

GLOBAL TECH ADVOCATES GOES TO HONG KONG AND CHINA

In November, I travelled to Hong Kong to participate in the Tech West England Advocates Tech Mission to China. Organised by Tech West England Advocates (TWEA) lead Richard Lowe and his business partner Angela Tang from Hewlett Rand, the mission invited 15 scaling businesses from across the UK to visit Hong Kong and explore opportunities for international expansion in the Greater Bay Area (which includes Shenzhen).

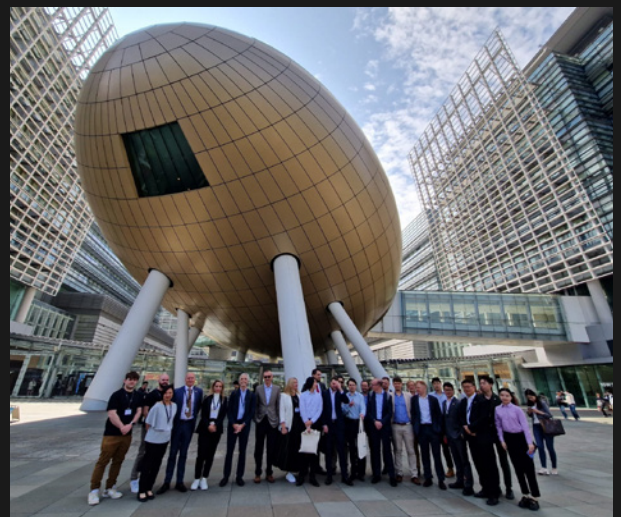
I left the mission midway through the week and travelled with John Zai and Kelly Chan from Tech China Advocates and CENTI Group to three tech hubs in China: Chongqing, Wuxi and Shanghai.



MONDAY 13TH NOVEMBER

The delegation gathered at the Nina Hotel in Causeway Bay and then participated in three events during the day:

- The Hong Kong Trade Development Council hosted an introductory and overview session to share more about their role in helping overseas businesses to come to Hong Kong and why it represents a strong expansion destination, especially with its proximity to Mainland China.
- The British Consulate in Hong Kong hosted a lunchtime event which featured speakers from the Consulate along with the UK Department of Business and Trade (DBT). Richard then moderated a panel discussion with three scaling businesses who expanded to Hong Kong to share more about their experiences.
- Richard and Shane Smith from PitchFlix organised an event at The Eaton Club for several investors to 'pitch' to a large room of founders including the founders within the TWEA delegation. I moderated the session with each investor delivering a five minute pitch followed by Q&A. There were well over 100 in the room with some very good questions to the investors. You can learn more about the ReversePitch sessions here: <https://www.pitchflix.tv>



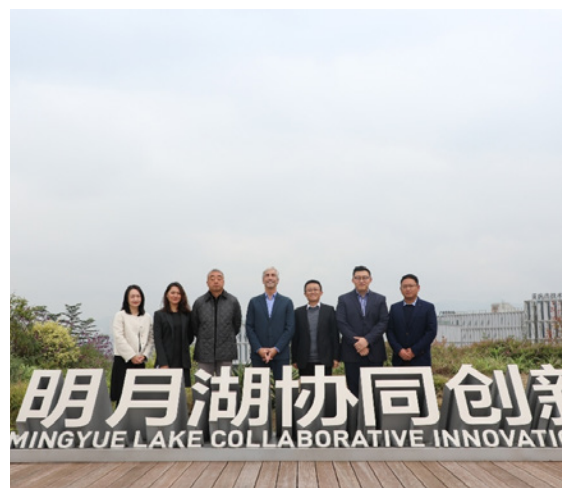
TUESDAY 14TH NOVEMBER

The delegation travelled from Causeway Bay to the New Territories to visit the Hong Kong Science & Technology Park (HKSTP), where an overview of the park was shared including the benefits of being based there. The founders of the delegation then had an opportunity to pitch their businesses to investors who were invited by HKSTP to meet the delegation.



