network

The official magazine of the UK Chapter of Meetings Professionals International

Summer 2007

UK CHAPTER MPI

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Welcome

Welcome to a new look Network magazine. Apart from a face lift, the magazine is now bigger and contains more articles on different aspects of meetings procurement which we think will be of interest to meeting planners and suppliers alike.

For example, in this issue we have an in-depth article about the greening of meetings and travel by Bernard Harrop, together with the views on the subject of MPI UK President Peter Haigh. It seems that you can't open a newspaper or turn on the TV these days without being bombarded with various aspects of the environmental debate.

Of course, for the corporate market in particular and the meetings industry in general the real issues are whether the supplier will ever put sustainability before profit and will the customer accept higher prices for a more responsible meetings programme. Only time will tell.

We hope that you enjoy the new look Network, and that you'll take the time to tell us what you'd like to see covered in forthcoming issues by e-mailing me at mark.harris@the-tin.com.

Mark Harris Editor

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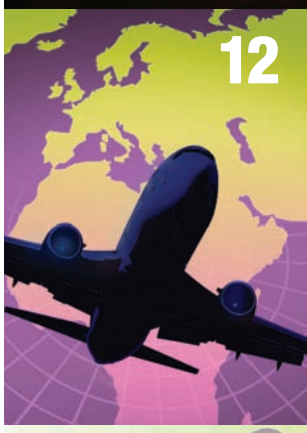

UK Executive Board Members

Peter Haigh	*President*
Sofia Vandaele	*President Elect*
Pete Brady	*Immediate Past President*
Paul Cook	*Membership Chair*
Anthony Hyde	*Deputy Membership Chair*
Andrew Latta	*Education Chair*
Richard Parker	*Deputy Education Chair*
Damian Hutt	*Marketing Chair*
Carina Bauer	*Board Member, Sponsorship*
Mandy Torrens	*Special Events Chair*
Fiona Pelham	*Deputy Special Events Chair*
Emma Hood	*Treasurer*
Erica Keogan	*Byelaws*

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MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

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From the President

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Peter Haigh
President, MPI UK Chapter

The 'greening' of the meetings industry is a hot topic right now. Corporate Social Responsibility (or CSR) is becoming increasingly important to the meeting planner, for two main reasons.

Firstly, companies are becoming more focussed on the need to demonstrate their duty to care towards employees, and to society in general. Five years ago CSR policies were little known outside the PLC as CSR reporting was a shareholder requirement. Today, the impact of corporate manslaughter legislation, the mounting evidence of climate change and the marketability of a more caring corporate image have turned the CSR bandwagon into a juggernaut.

The result is increasing adoption of formal CSR policies, with a direct impact on companies' meetings and travel programmes. Meeting planners are now being asked to prove there is a need to hold the meeting in the first place. What's the return on investment? Are there any alternatives to the face-to-face meeting?

This trend is particularly evident in the incentives market, where companies are now questioning the validity of whisking high performers to exotic destinations whilst carrying out redundancies in other parts of the organisation.

This is where environmental and sustainability issues come in. What are we doing abut the carbon emissions generated by running conferences both at home and overseas? As our guest writer Bernard Harrop explains in his feature elsewhere in this issue, it isn't just air travel that generates significant levels of CO_2.

Video conferencing, web casts and greater use of internal meetings space are just three examples of how companies are conducting meetings in a more responsible and sustainable way. However let's not kid ourselves, for the benefits of a face-to-face meeting are still considerable. It's just a matter of identifying those meetings which require face to face contact, and those which do not.

Learning, networking and motivation will – in my view – continue to require on the spot human interaction. However, project meetings, for example, don't always do so, and many organisations are looking at the alternatives available to them, not least being technology, so that they can communicate with colleagues in multiple locations without always bringing them together in one place.

I hope you enjoy the first issue of our new look Network magazine, and look forward to seeing you at one of our next MPI UK meetings.

