BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SOUTH CHINA
中国华南英国商会

GO GLOBAL PROGRAMME REPORT

Success in the UK & Beyond.

How British professional services can capture the $174 billion opportunity of Chinese outbound expansion — findings from three forums in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai.

NOV 2025 - JUNE 2026

GO GLOBAL REPORT

Contents.

Strategic context, programme evidence, and four recommendations for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

FOREWORD

China is going global. Britain should be first in line.

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China is going global. In 2025, Chinese outbound direct investment reached $174.4 billion, up 7.1% year on year. By the end of 2025, Chinese investors had established over 50,000 enterprises across 190 countries and regions, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

Much of the public discussion around Chinese global expansion has focused on trade deficits and competition. Within government, efforts to capitalise on it have understandably concentrated on attracting Chinese investment: factories, offices, and jobs in the UK. That is a welcome and important part of the picture.

But there is another opportunity that receives relatively less attention: every one of those 50,000 enterprises also needs lawyers, accountants, tax advisers, governance specialists, branding agencies, and market entry consultants.

> **Helping Chinese companies go global is a huge opportunity for British professional services firms. And it is one the UK is uniquely well-placed to capture.**

The UK runs an £11.4 billion services trade surplus with China. Services exports rose 7.5% year on year to £20 billion in the four quarters ending Q3 2025, with the fastest growth in professional and intellectual property services — exactly the sectors that support Chinese outbound expansion.

FOREWORD

$174 billion in Chinese outbound investment is looking for trusted partners. Britain should be first in line.

One-third of British firms in China now cite assisting Chinese companies going global as their biggest commercial opportunity, a figure that rises to 85% among legal firms and 68% by financial services firms, according to the British Chamber of Commerce in China's latest sentiment survey.

The demand is not hard to explain. As Chinese enterprises move beyond domestic success into international markets, they need precisely what the UK sells best: governance, legal structuring, tax planning, financial advisory, branding, and market entry support. We believe this represents one of the most promising avenues for delivering on the UK Trade Strategy's ambition to make services the engine of British export growth.

The British Chamber of Commerce South China has been facilitating this opportunity through its Go Global programme, a series of FCDO-commissioned forums held across South China bringing together Chinese enterprises with British professional services firms, government representatives, and industry experts. The programme has so far delivered three half-day forums in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai, attracting over 740 enterprise registrations.

The programme is designed to support British companies serving Chinese outbound expansion, attract Chinese investment into the UK, and strengthen business networks across the UK, the Greater Bay Area, and Hong Kong.

The third forum, held in Zhuhai Hengqin on 15 May 2026, took place after the original version of this report was completed. A full account of that event appears in Appendix 01. The survey data and aggregate figures throughout the report have been updated to reflect all three forums.

Crucially, the programme has received active support from the Chinese side at every level. Municipal commerce bureaus drove event registrations and reposted event promotions through their official channels — a first in the chamber's 30-year history. A strategic Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the national body responsible for coordinating China's outbound enterprise support, committing both sides to building a vetted list of British service providers that Chinese companies can access as they expand internationally. We believe this signals real policy alignment that must be built upon.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The opportunity, the evidence, and the recommendations.

The commercial case for positioning British services at the centre of Chinese outbound expansion — in the UK and in every third market Chinese companies enter.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Chinese outbound direct investment reached $174.4 billion in 2025. Every one of those 50,000 enterprises needs lawyers, accountants, tax advisers, governance specialists, branding agencies and market entry consultants.

The UK runs an £11.4 billion services trade surplus with China. Services exports grew 7.5% YoY, with the fastest growth in professional and IP services — exactly the sectors that support outbound expansion.

This opportunity is not limited to the UK market. Every pound sold to a Chinese company expanding abroad is a UK services export.

THE EVIDENCE

Three forums in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Zhuhai attracted 740+ enterprise registrations and nearly 3 million cumulative media impressions.

