

## British Chamber Year in Review - 2021

As we entered 2021, we all felt a sense of relief that we were leaving behind the challenges of 2020. Little did we know that 2021 would bring with it more hurdles and difficulties for us to navigate. At the Chamber, hosting events and networking with the wider international business community is at the heart of what we do and, like many of you, we have had obstacles to overcome this year. Of course, there have been positives from this crisis, including a greater awareness of how we work and spend our time and the reinvention of some business operations.

As the COVID-19 socially distancing requirements began to relax mid-way through the year, we could not have planned for a better time to host our Greater Bay Area (GBA) Summit. Not only was this the first major event of this type that the Chamber had ever hosted, it was the first hybrid event that took place in almost 12 months. We welcomed just over 100 in-person and 400 virtual attendees throughout the day. The Chief Executive of the HKSAR also generously agreed to open the Summit with a keynote speech and we had numerous other speakers from Government and the business community. It was an excellent event and contributed to our thought leadership on Hong Kong's role in the GBA.

Thereafter we have been able to make a welcome return to in person events and many have been able to enjoy the famed Hong Kong Club breakfast once again. And in the Autumn, the Chamber's strong and active Healthcare Committee conducted a half-day Digital Health Symposium that addressed the future opportunities for Hong Kong's healthcare sector as it eventually becomes more integrated with the GBA. We held this at the offices of InvestHK, which has been a strong supporter of the Chamber throughout the year and with whom we will look to partner with in the future.

ESG has increasingly become a topic of conversation within the Chamber community. With COP 26 taking place in Glasgow in November, we made it a focus of ours to promote COP 26 by helping to raise awareness and educate people on this important issue and address the key issues on the road to carbon neutrality. We hosted a four-part event series with the UK Department for International Trade and welcomed leading experts to provide insights and key action points to encourage businesses to invest in a clean and resilient recovery plan that delivers for the people of Hong Kong, and the planet.

The 'Social' pillar of ESG has been an ongoing priority of the Chamber's Women in Business Committee and they recently launched a Diversity & Inclusion series in partnership with EY. This series seeks to be a catalyst for discussion in Hong Kong and brings together a diverse group of people to celebrate the women in our community driving sustainable business practice.

2021 has also been a busy year for the Chamber's policy and advocacy efforts. In addition to our detailed submission in relation to the Policy Address, we issued 24 policy submissions throughout the year to the Hong Kong Government (including responses to public consultations) on a diverse range of topics across education, land supply, tax, law, healthcare and COVID-19 measures.

The Chamber has a strong relationship with the HKSAR Government and values the dialogue we have in order to support the international business community by working together to better Hong Kong as a place to do business. We were therefore pleased to be invited, along with a number of other international Chambers, to partner with the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) who launched a programme to create 100 full-time entry-level job opportunities for young people within the creative industries sector. The talent shortage has slowly become a challenge over the past 12 months and our latest COVID-19 survey highlighted that recruitment and talent

retention is one of the main short-term issues as a result of the COVID-19 measures. We will continue to lobby on the topic of talent and travel restrictions as we head into 2022.

The Chamber is optimistic about the future for Hong Kong and we were pleased to have been a co-organiser for the "Discovering and realising new opportunities in Asia" event alongside Hong Kong Trade Development Council last month. This hybrid event was held to promote Hong Kong's role as a business partner and hub for the UK and welcomed over 700 participants both in Hong Kong and the UK. The three sessions on finance, expanding business to Asia and healthcare provided great insight into the current business environment and the future opportunities that Hong Kong has to offer, in particular the Greater Bay Area.

As we look forward to 2022, the Chamber will be placing particular focus on the following topics:

- GBA sector developments and updates.
- ASEAN, particularly Hong Kong's role as a connector to the GBA.
- Talent - the challenges that Hong Kong faces and how to overcome these.
- Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050 and developments from COP26.
- Infrastructure Development Strategy (including the Northern Metropolis).
- Community outreach – we will look to foster relationships and support the local Hong Kong NGOs, in particular, those that are focused on the Hong Kong community. More details to come in 2022.

We have a busy pipeline planned for 2022 covering events and advocacy work. We hope that we can continue to host more in-person events to bring you all together not only to network but also to gain insights into the important business trends that are shaping the future of Hong Kong. All being well, we are planning a Summit in May and a Ball in October – watch this space.

Finally, we are proud to announce that BritCham Hong Kong has won 'International Chamber of the Year' at the British Chambers of Commerce Awards ceremony held in London. A special thank you to all our Committee members and supporting organisations who have worked alongside the Executive team during the year and to our General Committee who have provided direction and inspiration. This award is owned by all our members and shows the quality and calibre of your support and commitment to our purpose of supporting business in Hong Kong. We will continue to seek feedback from our members who, through the diverse and well-connected community, can work collectively to better Hong Kong as a place to do business.

From all of us at the Chamber, we wish you and your families a very happy and healthy Christmas holiday and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.



Peter Burnett  
Chairman



David Graham  
Executive Director