MPI UK Events

June 2007
Thursday 21 June 2007 London
Annual Gala Dinner Awards
The annual awards for leaders in MPI and the Meetings Industry, recognising planners, suppliers and venues. A key social event in the MPI Calendar for the Summer provides an excellent networking opportunity.

October 2007
London
MPI UK Annual Conference
This year the UK Chapter is producing a one day conference, responding to member's requirements identified in the recent research. The programme will be developed by an expert conference researcher, Sam Huby and take place during National Meetings Week (15-19 October).

To register and see more details visit www.mpiuk.org

MPI UK announces 2007/8 Board

The following is the approved Board of Directors of the UK Chapter for the Slate Year 2007/2008

Board Position	Name	Category	Company
President	Paul Cook	Supplier	Clarity Event Insurance
Immediate Past President	Peter Haigh	Supplier	Preferred Hotel Group
Treasurer	Pete Brady	Planner	BusinessMeetings ASP Ltd
Marketing & Communications Chair	Mandy Torrens	Planner	EIBTM – Reed Travel Exhibitions
Marketing Deputy Chair	Fiona Pelham	Planner	Organise This Ltd
Membership Chair	Anthony Hyde	Supplier	Barbican
Membership Deputy Chair	Sue Etherington	Supplier	Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
Education Chair	Damian Hutt	Planner	Compelling Conferences
Education Deputy Chair	Jane Hague	Supplier	ExCel London
Byelaws	Emma Hood	Supplier	Coverex International
Events Chair	Sean Denny	Planner	Ovation
Sponsorship Chair *	Reg Athwal	Planner	RAW Group
PR **	Richard Parker	Planner	Pfizer Inc
Board Member	Tracey Halliwell	Supplier	Visit London

** Reporting to the President: Responsible for co-ordinating all sponsorship activities*
*** Reporting to Marketing and Communications Chair: Responsible for Media and Press*

AGM Report

The UK Chapter AGM took place on Monday 5th March and was kindly hosted by Visit London in their splendid offices overlooking Tower Bridge. It was a very low key AGM with no contentious issues raised.

MPI UK President Peter Haigh reviewed the year to date highlighting the several educational events that have taken place so far, the successful Christmas Lunch and recent networking event at the Barbican.

The appointment of a new Secretariat, Mary Lockwood, in January has been a great boon to the smooth running of the Chapter.

The President also recognised the generous support of the Chapter sponsors including Visit London, EIBTM and Davis Tanner. He also referenced the presence the UK Chapter has had at various trade shows over the past few months such as World Travel Market, Business Travel Show and CONFEX, which has helped raise the profile of MPI and generated many new member enquiries.

The Nominations for the Board for the next slate year were announced.

With the MPI European Professional Education Conference coming to London in April 2008 there is a great opportunity to expand the UK membership substantially and she was looking forward to ensuring the UK Chapter worked closely with the Host Committee.

The Financial report for the year was presented by the Treasurer and there being no other business the AGM was adjourned.

Culture Active Tool

The **CultureActive© Tool** can be accessed through MPI's global website. Simply select *Career Resources* in the left hand menu and then select the tool.

The MPI **CultureActive© Tool** is a Web-based, stand-alone cross-cultural analysis and briefing tool that is now available exclusively for MPI members.

MPI UK Chapter 2007 Incentive Scheme - *Reap the Rewards*

The title of MPI UK's 2007 incentive scheme is Reap the Rewards. Here, MPI UK's President-elect Paul Cook explains the rationale behind the initiative.

Why have an Incentive scheme?

We passionately believe that the more involved you become in MPI the more you will gain from your membership. We know that you will develop new skills, new networks and create new opportunities. All of this is at the very heart of MPI and we want you to really gain from your time as an MPI member.

How do I win the challenge?

You simply have to accumulate more points than any other member. Board and International members are excluded from taking part in the scheme. Work placement activity for MPI is also excluded from scoring points within the scheme.

How can I score points?

You can score points through any of the following. Points are shown beside each activity.