A landmark MOU was signed with the "Go Global" Comprehensive Service Centre for Chinese Enterprises — the national body coordinating China's outbound enterprise support. BritCham South China is the first foreign chamber, and the UK the first country, to do so.

Survey data shows attendees came above all to find trusted British partners — not to learn in the abstract.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Four concrete recommendations to the FCDO, all aimed at enabling the programme to extend beyond the current mandate: scale large-format forums across China; run targeted workshops aligned to the Industrial Strategy and to specific operational needs of companies looking to Go Global; convene a Hong Kong–GBA cross-border summit; and operationalise the GGCC MOU through a digital portal. With continued investment, the programme can become a permanent platform serving the UK's Industrial Strategy, Trade Strategy and Foreign Service priorities simultaneously.

> **Britain wants to export services. Chinese companies need to buy them. The Go Global programme sits at the intersection.**

SOURCES: MOFCOM, ONS, BCCC SENTIMENT SURVEY, PROGRAMME DATA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Six numbers that frame the opportunity.

01

$174 BN

Chinese **outbound direct investment** in 2025, up 7.1% YoY and looking for trusted international partners.

02

£11.4 BN

UK **services trade surplus** with China — growing, with services exports up 7.5% YoY.

03

85%

of British **legal firms** in China now cite assisting Chinese outbound expansion as their biggest commercial opportunity.

04

740+

enterprise **registrations** across three forums; Nearly 3 million cumulative media impressions

05

1ST

foreign chamber — and the UK the first country — to sign a **strategic MOU** with China's national outbound body (the GGCC).

06

+58%

growth in participants from Guangzhou (120) to Zhuhai (190). Demand is **accelerating.**

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Britain wants to export services. Chinese firms need to buy them.

TWO OPPORTUNITIES

The first is **inward investment.** BYD has opened 125 retail outlets across the UK; automaker Chery is establishing a regional headquarters in Liverpool; life sciences group Asymchem is expanding its UK operations with 150 new jobs in advanced R&D and manufacturing.

The second equally important opportunity lies in **services.** The UK is the world's second-largest exporter of professional and business services. Services account for about 80% of the UK economy and generated more than £200 billion in net services trade in 2025.

Unlike inward investment, this opportunity is not limited to the UK market. A Chinese manufacturer entering Saudi Arabia still needs British legal advice. A Shenzhen tech firm listing in Hong Kong still needs British corporate secretarial expertise.

> **Every pound of advisory, legal, financial or branding work sold to a Chinese company expanding overseas is a UK services export.**

CHERY & JUICE

Chery itself illustrates how both opportunities overlap. Its investment in UK dealerships and a regional headquarters in Liverpool creates jobs and capital expenditure. But it also created commercial opportunity for Juice, a British creative agency. Chery needed a partner who understood how to position a Chinese brand for UK consumers — Juice repositioned it from an unknown import to something that felt authentic to British buyers, and is now supporting Chery's expansion across wider European markets.

POLICY ALIGNMENT

Both opportunities sit within the UK government's own strategic framework. Of the eight growth sectors identified in **"Invest 2035,"** the Go Global programme directly engages five — professional and business services, financial services, digital and technology, creative industries, and advanced manufacturing.

At the same time, China's 15th Five-Year Plan, approved March 2026, commits to expanding services market access — a rare moment of complementary policy priorities.

WHY SOUTH CHINA

The centre of gravity for Chinese outbound expansion is here.

GUANGDONG IN 2025

China's largest provincial economy, and its biggest trading province. Foreign trade topped 9.4 trillion yuan (£970 bn).

ITS INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT

Home to all 31 of China's manufacturing categories, 15 of which are the largest in the country.

THE COMPANIES

Unlike Shanghai, which is dominated by multinational headquarters and state financial institutions with established global networks, Guangdong is home to Chinese-founded private companies in tech and advanced manufacturing (BYD, Honor, Tencent, WeRide) that are now scaling internationally and need external professional support to do so. They are the ones actively looking for trusted partners, and they are the Go Global programme's core audience.

