

THE BUSINESS OLYMPICS

The cauldron wasn't the only London 2012 creation to highlight Britain's strengths. *Business Voice* took time out from the sporting action to focus on the effort to promote UK plc while the eyes of the world were upon it.

The opening ceremony of London 2012 wowed the cynics and heralded a successful Olympics. It also dramatically portrayed the UK's commercial and creative strengths. But, away from the main event, the messages of the country's creative, industrial and technological expertise were reinforced to a global business audience as UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) went into overdrive to maximise the benefits to be gained by playing host.

It held a series of summits at the "British business embassy", set up at Lancaster House in central London. Covering the creative industries, infrastructure, energy, life sciences, education, technology, advanced engineering and retail, these events offered a platform for a number of British corporate success stories to discuss what's behind the country's strength in these areas.

At the same time, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills opened a public exhibition, "Make it in Great Britain", to showcase UK manufacturers (see panel, page 38). It also hosted US venture-fund managers and investors at a US/UK "Financing innovation" conference.

Lord Green, minister of state for trade and investment, said: "We were determined that this Olympics would be the best for business ever". And it had to be, as the government had set targets of signing £1bn-worth of commercial deals during the summer, plus another £1bn in the years to follow, as a direct result of the games.

Creative content

The choreographed arrival of the Queen at the opening ceremony, after her acting debut alongside Daniel Craig in a James

Bond homage, brought the curtains up on a creative masterpiece by Danny Boyle. At UKTI's "Creative content" summit, panellists wondered whether the "Danny Boyle effect" would encourage more directors and producers to remain in the UK rather than move to Hollywood. According to Tim Bevan, founder of independent studio Working Title, there are clear advantages to staying here.



Investment ahoy? The government hopes that London 2012 will be a golden opportunity for British business.

"We can make films cheaper in the UK, as the industry isn't as unionised as it is in the US," he said. His business partner, Eric Fellner, added: "As an international market for film-making has emerged, we've turned being in the UK into a positive."

David Heyman, producer of the *Harry Potter* movies, highlighted the fact that each film employed 2,500 people in this country and that each success played a part in developing British capabilities

further. Two-thirds of the special effects in the early *Harry Potter* films had been created in the US, but by the final one, nine out of ten of the more advanced effects were made in Britain. Their fellow panellist, Ivan Dunleavy, CEO of Pinewood Studios, also highlighted the UK's world-class facilities for film-makers.

The director of London's Design Museum, Deyan Sudjic, spoke of the design expertise in this country that was represented at the opening ceremony not only by Thomas Heatherwick's cauldron, but also by Boyle's portrayal of the industrial revolution.

"Design can be seen as frivolous, but the industrial revolution started with textiles and fabric," he said.

Heatherwick himself commented on London's ability to attract many of the "top designers on the planet", which Interbrand's Rita Clifton put down to the fluid boundaries between the different creative industries. "It makes London a great place to develop a design philosophy, to study and to spot talent," she said.

But Howard Stringer, Sony's Welsh-born CEO, argued that, to make the most of the opportunities, the UK had to improve its ability to commercialise its creativity. "We need to take risk and be disrupted out of our complacency," he argued.

Health and efficiency

The decision to feature the National Health Service so prominently during the opening ceremony might have raised a few eyebrows, but the organisation plays an important role in the success of the UK life sciences industry - not only by spending about £20bn a year on goods and services, but also as a research partner for developing medicines and clinical



"London 2012 delivery has shown UK plc at its finest" **Stuart Hill, BT**



"The Olympic Park is a shop window for UK design and construction firms" **Eric Pickles MP**



"Individual efforts will make the business legacy of the games a success. It's down to all of us" **Lord Bell**



technologies. At the life sciences summit, pioneering surgeon Lord Darzi said: "The NHS is a very strong brand and has a wealth of experience of what works and what doesn't." He drew attention to the fact that Britain has been awarded 76 Nobel prizes in science and technology, 39 of which were health-related.

Of the top 50 global pharmaceutical companies, 37 have operations in the UK. These operations account for ten per cent of the world's research and development funding. Delegates at the summit heard about moves under way to support new medical breakthroughs, including the Francis Crick Institute, which will focus its resources on the "next generation" of young scientists coming through.

Highlighting the productivity of the life sciences sector, the minister of state for

universities and science, David Willetts, said that it was "a good example of everyone working together to drive development".

"This is for everyone"

The commentators for US Olympic broadcaster NBC might not have known Tim Berners-Lee's claim to fame, but the appearance of the inventor of the worldwide web at the opening ceremony highlighted the part the UK has played - and will continue to play - in the development of telecommunications. In fact, London 2012 was known as the first "Twitterlympics", generating more than 150 million tweets even before the Paralympics got under way. There were also 46.1 billion page views on the official website, www.london2012.com, peaking at 104,792 page views per second. And at

UKTI's summit on ICT, Locog's chief information officer, Gerry Pennell, said that the technical challenges of the games gave those that worked on them "five years of experience in one year, which they will take back into the UK's digital workplaces".

At the global investment summit, Google's chairman, Eric Schmidt, and Cisco's CEO, John Chambers, explained why the UK was a good place for them to invest. Chambers praised its "willingness to rethink how it can be the best place for business" over the past five years.

Meanwhile, George Osborne highlighted the cutting-edge research facilities that were being developed at Tech City, the technology cluster stretching from Shoreditch to Stratford, as he announced new investments by Vodafone, Barclays and social gaming company GREE.

A MANUFACTURING SHOWCASE »

During the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, a special exhibition was held at the Science Museum to showcase the UK's expertise in manufacturing. The 39 businesses on display included:



1 JOHNSON MATTHEY
Johnson Matthey's plant in Royston, Cambridgeshire, manufactured the world's first autocatalyst in 1974. Since then the technology, based on platinum-group metals, has prevented millions of tons of pollutants from entering the atmosphere. Today the company's autocatalysts are fitted to one in three cars worldwide. And scientists at Royston - one of 14 manufacturing sites for its emissions-control business around the globe - continue to respond to tightening environmental regulations.



2 EVAC+CHAIR
The Birmingham firm has pioneered the development of evacuation chairs since it was set up in 1989. It is the world's leading supplier of the chairs, which enable people who are mobility-impaired or injured to descend stairs in non-domestic buildings in the event of an emergency where lifts can't be used. They can be operated by a single user, with no heavy lifting required. The company supplies more than 7,500 chairs a year to customers in more than 30 countries, from hotels and sports venues to schools and hospitals.



3 MESSIER-BUGATTI-DOWTY
Messier-Bugatti-Dowty's Gloucester site has been at the cutting edge of landing-gear technology for aircraft for more than 75 years. Part of the global Safran group, it employs 945 people working in design, research and development, state-of-the-art manufacturing, assembly, testing and in-service support. It produces gears and other critical components for aeroplanes including several Airbus airliners and is now also supplying the main and nose landing gear for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.



4 ULTRA GLOBAL PRT
At Heathrow's fifth terminal, 800 passengers a day use Ultra's 21 small, driverless electric vehicles to travel between the business car park and the terminal itself along a 3.8km guideway. Rather than having to wait for timetabled services, passengers on the £30m system are transported on demand. The company, which emerged from an engineering research project at the University of Bristol in 1995, has also won a contract to install a public transport system in Amritsar, India.