- Attending a MPI UK Chapter educational event – *5 points*
- Bringing a guest to a MPI UK Chapter educational event – *5 points*
- Introducing a new membership lead to the Chapter – *5 points*
- Converting a lead to becoming a new member – *20 points*
- Working at an MPI stand at a trade show – *10 points per hour*
- Writing an article for any of the MPI publications – *15 points*
- Writing a paper on subjects as requested by MPI – *15 points*
- Active participation of a non-Board member in a team for the UK Chapter – *25 points*
- Outstanding contribution of an individual as awarded by the UK Chapter – *25 points*

What are the Prizes on offer?

1st Prize – Place to MPI World Congress 2008 (includes economy flights from the UK, registration and accommodation)

2nd Prize – Place to European Congress 2008 (includes travel, registration and accommodation)

When does the scheme finish?

The current scheme finishes on 31st December 2007, and the prize winners will be announced in the New Year of 2008.

Who can I contact if I have a question?

The scheme will be driven through the MPI UK website as we want to play our part in helping the environment – and the points you've earned will be updated there regularly.

You can contact any of the membership team but Sue Etherington is the Champion of the scheme and she can be contacted at sue.etherington@qeiicc.co.uk. Sue will be happy to answer any of your queries.

2006 Incentive Scheme Results

Winners

1st Ashley Boniface	Compelling Conferences	*World Congress Place*
2nd Carla Snajder(Antonio)	Student	*European Congress Place*
3rd Sue Etherington	Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre	*Weekend for 2 at The Park Plaza Riverbank*

MPI & American Express Study: *FutureWatch 2007*

The fifth annual FutureWatch survey undertaken by MPI in association with American Express into the worldwide meetings industry is now available. Based on surveys completed by 1,443 (mainly US-based) meeting planners, the report provides a fascinating insight into global trends.

You can download a copy:
www.mpiuk.org/knowledgebank/futurewatch2007.pdf

MPI UK Meetings Survey results

At the beginning of 2007, MPI UK conducted an in-depth survey amongst meetings planners based in the UK and Europe. The group surveyed included both MPI UK members and non-members, with the aim of the research being to find out a little more about them, their responsibilities, concerns and challenges.

Just fewer than 40% of respondees were MPI UK members, with 27% being PCOs or independent events organisers and 26% being corporate planner/buyers. As figure 1 shows, participants' level of seniority within their organisations was high, whilst figure 2 demonstrates the sizes of those organisations.

Fig. 1 **Level within Organisation**

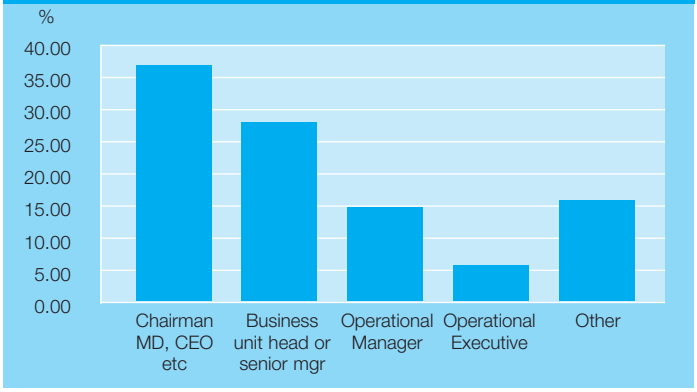
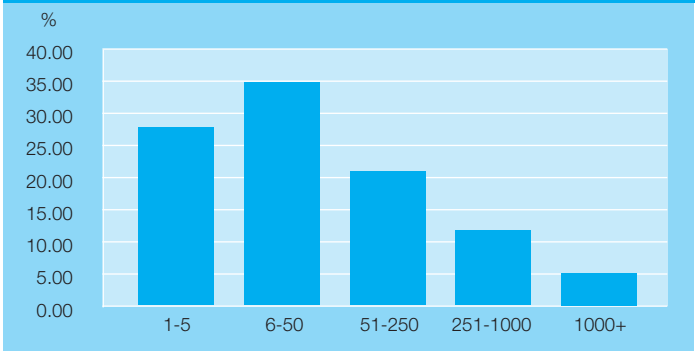


Fig. 2 **Employees in Organisation**



54.5% of survey respondents spend more than half their working time on events, which is also the primary responsibility for 36% of respondents. In terms of the types of event organised by our survey respondents, client events ranked highest (68%) followed by workshops & seminars (63%), dinners, gala's or award ceremonies (60.7%) and large international conferences (56.3%).