If the opportunity lies in helping Chinese companies go global, that raises the question of where those companies are concentrated and where British firms can find the best openings. **The answer, overwhelmingly, is South China.**

GUANGDONG'S SHARE OF GLOBAL PRODUCTION

Consumer drones	70%
5G equipment	50%
Smartphones	40%
Industrial robots	20%
New-energy vehicles	15%

Source: Xie Zheng, Director of the Guangdong Board of Investment Promotion, Shenzhen forum, Jan 2026

THE GGCC IS HEADQUARTERED HERE

The national-level "Go Global" Comprehensive Service Centre for Chinese Enterprises (GGCC) — the body coordinating China's outbound enterprise support framework — is headquartered in Guangzhou Nansha, not Beijing or Shanghai. It is one of the only Chinese national-level entities of its kind not based in the political or financial capital.

THE HONG KONG CORRIDOR

Guangdong also sits at the doorstep of Hong Kong. Multiple speakers identified Hong Kong as the most tax-efficient route for Chinese companies going global — HSBC cited a record **9,960 overseas companies** based there in 2024 and 119 IPOs worth HK$280bn in 2025. London is the world's second-largest offshore RMB hub at 21.9% of volume.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Three forums, 740+ enterprises, one strategic MOU.

FORUM 01

Grand Hyatt Guangzhou

6 November 2025

230 enterprise registrations · **120** participants Daytime forum + evening networking reception

FORUM 02

Park Hyatt Shenzhen

28 January 2026

322 enterprise registrations · **150** participants +25% growth vs. Guangzhou

FORUM 03

DoubleTree by Hilton, Zhuhai

15 May 2026

190 participants · Full account in Appendix 01.

A LANDMARK MOU

After inviting them to speak at the Guangzhou forum, and following subsequent meetings, at the Shenzhen forum, BritCham South China signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with **the "Go Global" Comprehensive Service Centre for Chinese Enterprises (GGCC)**, the national body coordinating China's outbound enterprise support.

BritCham South China is the **first foreign chamber** — and the UK the first country — to sign such an agreement. The MOU operates on two dimensions: horizontal coverage across the full outbound lifecycle (governance, legal structuring, tax, finance, branding, market entry) and vertical focus on precise industry matching.

A PIPELINE AT SCALE

In practice, the MOU commits both sides to building a vetted list of approved British service providers accessible through the GGCC's national platform. A Chinese manufacturer in Shenzhen looking for a UK law firm — or a Guangzhou tech company seeking a British branding agency — will find verified, chamber-endorsed providers through a single trusted channel.

The Shenzhen Municipal Commerce Bureau actively drove event registrations and promoted the forum through its official channels — the first time in the chamber's 30-year history.

MOU · CHAMBER × GGCC

The **first foreign chamber** to sign with China's national outbound body.

BritCham South China and the "Go Global" Comprehensive Service Centre for Chinese Enterprises commit to building a vetted list of approved British service providers accessible through the GGCC's national platform.

KEY FINDINGS

Firms came to find partners and understand policy.

WHY ATTENDEES CAME

From 335 unique companies surveyed at Shenzhen and Zhuhai. Responses per question vary.

Find Partners or Resources	133
Understand trends & policy	97
Solve operational problems	55
Learn from peers	54

MOST URGENTLY NEEDED THIRD-PARTY SERVICE

Market entry & channel dev.	98
Compliance & risk mgmt.	39
Talent & team mgmt.	25
Digitalisation & tech	17
Supply chain & operations	18

FOUR THEMES FROM THE STAGE

Compliance is where British firms get in the door

Chinese companies going global need legal structures, governance frameworks, and compliance systems in place before they scale — and most lack this expertise in-house. At the Guangzhou forum, Gowling WLG's Vivian Desmonts detailed the UK's national security and investment review mechanisms. APCO's Chris Torrens advised seeking professional support early rather than after a problem emerges. In Shenzhen, Law Debenture, WeRide, and AWS reinforced the same point.
For British law firms, auditors, and compliance consultancies, this is a direct and growing source of revenue.