In the evening, Global Tech Advocates hosted the launch of Tech Hong Kong Advocates at Preface in Causeway Bay. Tommie Lo and Lech Sikora-Sikorski talked about Preface and then John Zai, Lead of Tech China Advocates, announced the launch of the new group, followed by co-founder Richard Lowe. I moderated a panel session with John, Richard and Tommie to discuss Hong Kong as a vital tech hub and the role of Tech HK Advocates in the ecosystem.

You can learn more about Preface here: <https://www.preface.ai>



WEDNESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

It was a very early start as John, Kelly and I travelled to Shenzhen and then flew to Chongqing, a city of around 30 million people in south west China.

The focus of the visit was to meet with leaders from the Chongqing Innovation Zone in the Liangjiang New Area. This is a relatively new and incredibly large innovation zone with a focus on a variety of new technologies and supporting university spinouts.

We introduced them to Global Tech Advocates and announced the launch of a new Tech Chongqing Advocates group to kick off in December 2023. We toured a 3D printing facility and met with a couple of companies who are based at the venue. Members of the UK Department of Business and Trade (DBT) and the Welsh Development Agency joined the meeting.

You can learn more here: <https://www.ichongqing.info/2023/08/31/chongqings-national-level-development-area-to-create-an-innovation-ecosystem/>

After a lengthy afternoon of discussions, we travelled to Chongqing city centre for a traditional hot pot meal, which was delicious - although I had to avoid the incredibly hot and spicy dishes which the city is known for! This was followed by a walk along the river to see the city fully illuminated, which it is also renowned for.

THURSDAY 16TH NOVEMBER

Thursday was an even earlier start, departing Chongqing to fly to Wuxi, around 100 km from Shanghai. Tech China Advocates and CENTI Group were on full display during the day which included the following:

- Launch of Yangtze River Delta (Wuxi) International Talent Hub and the GTA China Hub (which Advocates around the world are welcome to use)
- Launch of Tech China Advocates Healthtech Group being led by Timothy Johns

I was also honoured to be appointed as a Global Ambassador for Talent Recruitment for Wuxi Xishan District.



After the event, we took the high-speed train from Wuxi to Shanghai.



FRIDAY 17TH NOVEMBER

John and I met with Deputy Secretary General at the Shanghai Municipal Government, Yuying Shang. Madame Shang discussed their focus on technology and specifically covered the Pujiang Innovation Forum, and specifically InnoMatch, which takes place in September. We discussed how Global Tech Advocates and Tech China Advocates can get more involved; we also discussed some ideas for how National Eastern Tech Transfer Centre, on behalf of the Shanghai Municipal Government, can get more involved with activities like London Tech Week.

I then spent the afternoon visiting the National Eastern Tech Transfer Center in the Yangpu Innovation District (which includes Fudan University). Julia Zhu and Michael Li gave a comprehensive overview of NETC and their focus on helping companies and governments with innovation and building tech transfer capabilities across China. More information is here:

<https://www.netcchina.com/en/about-us>

The week finished with a traditional Shanghai dinner hosted by John, Kelly and the team at CENTI group with Timothy Johns joining us (and yes, we enjoyed some Moutai, too).

So, it was an action-packed week, covering four cities in five days. Hong Kong and China are emerging from the pandemic and eager to engage with the rest of the world. Given some of the broader geopolitical issues (which were openly shared), many of us discussed how we can find ways to collaborate in areas which are beneficially to all (such as net zero, climate change and energy transition) and continue to have levels of engagements and interactions.

My thanks to Richard and Angela who organised an excellent tech mission for Tech West England Advocates and Tech HK Advocates. Many good relationships were established during the week.

My thanks as well to John Zai, Kelly Chan, Ritchie Li and the team at CENTI Group and Tech China Advocates for organising visits to three important tech hubs in China and for coming up with some practical ways to engage. Good relationships were created in Chongqing, Wuxi and Shanghai, which Tech China Advocates and Global Tech Advocates will build upon.