As far as personal involvement with the meeting planning process is concerned, venue sourcing is the most common activity, with 75% of respondents either carrying out 'a lot' or 'quite a bit' of this activity. Supplier arrangements came next (72%, followed by evaluation and meeting format (both 66%).

For meeting planners, the most important issues right now are providing compelling content (48% and ranked #1 issue), project management (46%) and measuring event outcome against objectives (44%). Interestingly however, only 31% of respondents are involved with any form of needs assessment or audience research.

Top 10 Important issues

	Issue	%
1	Providing compelling content and speakers for your event	48%
2	Project management for event organisers	46%
3	Measuring event outcomes against objectives	44%
4	Understanding and negotiating supplier contracts	44%
5	Getting the maximum marketing benefit from your events	42%
6	Choosing suppliers	42%
7	Venue sourcing	40%
8	Accommodation and rooms management	39%
9	Health and Safety	38%
10	Marketing of your events	37%

Our survey did not produce a league table of challenges facing meeting planners in 2007, but a list including availability, Budgets, client demands, communicating value, competition, contracts, creativity/innovation, data management, deadlines, delivering great events every time, locating venues/staff/suppliers & best practice examples, green Issues, measuring ROI and much more besides.

On the other hand accessing new information and self-education are perceived as being very easy, with learning from their peers being highlighted by 55% of respondees as being most useful in this respect, although only 34% do so in practice. 50% of respondents glean their learning from magazines like Network.

Main responsibilities

davies tanner
visit LONDON
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Fig. 3 Event types

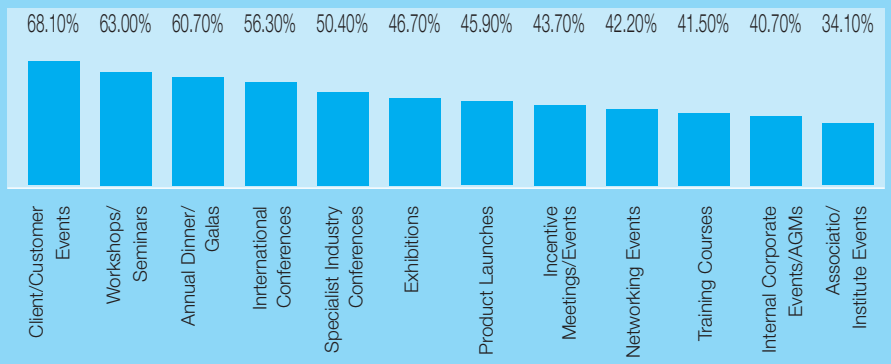
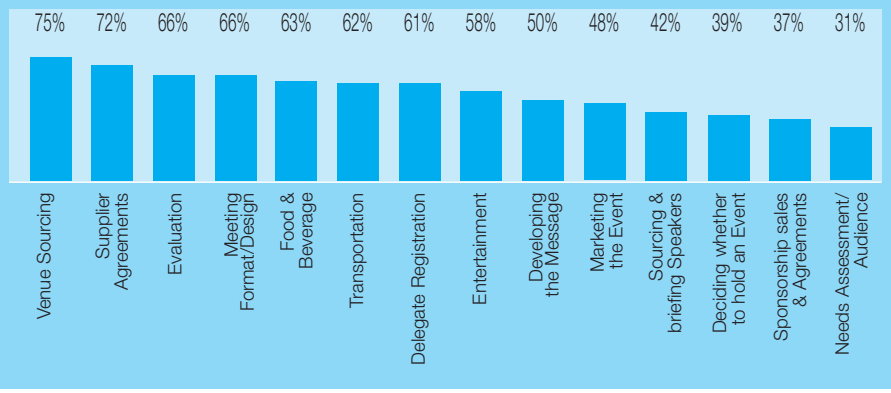


Fig. 4 Key activities



The survey showed that there are a number of challenges for MPI UK to deal with, although membership of the association scored highly in providing information to assist planners in doing their jobs (39%) and particularly in helping members' understanding of the industry and in developing personal contacts (55%).

