feedback meeting in October 2013 following on from a similar successful meeting in 2012.

With such meetings there are 2 types of feedback.

The first type is individual comments and suggestions coming from a small group (sometimes even just one person). These tend to generate idea for the Chamber and the Board to follow up on. They are not generally negative comments.

The second type is areas where there is general agreement of most people about how the Chamber could be improved.

In the meeting, these comments were invariably favourable about how the Chamber was progressing.

It is not possible in such a short report to go into more detail but the full comments are available on the BCCT website -

[https://members.bccthai.com/asp/view\\_doc.asp?DocCID=2516](https://members.bccthai.com/asp/view_doc.asp?DocCID=2516).

Next steps? In 2014 we intend to hold a similar meeting for members in Pattaya and a fuller member survey will be carried out later in the year.

The Chamber has changed and will continue to change in response to the needs of members so feedback is always welcome.

## **PROFESSIONAL WOMEN**

The Professional Women's Group's objective is to host events to inform, inspire and connect our female (and quite a few male) chamber members. The group works collaboratively with other Chambers such as AustCham and NZTCC to achieve these objectives. Our yearly program typically includes topics covering women in business and social networking events.

In 2013 we hosted or co-hosted four events: an evening presentation on 'How to Achieve a Work/Life Balance' with AustCham; An Evening with the Lord Mayor of Perth with AustCham; an evening presentation on 'Fifty Shades of Grey - Staying Young and Healthy' and a speed networking evening with AustCham and NZTCC.

## **PROPERTY & INFRASTRUCTURE**

The BCCT Property & Infrastructure (P&I) Group's mission is to support and advance BCCT work in relation to P&I; to organize quality events of interest to members at a reasonable cost; and to compile reports on market developments. The group normally holds four quarterly meetings at which events are planned for each quarter. The P&I Group has also supplied various reports on the P&I sector for members which are posted on the BCCT website.

In 2013 the P&I Group organised these evening presentations: with the Australian and South African Chambers on the Outlook for the Thai property market and with the American and Australian Chambers on Property and Infrastructure on the Eastern Seaboard.

## **SME**

During 2013, the group has been relatively inactive. In an attempt to analyse why this is so it is necessary to look at how BCCT provides support in other ways.

The notion of a group for SMEs cuts across almost every other group run by the BCCT as it is essentially a horizontal group covering all key interests of other groups.

It may well be that there is no need for a specific SME Group and that other groups can cover issues in their own way. Equally there may be generic issues that are not covered by any group. The potential role for an SME group going forward might be in identifying issues for other groups rather than trying to service the needs themselves.

## **TRAVEL & TOURISM**

Under the Chairmanship of David Cumming the Travel and Tourism committee was re-activated with regular meetings in 2013. The committee started with a strong number of representatives being present but regular meetings tended to have between 4 and 6 group members in attendance, due to the sectors very busy schedules. The committee which had been dormant for a number of years has a large core of members to cater to within the BCCT and going forward in 2014 the primary aim must be to serve their needs in every way we can.

A very successful event was held in June with the Governor of TAT, Khun Suraphon Svetasreni at which in excess of 60 members were in attendance to hear about developments in Thailand Tourism Sector.

The mission and main focus areas of the group for 2014 will lie in the following main areas:

### Mission:

The Travel and Tourism Committee will aim to provide a platform for the members of BCCT involved in this field to facilitate communication and business opportunities by linking and driving communication between Thailand and the UK tourist sectors. The goal is to enhance Thailand's overall tourist and travel experience by helping it to maintain a competitive advantage relative to neighbouring alternative destinations in S.E. Asia while assisting all sector related businesses to capitalise on the ever increasing Thailand tourist market.

The three main areas of focus for the group in 2014 will be:

- Following the current political situation, to work with the members to help drive the rehabilitation of the Thai Travel and Tourism industry
- Tourist Security and their confidence in Thailand as a destination
- Education- a focus on internships, service expectations, placements and support to our Chamber members in this sector
- Coordination, collaboration and dialogue with TAT with an aim of establishing how this can be carried forward to the field

In addition the aim of the group for 2014 is to complete an article for members twice yearly while also providing 3 major travel and tourism events; these may take the form of:

- Travel and Tourism Panel Event
- Dinner with Speaker
- Meetings with TAT, TCEB and other Industry associations
- Travel and Tourism networking events
- Understanding the needs of the members in this area

## **UK**

2013 has been another relatively quiet year on the BCCT UK Group front largely due to the fact that many companies have traditionally left their teams on the ground to action any Thailand-related matters.

Whilst this practice will probably continue for many of the well-established companies, newcomers to the market - particularly SMEs, whose interaction with the Chamber should increase significantly following the ongoing UKTI initiative - may find the UK Group a useful sounding board. Time will tell!

That aside, my time is likely to continue to be spent briefing any interested British Chambers/Trade Associations (ie Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT)), FCO/UKTI officials and attending a range of Regional/Thailand events (ie Anglo-Thai Society, Asia House, Thai Embassy, UK Asia Business Council etc).

In tandem, together with Mike Weatherley (Conservative MP for Hove & Portslade and a good friend of Thailand), I have been trying to raise the profile of the Anglo-Thai Parliamentary Group which has yet to stage a single activity! This should not only have broad-ranging benefits but is in stark contrast to the Anglo-Japanese Parliamentary Group (well attended (50-100) monthly functions) and the recently launched Vietnam/UK Network.