

Kazakhstan under construction

A series of infrastructure upgrades means the time is right for British companies to get involved

EMERGING MARKETS

KARA SEGEDIN

Construction in Kazakhstan is booming and the opportunities are there for UK companies. Earnings from the country's oil and mineral wealth combined with poor infrastructure have created plenty of room for firms to enter the building market.

More than a hundred UK firms or joint ventures are active in Kazakhstan and many Kazakh firms look to Britain for financial services expertise and funding.

As well as spending £33 billion on developing the country's three main oil and gas fields,



The country is spending billions on building projects and upgrades

Kazakhstan is upgrading 2,800 km of road between Russia and China at a cost of £4.3bn; upgrading three oil refineries for £4.4bn; and building and modernising five power

stations and upgrading the national grid at a cost of £2.6bn.

"Our expertise in building, design, consultancy, project management and training seems the most obvious fit for life out here," says Bernie Wilson, head of UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) in the capital Astana.

He says the opportunities for UK companies are likely to come from high-end and technically challenging projects and the supply of advanced building materials, products or processes.

Do your research

Ed Cooke is a construction partner at DLA Piper advising on development and construction in Russia

and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Mr Cooke says while there is a bilateral investment treaty between Kazakhstan and the UK, understanding the country's political, legislative and cultural background is very important.

British Expertise director Nigel Peters says a range of UK companies would benefit from working in Kazakhstan including consultants, architects, consulting engineers, construction managers and suppliers.

"Do your research before you jump in. Understand the market, look at what projects are being talked about and visit the country," says Mr Peters.

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The country, on the border of both Asia and Europe, has an enticing mixture of rapid growth and weak infrastructure, and boasts massive growth in oil and gas sectors. This is your chance to discuss real projects and pitch your company to handpicked developers, clients and other key players. Bucking the global recession, Kazakhstan's GDP growth last year was about 6 per cent, with a construction spend of around £8 billion. Opportunities for UK companies exist in many sectors that require significant upgrading, especially transport, power and telecommunications.

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