The research provided a valuable snapshot of meeting planners' views at this time and in forth-coming issues of Network we will be outlining how the association in the UK will be tackling the challenges it faces.

Overseas events

Our survey respondents are no strangers to overseas event management either, with 63% expecting the number of events they organise outside the UK to increase in 2007. 35% handle events for between 100 – 300 delegates at the top end and 56% for events for less than 20 delegates at the opposite end of the scale.

You and MPI UK

The majority of survey respondents were in agreement that association membership should provide a forum for learning, and in the closing section of the research we focused on perceptions of MPI UK in particular.

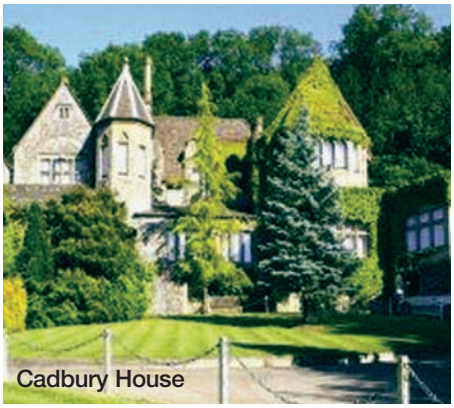
Top 5: Do you agree that an events industry association should provide the following:

Channel	*Strongly Agree*	*Agree*
A forum for members to network & learn from each other	53%	42%
Guidance and strategic issues	36%	51%
Help to gain general business skills	12%	49%
Help in reaching new clients	19%	49%
Help to gain skills specific to event organising	38%	48%

What is your experience with MPI?

	Strongly agree	*Agree*	*Neither agree nor disagree*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*
MPI provides all the professional development opportunities I need to develop my career	6%	13%	55%	21%	6%
I have made many good professional and personal friends within the MPI community	**19%**	**31%**	**35%**	**13%**	**2%**
I frequently use personal MPI contacts to get information I need in my job	10%	29%	29%	31%	2%
MPI keeps me informed about everything I need to know about the meetings industry	**7%**	**30%**	**35%**	**22%**	**6%**
MPI is very attuned to the particular needs of my country's market	4%	20%	50%	19%	7%
MPI is too USA oriented	**32%**	**40%**	**19%**	**9%**	**0%**
MPI has enabled me to understand better and develop personal contacts in the international meetings industry	22%	33%	26%	19%	0%

New openings & refurbishments


Cadbury House

Park Inn

Church House

Cadbury House Classic Hotel & Country Club, Bristol Airport/Congressbury

Cadbury House Hotel & Country Club is a new 4 star, 72-bedroom boutique style hotel built around a beautiful 18th Century House. Cadbury House Hotel is located 5 miles from Bristol Airport and 13 miles from Bristol City Centre and opens its doors in May 2007.

Whilst the hotel is under construction, the original 18th century main house has already been transformed into a state-of-the-art, stylish meeting and conference venue, hosting meetings and events for up to 350 delegates. Adjacent to Cadbury House is a stunning leisure complex and Spa.

Reconstruction at Reading University

The University of Reading is currently undergoing several major construction projects to improve and extend its conference facilities.

The new Carrington Building, due for completion in June 2007, will incorporate several new state-of-the-art meeting rooms. The Carrington Building is located immediately adjacent to the Palmer Building, the most popular conference facility on the campus and will extend the number of break out rooms available.