Chinese companies are actively looking for British partners

Panellists at both events described a market where Chinese companies are actively looking for British firms they can rely on for specific, immediate needs. KPMG's Patrick Lu addressed market selection, cultural integration, and supply chain design — each a billable engagement. In Shenzhen, the message was blunt: without a local partner who understands the market, even the best product will fail.

KEY FINDINGS

Hong Kong is the gateway, and British firms are already there.

Multiple speakers identified Hong Kong as the most tax-efficient route for Chinese companies going global. HSBC cited a record 9,960 overseas companies based in Hong Kong in 2024 and 119 IPOs in 2025 worth HK$280 billion. PwC highlighted that the UK levies no withholding tax on dividends — a structural advantage when paired with a Hong Kong holding entity. Law Debenture's Chris McComb noted that Hong Kong's common law system, shared with the UK since 1865, allows Chinese companies to rehearse British governance standards before entering the UK proper. British professional services firms are already deeply embedded in Hong Kong. The opportunity is to connect that presence with the outbound demand coming from Guangdong.

Creative and branding services as an underrecognised export.

Chinese companies cannot do their own UK and European branding. They need British agencies — and that need follows them into every new market.

In Shenzhen, Juice CEO Alan Poole demonstrated what this looks like in practice — a British creative agency hired by a Chinese automaker to sell to British and European consumers. CS Intelligence's Andrew Tu Dai showed how digital tools and data analytics support market intelligence at scale.

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT WE HEARD AT THE NETWORKING

The most revealing exchanges happened outside the formal programme. During the evening receptions, Chinese attendees approached speakers and Chamber staff with specific, practical questions: “How do I handle tax structuring for my UK entity?” “How do we find a trusted British partner to help us expand into Saudi Arabia?” “What are the compliance requirements for listing in Hong Kong?”

These are not broad inquiries but questions from companies already in motion, looking for the right British partner to help them execute. And critically, they reveal demand not just for the UK market itself, but for British expertise in helping Chinese companies access third countries: the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Latin America.

> **“How do we find a trusted British partner to help us expand into Saudi Arabia?”**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Four actions for the FCDO.

The evidence points to three areas — scale, focus, and infrastructure — and four concrete moves to turn this programme into a permanent platform.

01 Scale large-format forums across China

We recommend expanding the series beyond Guangdong to cities and provinces with high concentrations of outbound-ready enterprises — Changsha, Xiamen, Zhejiang and Beijing among them.

Each forum should be co-delivered with local government partners, replicating the model established in Shenzhen where the commerce bureau actively promoted and drove registrations. The daytime forum followed by evening networking reception format should be retained. As noted in our findings, the receptions are where the most commercially meaningful exchanges take place — British service providers meeting Chinese companies with specific, immediate needs.

Due to the success of the first two Go Global events, a third event took place in Zhuhai Hengqin on 15 May 2026, further testing the model in a new part of the Greater Bay Area. Results are detailed in Appendix 01.

02 Run targeted workshops to complement flagship forums

The large forums generate awareness and relationships at scale. But the survey data and networking conversations revealed sustained demand for more focused, practical sessions that the broad forum format cannot fully deliver. We recommend developing two complementary workshop streams.

The first stream would be sector-specific workshops aligned to the Industrial Strategy growth sectors most relevant to Chinese outbound expansion: advanced manufacturing, creative industries, digital and technology, and financial services. These would bring together British firms with deep sectoral expertise and Chinese companies in the corresponding industries, creating more targeted commercial opportunities than a cross-sector forum allows.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The second stream would be cross-sector technical workshops addressing the specific operational questions we heard repeatedly from attendees: tax planning for UK entities, corporate governance and compliance for UK market entry, using British professional services to expand into the Middle East and other third markets, and branding and marketing to the UK consumer. These sessions would be driven directly by the demand Chinese companies have already expressed, and each one creates a concentrated commercial opportunity for British firms in that specialism.

