

British RDAs should copy American example for inward investment success

British regional development authorities represent a poor use of public money, are inefficient, inappropriate and badly thought out, Douglas Blausten, senior partner in property consultancy and surveyors Cyril Leonard told a Commons All Party Committee.

Mr Blausten, a director of British America Business Inc, told the All Party Export Committee that the structure of UK regional development authorities at present was not the right way to develop inward investment. Instead UK RDAs had a lot to learn from the techniques and innovative marketing used by The Fairfax County Economic Development Authority of Virginia in attracting inward investment.

UK Government money spent on regional development authorities undermined the efforts of UK Trade and Investment and would be better spent on UKTI, Mr Blausten told MPs and leading experts on investment.

The committee was holding a session looking at “Special Relationship –Special Opportunities” during which the President of the Fairfax County Development Authority, Virginia, Dr Gerald Gordon spoke about UK companies being better placed to do business with the Federal Government than those from other countries because of the closeness of the relationship in recent years.

Mr Blausten said the British Embassy and Consulates in the US were “grossly underused” by exporters. They were a source of outstanding expertise and quality people and should be better promoted as a first port of call for UK business people.

But he praised the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority as a “model of how to do business as far as America is concerned”. The FCEDA was always “innovative, very focussed and with an organised form of marketing.

“They use creative links in terms of competitions and in terms of two way trade and I don’t think that these methods are replicated in the UK.”

“There is now a fatally flawed inward investment system here, we have a lot to learn from the techniques used by US Development Authorities such as Fairfax County.”

ends