The new ICMA Centre extension and Business School will incorporate a new 275-seat lecture theatre, library facilities, multi media area, breakout rooms and café. It is due for completion in 2008.

The Park Inn Heathrow opens new conference centre

April 2007 sees the opening one of the largest conference centres in the UK. The Park Inn Heathrow's new conference centre can accommodate up to 700 delegates in 2,000 square metres of space. The facility will offer nine conference and meeting rooms and 45 break out rooms.

The Vale Hotel to open Conference Centre

Vale Hotel, Golf and Spa Resort, near Cardiff, has unveiled plans for a summer opening of their new £1million conference centre which will link the existing hotel with its leisure club.

The new centre, covering almost 12,000 sq-ft will include a main conference room to seat up to 550 theatre style, with back projection. The room, with natural daylight, will subdivide into smaller sections. It will be self-contained with its own restaurant and bar and will be equipped with the latest media presentation facilities.

Facelift for Eynsham Hall

Eynsham Hall Conference and Training Centre, at North Leigh near Oxford is to undergo a multi-million pound refurbishment which will result in a brand new conference centre and an additional 26 bedrooms. At the same time, the existing 144 bedrooms will be refurbished to a modern, 4 star standard.

The largest suite will seat up to 400 theatre style and will subdivide into two separate sections and will be supported by a range of syndicate rooms. Other works include linking the bedroom blocks to the Hall via underground walkway. Work is expected to start towards the end of 2007 and will take approximately 12 months to complete. Eynsham Hall will remain open throughout.

Intercontinental London Park Lane re-opens

The Intercontinental London Park Lane has opened its meetings and event space after a £75m refurbishment. The new contemporary event space offers unrivalled facilities with an entire floor dedicated to meetings and events. The event space features natural daylight through floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Park Lane and the Royal Parks

New Conference Centre at the Paramount Walton Hall Hotel & Spa

Phase 2 of the £13.5 million investment programme at the Paramount Walton Hall Hotel and Spa was complete when the new Conference Centre opened on 2nd March. Overlooking the Victorian gardens, the self-contained Centre includes 12 meeting rooms seating between 14 and 75 delegates, plus its own restaurant, bar, lounge and reception area. 130 bedrooms adjoining the conference centre have also been fully refurbished.

Further refurbishment of the main house bedrooms, luxury suites and premium bedrooms is due for completion in June 2007, when the hotel will offer: 195 luxury bedrooms; 20 meeting rooms situated in the main house and conference centre able to accommodate between 4 and 150 delegates; three restaurants and two bars plus a leisure club with health and beauty facilities.

Church House Conference Centre, Westminster

Church House Conference Centre reopened in March following a twelve month refurbishment programme. Much of the work has been essential maintenance, except for one major change.
The fixed seating in the Assembly Hall was removed and the floor flattened which will result in a more flexible space in future.
The new Assembly Hall will accommodate 198 delegates classroom style, 372 banqueting style on rounds and up to 664 delegates theatre style, including the balcony.

Church House Conference Centre, which opened in the 1930's, is now a Grade 2 listed building. The Centre, with 19 meeting rooms in total, is equipped with the latest technology including ISDN, CAT 5 cabling, video conferencing and infra-red translation services.

Please send your nominations for new openings or refurbished venues for inclusion in the magazine to: maggy.sainsbury@the-tin.com

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New guide launched to inspire events on the River Thames

Visit London has joined forces with Silver Fleet – Woods River Cruises as focus turns to the Thames to lure even more event organisers to the capital.

The partnership culminates in the launch of a helpful guidebook - 'Your Guide to Organising Events on & around the River Thames' - targeting both international and domestic event and meeting planners.

The aim of the guide is to underline the stunning backdrop the Thames offers to event organisers, from Richmond all the way to Greenwich. The guide will feature venues from Novotel London West, British Airways London Eye and Somerset House, to Vinopolis, ExCeL London and The O2. It will provide invaluable information for event organisers on how to make the most of the river as well as offering some insightful case studies and itineraries.