Both streams would be lower-budget than the flagship forums, allowing FCDO to test demand at smaller scale and direct resource toward the formats that generate the most commercial outcomes.

03 Convene a Hong Kong–GBA cross-border summit

We recommend convening a cross-border summit that brings together DBT China, DBT Hong Kong, and the Foreign Service in Hong Kong, alongside British professional services firms operating in both markets. The aim would be to position the UK explicitly within the Guangdong-Hong Kong outbound corridor — not just as a destination market, but as the services partner of choice for Chinese companies heading anywhere.

04 Operationalise the GGCC MOU through a digital portal

Invest in a secure, functional portal where British companies apply, the chamber verifies credentials, and approved providers are listed on the GGCC's national platform. Turns the MOU from a framework into live commercial infrastructure.

Together, these four recommendations would convert the Go Global programme from a tender deliverable into a **permanent UK platform,** connecting British services expertise with Chinese outbound demand, and serving the UK's Industrial Strategy, Trade Strategy, and Foreign Service priorities simultaneously.

APPENDIX 01 - FORUM III — ZHUHAI HENGQIN

Growing Reach
Growing Demand

The FCDO extended the Go Global tender to include a third forum, and the result confirmed what Guangzhou and Shenzhen had suggested: demand for this programme is growing.

VENUE

DoubleTree by Hilton Zhuhai Hengqin

15 May 2026

ATTENDEES

190

Largest of the series

MEDIA REACH

1.4M

14 outlets

A WIDENING NET

The FCDO extended the tender to include a third forum. The Zhuhai Hengqin session on 15 May drew **190 registered attendees** — the largest turnout of the series, nearly **double above the original brief** of 80–100. Across three events, the programme has engaged more than **740+ enterprises.**

Hengqin's Economic Development Bureau co-promoted the event through its own channels and partner institutions, including the China–Portuguese-speaking Countries Economic and Trade Service Centre (CECPS). A single CECPS WeChat post generated over **100 pre-registrations** — companies the Chamber would not otherwise have reached. The pattern mirrors Shenzhen, where the Commerce Bureau drove sign-ups for the first time in BritCham's 30-year history. Each forum has widened the net.

OFFICIAL SUPPORT

The Hengqin forum continued the pattern of Chinese government engagement that has defined the series. Zhang Sheng, Deputy Director of Investment Promotion at the Hengqin Economic Development Bureau, delivered an opening address and committed the zone to working with BritCham and the British Consulate-General to provide 'full-cycle services' for outbound companies — adding Hengqin to a list that already includes the Shenzhen Commerce Bureau and the GGCC.

CASE STUDIES

Juice returned from the Shenzhen forum with a result. The agency's work with Chery sub-brand Jaecoo, first presented in January, had helped turn an unknown import into the UK's best-selling car — the J7 reached number one less than two years after launch. Jaecoo won Brand of the Year at the Carwow Awards 2026. Honor and Guangzhou Pharmaceutical also presented case studies.

The panel — GGCC, Standard Chartered, Deloitte, Autel Robotics, Clyde & Co — focused on operational specifics: ODI compliance, cash repatriation, the gap between market entry and sustained growth, and how cultural misunderstandings erode contractual trust.

> **The UK is open for business, it's open for new brands, it's open for new ideas and it's open for new challengers**
>
> Alex Jupp, Client Partnerships Director at Juice

MEDIA REACH

Estimated **1.4 million impressions** across **14 outlets,** including China News Service, China.org.cn, Nanfang+, Zhuhai TV, Sina Finance, Tencent News, and Today's Headlines.

