

China offers businesses a big opportunity



Jim Stewart addresses the audience at Houston House Hotel near Uphall. Picture by Nigel Duncan Media

Lothians businessman Jim Stewart, an experienced exporter to China, believes the return is worth the hassle.

But the director of Livingston-based Click Netherfield warned businessmen and women that they must take all steps to protect their business.

And they must find a lawyer and learn to be patient as deals can take time.

Mr Stewart was speaking to a joint meeting of Midlothian and East Lothian and West Lothian Chambers of Commerce.

And he said: "There are problems in exporting to China but there are many opportunities."

His firm, which manufactures museum display cases and exhibition showcase design, has been trading there for 13 years.

And he added: "I would thoroughly recommend exporting to China.

"Before you step on the plane to China you should be taking advice from the local chamber, or from SDI or Scottish Enterprise or even from one of the British Embassies.

"It is very to protect your IP (Intellectual Property)."

A double-sided business card was also important and he added: "It is respectful and the Chinese will appreciate that that you have taken that extra step.

"You have to be prepared to be patient and play a long game. The bureaucracy at times can be difficult and frustrating and things don't move as fast as you would like them to do. You need to plan well in advance.

"Britain has a stellar reputation in China and we find that there is a huge demand for British goods, retail or commercial.

"Buy Britain still has a huge influence on the Chinese market and there is a whole new Chinese middle-class emerging who have a huge amount of disposable income and they need to spend it with someone and they much prefer to spend it on British goods.

"You cannot take enough steps to protect your brand. There are people in China who will look to make money on the back of your business or your brand.

"If you don't take steps to protect your brand if you don't then people will exploit that."