

City of Wuhan Delegates Take Lessons from Birmingham

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The University of Birmingham has, for the last two months, played host to 22 senior government officials from the City of Wuhan.

The Chinese delegates have been spending time with academics at the School of Public Policy, in a bid to learn more about the UK's public administration.

The six-week visit involved a series of lectures from the School's academics, as well as visiting experts, on aspects of UK public service delivery. And the group went beyond the theory to see UK structures in practice in public sector organisations throughout the West Midlands.

Highlights included a visit to an eco-friendly school in Worcestershire which has a unique ground source heating system and which recycles rainwater. The group also visited a Care Home as well as a secondary school where Chinese is on the curriculum. The delegates also underwent media training at the University's Media Centre.

Eileen Dunstan, Director of the Wuhan Programme, said the relationship has a two-way benefit: "This is the second year that the School of Public Policy has hosted a study visit from the city of Wuhan and it's been a huge success.

"One of the greatest strengths of the programme is that in the process of getting to know and teaching the delegates, School of Public Policy staff are themselves learning not only about public management, but also about Chinese language and culture. And overarching every aspect of the programme is the forging of academic, professional and personal friendships that will continue long into the future."

In their final week here, the group will visit Warwickshire County Council to learn more about the tourism industry, Severn Trent Water, and meet with the Birmingham Youth Offending Team.

After their intensive, fact-finding mission, Wuhan will go head to head with Birmingham in a friendly seven-aside football match on Thursday 23rd August.

Mr Xiong Zhizhong, Director of the Wuhan Arbitration Committee Administration Office and lead delegate of the Wuhan group says the second trip has been a huge success. He comments:

"The University of Birmingham is one of the world's leading universities. The lectures were excellent and the facilities are impressive. Everybody feels very positive about the programme."

And Eileen says that it hasn't just been about sharing best practice in public service delivery. "Many of the staff at the School have taken the opportunity to master a few key phrases in Mandarin, eliciting appreciative smiles and nods (and one or two puzzled looks) from the delegates.

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