

China business: What can Royal Albert Dock learn from Beijing?

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ABP Beijing

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ABP Beijing

There's £1.7 billion of investment going into a 35-acre brownfield site in the Royal Albert Dock.

The money is set to create a whole new business district, two-and-a-half times the size of Westfield Stratford City, teaming with hundreds of different companies.

As for residents, the development is set to bring 20,000 new jobs to the borough.

There's no denying it, on paper it sounds incredible. But will ABP's new business district – set to rival Canary Wharf and the City – work?

ABP Beijing, the first of the Chinese developer's huge projects, has been operational since 2013 and may give some indicator of success.

There are 500 companies in the 344-acre park. Among them is the Pan-China, once owned by the country's ministry of construction, which has had a base on site for the past 10 years, boasting a 500-strong workforce.

"It was best for us to have our headquarters here," said the deputy office manager. "In the beginning there were many favourable policies from the government.

“In ABP Beijing there is quite a high cluster of enterprises so it makes us easier to co-operate with other enterprises.

“It’s much easier for us to do business here, plus we get a lot of government support.

“There are all sorts of enterprises here – banks, government offices. It makes it easier to do everything in one place.”



Wang Changming, Angel Yeast general manager

The site boasts a range of banks, hotels – including the ABP-owned Maya Island, inspired by chairman Xu Weiping and his travels – plus a Starbucks and McDonald’s, while plans are in place to bring in a KFC.

Another of the major investors is Angel Yeast, one of the world’s biggest suppliers of yeast which has a regional headquarters in APB Beijing – its head office is south in Hubei – but hopes to set up a small office in London as well.

“Most of our clients are based in Beijing and many of them are in APB Beijing, so it’s good for us to be here,” said general manager Wang Changming.

“There are many enterprises that we can learn from. Many of the enterprises here are more than 100 years old but we were only set up in 1986.

“We want to be around for at least another 100 years, so we have much to learn from other enterprises.”

But there’s much more to the business district than just business. Alongside the endless office blocks and residential are sports pitches and basketball courts, plus a two-acre underground food court.

A series of club buildings offers the company bosses somewhere to unwind and relax together, with executive suites, jacuzzi baths and even a nearby wine cellar.

An ABP International Alliance Club has also been set up to strengthen engagement between the enterprises, both economically as well as socially.

Designed as a platform for businesses from both the UK and China, although currently only featuring Chinese companies, the club host regular round-table discussions, networking events and exchange visits alongside a host of extra-curricular activities.

In addition to an annual – and hugely popular by all accounts – inter-company basketball tournament, the group also offers a range of clubs, such as mountain-walking and golf, and even hosts social events like match-making nights.

“If they both like each other they will get a gift from us,” he explained Wang Xiang, club manager.



Reporter Mark Shales with branch manager of Ping An Bank

However the prize for the first ABP Alliance Club wedding is still up for grabs.

“In China the wedding ceremony is a very personal and private thing,” he added.

“If that happens though, they’ll let us know.”

In Beijing at least, a thriving community has been built up with business at its core but much more following on.

Hopefully we will see the same success here in the Royal Docks.

http://www.newhamrecorder.co.uk/news/china_business_what_can_royal_albert_dock_learn_from_beijing_1_4220823