The Zhuhai Municipal Government and the national "Going Global" Comprehensive Service Centre amplified coverage through their official channels.

The event made the front page of the *Zhuhai Special Economic Zone Daily*.

CUMULATIVE · THREE FORUMS

2.9M+ impressions

30+ outlets

WHERE ARE YOU IN GOING GLOBAL?

Already in multiple markets	62
Early-stage research	56
No current overseas plans	67
Strategy formulated, preparing	26
Initial (1–3 markets)	52

BIGGEST SURPRISE GOING GLOBAL

Sudden regulatory / policy changes	98
Cultural / management conflicts	63
Supply chain disruptions / cost surges	54
IP infringement disputes	21
Cross-border cash-flow tension	40
Geopolitical issues / negative sentiment	59

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO LEARN?

Compliance & regulatory checks	81
Local sales channels & customers	98
Building local teams	36
Cost control & cash flow	45
IP Protection	23

MOST URGENTLY NEEDED THIRD-PARTY SERVICE

Market entry & channel development	98
Compliance & risk management	39
Talent & team management	25
Digitalisation & tech support	17
Supply chain & operations	18

PRIMARY REASON FOR ATTENDING

Find potential partners or resources	133
Understand industry trends & policy	97
Solve specific operational problems	55
Learn from peers' practical experience	54

APPENDIX 03 CITATIONS

[01] CHINA MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (MOFCOM)

2025 Chinese outbound direct investment statistics: $174.4 bn, +7.1% YoY; 50,000 enterprises across 190 countries. *english.mofcom.gov.cn*

[02] UK OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS

UK trade in services with China: £11.4 bn surplus; £20 bn services exports, 4 quarters ending Q3 2025. *ons.gov.uk/internationaltrade*

[03] BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN CHINA

Business Sentiment Survey: 85% of legal firms, 68% of financial services firms cite assisting Chinese outbound as biggest opportunity.

[04] UK DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS & TRADE — INVEST 2035

Industrial Strategy identifying eight growth sectors; five engaged directly by the Go Global programme *gov.uk/invest-2035*

[05] NATIONAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS OF CHINA

Guangdong foreign trade data: 9.4 trillion yuan in 2025; provincial industrial categories. *stats.gov.cn/english*

[06] GUANGDONG BOARD OF INVESTMENT PROMOTION

Xie Zheng, Director. Remarks delivered at the Go Global Shenzhen Forum, 28 Jan 2026. Provincial share of global production.

[07] HSBC

Presentation at the Go Global Shenzhen Forum. 9,960 overseas companies in HK (2024); 119 IPOs worth HK$280 bn (2025).

[08] PWC · PATRICK LU, TAX PARTNER

Tax presentation, Go Global Shenzhen Forum. UK withholding-tax treatment of dividends.

[09] LAW DEBENTURE · CHRIS MCCOMB

Governance session, Go Global Shenzhen Forum. Hong Kong common-law alignment with the UK since 1865.

[10] GOWLING WLG · VIVIAN DESMONTS, PARTNER

UK National Security & Investment Act review, Go Global Guangzhou Forum, 6 Nov 2025.

[11] APCO · CHRIS TORRENS

Panel remarks on compliance, Guangzhou forum.

[12] KPMG CHINA · PATRICK LU

Market selection, cultural integration and supply-chain design.

[13] JUICE · ALAN POOLE, CEO

Case presentation on Chery repositioning. Go Global Shenzhen Forum.

[14] CS INTELLIGENCE · ANDREW TU DAI

Market-intelligence analytics, Shenzhen forum.

[15] GGCC · XU WEI

“The UK as a third-market opportunity for Chinese companies.” Go Global Guangzhou Forum.

[16] CHINA STATE COUNCIL · 15TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

Approved March 2026. Commitment to expanding market access in services.

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$174 billion is looking for **trusted partners.**

Britain should be first in line.