Hospitality businesses risk hardship if they don't plan for UK smoking ban

UK hospitality businesses that fail to plan now for the new smoking ban risk closure and hardship, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP.

In its briefing paper 'Preparing for the impact of the smoking ban', the firm said businesses need to assess the smoking prevalence amongst customers and how smokers might change their behaviour following the ban.

Revenues and profit

David Trunkfield, head of leisure, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP Strategy said: "We have seen smoking prevalence ranging from 20% of customers to over 50%. But the big issue is how those smokers might alter their behaviour after the ban and the knock-on effect that might have on revenues and profit.

"The experience of existing smoking bans in other countries shows that some industries have seen revenues drop dramatically and have taken several years to recover to pre-ban levels. In fact, some individual businesses may never recover and may face closure."

Implementation dates for the smoking ban are: Wales April 2, Northern Ireland April 30 and England July 1.

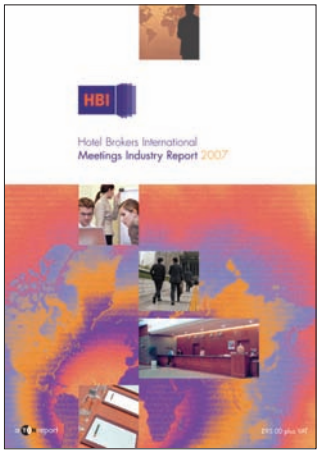
Trainline creates carbon emissions reporting

A carbon emissions reporting service has been established by online rail retailer TheTrainline. The scheme, available from March, aims to help businesses manage their carbon footprint.

It has been developed in response to growing demand from government and industry bodies for companies to reduce and off-set business travel carbon emissions, according to the company.

TheTrainline's externally validated mileage database calculates the amount of carbon dioxide generated by employee rail travel using an accredited DEFRA emissions standard. This information may then be requested as an added extra by corporate clients to be communicated to companies via monthly management information reports.

Annual report for meetings industry just published



Hotel Brokers International has just published the first-ever annual report for the UK meetings industry. The 140pp document contains trend information and in-depth articles on each of the key issues facing meeting planners such as venue rates, yield management and the consolidation of transient and meetings spend.

Compiled from interviews with leading buyers, suppliers and intermediaries, containing the latest statistics and bench-marking data, complemented by HBI's own research, this is a must-have for anyone seeking to purchase and control the purchase of meetings space more effectively.

The report is available to download, free of charge, or in printed form at a cost of £95.00 + VAT, at: http://www.hotelbrokers.co.uk/meetingsreport

by Mark Harris

What hotel consortia can do for the meetings planner

For many meetings planners – and procurement managers in particular – the inclusion of independent hotels in a corporate meetings programme is driven, not by a strategic overview of the organisation's accommodation requirements, but by historical usage or because a venue has that essential qualities to help achieve the organiser's objectives.

The perception that the inclusion of non-chain hotels reduces the potential for volume savings through consolidation into a select number of groups is one still peddled by some venue placement agents, although the development of increasingly sophisticated meetings technology in the form of venue databases and extranet sites have helped create a counter view.

In the UK there are a number of consortia representing hotels, specialist venues and conference centres. In the case of independently-owned hotels, these consortia provide their members with a collective sales presence into intermediaries and corporate segments of the meetings markets. The best known consortium is probably Best Western, but a new and rapidly growing rival has emerged in the form of Classic British Hotels which represents over 50 top three, four and five star venues in locations across the country.

Classic British Hotels CEO Len Louis set up the business six years ago but has been in the hotel industry for over 25 years, having joined Allied Lyons hotel division from the FMCG sector before moving on to Jarvis Hotels and Pegasus Solutions via Best Western. But the company's name is not one familiar to many meeting planners. So does every Classic British Hotel provide meeting facilities?

