



Summary biographical details

John Williams MBA FCMI FInstCM MIoD
Chief Executive
Gateway to London

New Chief Executive for Gateway to London, John Williams, comes from a long and varied background in both private and public organisations, and the not-for-profit sector. He has lived and worked in the Far East, Middle East, North America and Europe, as well as the UK, in sectors as varied as stockbroking, oil & gas, higher education and trade & investment. He has been a director and adviser to management, and has owned his own companies in the UK and Hong Kong.

After several years in finance, consultancy and international business, John's career began to coalesce around trade & investment in 1995, when he became responsible for international business development at Northern Offshore Federation, a trade association of more than 300 businesses in the oil & gas sector. He focused particularly on developing relationships with the investment arms of major oil & gas companies and the setting up of an overseas presence for the Federation in the USA and the Middle East.

Later seconded to the UK's Department for Trade & Industry as an Export Promoter, John advised businesses, Ministers and senior Government officials on trade & investment with the Middle East, and managed two inter-governmental Trade & Economic Committees, in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. He was recognised as "one of the best Export Promoters" in the UK by the then President of the British Overseas Trade Board, Sir Martin Laing, and during his secondment worked with dozens of businesses on trade and investment strategy.

Building on this experience, John was appointed as the first Director in the North East of England for UK Trade & Investment, the FCO/BERR partnership that leads in promoting British business interests internationally, where he witnessed a rise in regional export performance of almost 30% to £10 billion. As John himself says, "No-one, other than the businesses themselves, can claim any credit for the superb trade performance of the region. At the same time, it is clear that the diversification in regional trade performance is due in part to the efforts of the UKTI team. Significantly reduced dependence on EU trade – down from 80% to less than 60% - and net growth of 25% in the number of companies trading internationally reflects our strategy to broaden the base of opportunity for NE companies in trade and investment."

During his time with UKTI, John worked closely with the Regional Development Agency on the co-ordination of trade & investment support and investor development, and was architect of the NE Regional International Trade Office, a unique development in the delivery of trade and investment support to business. This initiative is the only public-private venture of its kind in the UK, and still successfully funded by the combination of private sector, UK Government and EU funds. The funding structure is unique in the UK, and is used as a model in other parts of Europe and has been used by the UN International Trade Centre in Geneva as an element of their Regional Export Strategy template.

After five years with UKTI, John took up a secondment as Director of the International Office at Newcastle University, working with university authorities on devising and deploying an internationalisation strategy. He subsequently spent two years advising and supporting INTO University Partnerships – a business revolutionising the nature of international higher education – on strategic projects, including partnership development, organisational structure and international strategy.

John's key skills include strategic planning, change management and international business development. During the past fifteen years, he has provided advice on international business to the UN ITC and to Governments in Romania, Brunei and the Middle East, as well as taking part in several strategic initiatives within UK Trade & Investment.

At work, John's primary aim is encouraging members of his team to achieve more than they thought possible, finding ways to overcome apparently insurmountable difficulties and generating team spirit through energy and

enthusiasm. He is a strong believer in Situational Leadership, Dr Paul Hersey's principle of adapting leadership behaviour to individuals and situations, and has built teams in widely varying environments, in public, private and voluntary sectors.

John's experiences and interests outside work have ranged widely, including Honorary Treasurer of a young people's charity, membership of the Northumbria Probation Service Committee, freelance writing for business publications, and working with the Cabinet Office on developing an e-Learning website for ethnic minority members of the Civil Service. He has even work-shadowed a member of the Royal family!

John is a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute, a Fellow of the Institute of Commercial Management and a Member of the Institute of Directors. He is also a keen runner and cyclist, a qualified Sports Massage Therapist, a UK Athletics coach to marathon distance and has a Diploma in Sports Psychology. He continually threatens to take up inline skating, so far to no avail.