

# partnership in action

## UKIBC Case Study

# BECKETT RANKINE

Beckett Rankine, the UK's leading specialist firm of Marine Consulting Engineers, have conducted projects in India and worldwide which include port and harbour structures, cargo and passenger handling facilities, dredging, land reclamation, breakwaters and coast protection works, and even the passenger pier at the London Eye.



From left to right: Mr James Sutcliffe, Mr Gordon Rankine, Lord Karan Bilimoria CBE DL, Lord Digby Jones KT

### **Please tell us about Beckett Rankine.**

Serviced offices provide everything that is needed in a flexible way, saving time and capital expenditure. Most commercial offices are taken on a lease. In a fully serviced office, the fundamental difference is lease flexibility. You can come here for three months, and be gone. That is of course shorter than in a conventional lease. If an Indian company is in the UK to test the water, or vice versa, they have that flexibility.

We're a firm of specialist consultants, in ports, harbours and other marine areas. Here in London we have approaching 20 staff. We undertake UK projects along the Thames, around the coastline, and overseas some larger ports. For example in Qatar we planned one of the world's largest ports, which is now under construction. For LNG and other gas projects we have worked in Russia, Siberia, Khazakstan, and other places. But also in India. Beckett Rankine India Pvt Ltd, which we set up a year or so ago is fairly small at present, and we are just moving into new offices. But we have been working in India for much longer, largely from our London office. So it has been a long process, and we now have two senior staff in India along with two other eminent and trusted advisors.

# partnership in action

## Were they from your original team here?

No, all Indian. And two of these are people that I've got to know over the years. One I've known for over ten years. I was introduced to this very senior person in industry in India by an old colleague of his who was heading up a mission, a UKTI sponsored mission, through the Ports and Terminals Group. The leader of the mission introduced me to his friend and we struck it off, and our work in India began there, although it wasn't formal to start with. One of the things about India is that it takes time.

## Why did you now feel that it was time to start Beckett Rankine India Pvt Ltd?

We see that India is a market that is growing enormously. We want to be there on the ground, to take part in this. We see that there is a requirement for infrastructure of all types, ports being one of them. That is one aspect. The other aspect is that it is very difficult to recruit good staff in the UK, in engineering specialisms. And so we feel that it is a good strategic move to build up our office in India, so that we can work on India projects, but with that resource we can also carry out projects in the UK and other places in the world.

## There are very many skilled engineering graduates in India?

Yes. There is a large, large number. And of course, everywhere you go it is always difficult to find good people, but in India there are many to choose from.

## How is your company structured in India?

It's a subsidiary of our UK operation. Through our two advisors, we have undertaken a fairly intensive recruiting exercise over the last two or three years, and we have now got the two senior staff in place. We took a lot of time and trouble getting these two people who are very well respected and senior in their industry, which we thought was very important.

## Were the advisors that you used, or the methods that they used, crucial to finding that quality of person?

Yes, absolutely the case, because this has actually happened by word of mouth. We didn't have a blanket advertising campaign, but I think a lot of things happen in India, perhaps a little differently to how they do here, by people knowing someone and then knowing someone else. And then a lot of phone calls are made, and we find out who the right kind of person is, who not only has the skills that we need, but also the character, in the way they work, and obviously you need people who are trustworthy and you can get on with. By having advisors on the ground that we know that we can trust, we know they can find this out. So it leads onto getting the right people.

## How did you find those advisors?

As I say, the first one was introduced through a UKTI sponsored Ports and Terminals Group trade mission. The second one is someone that he had known for a long time.

# partnership in action

## How did you manage regulatory issues in setting up Beckett Rankine India Pvt Ltd?

It was very long winded and time consuming. But as we haven't been in an enormous rush to set up, that hasn't been a problem. I think if you were trying to set up in a rush, you'd probably have to have some high level advisors to help you. And there are a lot of forms to be filled in, and approvals for directors, and various things like that. But local accountants and local lawyers understand that.

## Within Mumbai?

Yes.

## And did you find service providers who you were very impressed with?

Yes, we used fairly small firms, who are well known to our people there.

## In addition to the processes of crossing red tape and finding good staff, were there any difficulties that were unexpected, and how did you resolve them?

A lot of things are unexpected because you're not familiar with them. However, I can't think of anything unexpected that put us off.

