

Foreword



HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW

Lord Heseltine



It has been my privilege to be a ‘friend’ of China since my time as President of the British Board of Trade in the early 1990s and I am delighted that following the launch of the UK-China Forum a few years ago bilateral relations have continued to progress from strength to strength.

As the largest single European investor in China, the UK has an important role to play in China’s economic transformation. But we have also forged strong cultural, civic and academic links that benefit both our nations. This book puts the focus on just a few of those friendships; not the least symbolised by the magnificent Chinese Arch in Liverpool, the largest of its kind out of China and marking the legacy of the oldest Chinese community in Europe.

The UK is a small country, minute in comparison to the People’s Republic of China, but in many respects in our trade and cultural relations we punch well above our weight on the international stage. The same can be said for Liverpool. Its sister Chinese city Shanghai is now recognised as one of the most dynamic powerhouses in Asia. Yet at only a fraction of the size of Shanghai, Liverpool still manages to attract global attention: its recent accolade as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its glorious waterfront is just one example.

I have been associated with Liverpool for close on a quarter of a century and was very proud of my title Minister for Merseyside at a time when the city and the region didn’t have that many friends either in government or business circles. The city’s relations with Shanghai mirror Britain’s own hopes and aspirations for ongoing friendship with the PRC. There can be no more exciting time to work with China. I want to see our two countries take as much advantage as possible of the areas where we share strengths, and where we complement each other’s capabilities.

I was impressed during my many visits to Liverpool at the entrepreneurial spirit of the Chinese community – many of whose origins are from Shanghai – and its reputation for hard work. At a time when Britain had over three million unemployed I was informed that there wasn’t anyone out of a job in the Chinese community. I have never forgotten that.

Michael Heseltine, Lord Heseltine of Thenford