## What would be the most important piece of advice that you would give about building business in India?

I think it's crucial to go out there and make some relationships with people, and gradually build on that, so that you will mainly be dealing with people that you can trust. Because there are a lot of people that you can't.

## Did you find any differences between the way that you would do business in India and the UK?

Yes, it is very much more an issue of developing relationships. For the type of work that we do, we tend to work more with the private sector than public sector. And I think we do have quite a difficulty with doing public sector work. There are quite a lot of opportunities in the public sector, which are advertised, and they go out to tender. But these tenders are difficult to respond to, as they require the many forms to be filled in in a particular way, and we have done that on quite a few occasions, and put forward a proposal, and although we're often told that we're the best proposal, the job is given to the lowest priced offer. Often the way that the tenders are advertised suggest that quality will be the winning factor; actually it isn't, it's price. But we find that the private sector which is fast emerging has a better understanding of the need for quality and how to judge the quality-price ratio.

## What are your goals for Beckett Rankine India Private Ltd in the next few years?

Our goal is really to expand and develop our office in Mumbai to such an extent that it is equivalent to the office that we have in London, in size and in capability. We want to have an absolute linkage and transfer of data and skills between both offices, so we can work as a unit together on projects worldwide.

# partnership in action

## **You were on the January 2008 delegation organised by UKTI and UKIBC. Would you recommend that companies join those events and delegations?**

It was very useful to be involved with something that has a high profile, like that. In going there, with high profile people, we managed to organise quite a few meetings with other people that I'd previously met. And that is very useful, because they can see that we are part of something that British Government is doing together with business, and it gives a little bit more gravitas to what we're doing. So we think it's useful.

## **How have you found that being a British company has affected the way Indian companies see you?**

I think going into this you do really have to pick up the local flavour of how people do work. In India you'll find that everyone is a businessman and that everyone has business interests. This means that people who work in one area also know a lot, and know a lot of other people, in other areas. It's quite common for a company to not necessarily focus just on their main line of work. For instance, in the ports sector we found that pharmaceutical companies, or telecom companies, suddenly end up owning ports, which at first they don't know about. This has complications because they may see us as just another business which they're going to make money on, and they don't understand the nuances of how our experience can help them.

## **How successful have projects been so far in India?**

We've had very successful projects. We did a lot of the original planning for the expansion of the existing minor port at Krishnapatnam to accommodate coal carriers principally for delivery of coal for power generation. We worked for the sponsoring organisation who picked up the concession to develop and plan the port. Following that they sold out to someone else, and the plans are now being put into place so that the port can go ahead and be constructed. Other of projects include planning jetties for handling ro-ro ferries and advising on a jetty to accommodate large numbers of dry bulk carriers with an approach extending over 2km out into the Gulf of Cambay, Gujarat.

## **Have you found that following successful projects in India, more companies will pick up and take notice of you?**

I think it's very important to look for worldwide experience of projects, as we've had. In some cases we've had people come into the office to talk about potential projects because we know quite a lot about Andhra Pradesh, or Gujarat, or other specific places we've worked in, because India is a gigantic place, and although we're only involved with the coastal states, they are very different in the way that projects are developed.

## **What do you predict for infrastructure developments in India in the coming years?**

Lots of improvement and growth. As it is, it's desperately needed, and a lot of people have realised this for some time, and it's just beginning to come through. We're seeing the roads are being developed, telecoms have been developed, power is very important and that's been lagging behind, and ports, which is what we're interested in – there are a few ports which have been developed, but there are so many others which need to be developed. The ports need to be brought up to the standard of ports in many other places in the world to enable the efficient import and export of the increasing cargo volumes that will drive India's gigantic growth over the next few years.

# partnership in action

## Key facts on infrastructure growth in India

- There are plans to implement 276 port projects valued at £6.3 billion.
- £4.5bn of Government money is earmarked to upgrade 25 airports.
- 100 per cent FDI is permissible for the development of all greenfield and brownfield airports.
- £27bn of Government money is earmarked for roads and highways development.
- The entire road and highways network has been declared an industry allowed to commercially borrow.
- India has the largest road network in the world aggregating 3.3 million km.

**Beckett Rankine**

[www.beckettrankine.com](http://www.beckettrankine.com)

**270 Vauxhall Bridge Road**

**Westminster**

**London**

**SW1V 1BB**

**UK**

**+44 (0)20 7834 7267**