"It depends on their location" says Len Louis. "As a group we probably only have two properties that don't have meeting facilities. Our strategy is that where there are corporate locations we will always have meeting rooms available" However Louis is a subscriber to the view that location is less relevant in the meetings sector than in business travel. "A venue is chosen on a whole range of criteria not related specifically to location alone, such as leisure facilities, transport links and so on."

Louis believes that the meetings industry, from a venue perspective, has changed very little in the last 30 years. "The content of the delegate package hasn't really changed. You've still got the same items being offered to conference organisers. In the majority of Classic British properties we either include unique, local touches, or provide a higher quality to that available in the market.

A crucial barrier to be overcome is planners' perceptions of the difficulties in working with consortia compared to a hotel group, such as a lack of consistency in terms of cancellations and booking policies, getting all the consortia's properties to participate in a particular programme,

or getting those problems resolved because no central point takes responsibility. So how can an organisation like Classic British persuade the corporate market that it isn't easier to work with centralised groups?

"We try to operate as a very cohesive group and provide centralised solutions to fragmented issues" says Louis. "So when we are dealing with agents we deliver the same sort of central purchasing power that a group would provide in negotiations. Our members are all exclusive to our organisation, they can't belong to any others and we speak on their behalf."

"We work at the highest level with the agents so our members are competing with the major groups on an even playing field. And because they're independent, have rosette awards for food, their own flavour and style, in many cases they offer better value to group hotels in many key locations. We get a lot of RFP's coming through on the conference side, and our strategy is very much to have one hand round the agent with the other round the client. It is by working as a tri-partite partnership that we have seen some major results."

The subsuming of meeting spend by procurement functions is an important trend in the meetings market right now, however Louis does not believe that the separation of accommodation and conference booking accounts between different agents is yet widespread.

"There are still quite a number of companies that keep their conference and accommodation expenditure separate, often because the corporate wants to compare the performance and rate delivery of competing agents. To us it doesn't matter because we work so closely on both sides of the fence."

Standards within independent hotels can vary wildly, so how does a representation monitor standards "We work to AA star ratings and apply standards that are above the AA's average. We also have an independent company that operates a Mystery Guest programme in all our hotels. If a hotel falls below these standards, then it's not one for Classic British. An independent hotel is often very parochial in terms of its pricing structure, its way of thinking and focus. So when they join us we show them the bigger picture." says Louis.

The theory goes that independent hotels lose out because they cannot afford to match the chains' level of investment in meetings technology. Within Classic British this decision remains vested at property-level. "One of our properties has tiered theatre seating and has built everything into that room so any organiser gets all the equipment they will

need. All our properties have the basics but production companies setting up a conference or event prefer to use their own equipment anyway. With more sophisticated equipment hotels will hire it in. It is not always a good idea to carry a lot of heavy equipment because of the maintenance and speed of change issues. What is key is the sound proofing, lighting, WiFi, and other items to support the technology hired in"

The pressure on meeting planners to quantify the return on investment from a meeting can work to a venue's benefit according to Classic British Operations' Director Kevin Tattum.

"The use of non-residential, serviced office style accommodation for meetings, and companies' greater awareness of the benefits from using their own office space for meetings has forced external venues to sharpen their creativity and thinking. However there is still a good business return on taking people offsite, and putting them into something with bit more of an experience to it rather than being in an uninspired faceless office which could be absolutely anywhere. Organisers find that they need a combination of both business and social interaction, which a good external venue inspires and allows you to get your people into the right mindset."

More and more meeting planners are either using an agency or doing their own research and very often they'll stumble across things on the web and then take it from there to the next stage of actually wanting to hold a conference. There are also many specialist programmes and things for conference organisers that people use. So does a hotel consortium react to a fragmented market place any differently than a hotel chain?

Not according to Len Louis. "Our strategy is three-fold. Firstly to achieve preferred status with all the major conference agencies so that the major companies who are using these agencies will actually use our properties; second to maintain a strong, and easy to use website so that planners can find our properties, and thirdly to work with all major third party websites targeting the conference market."

Louis foresees the hotel business emulating the airline sector. "I believe that the real difference between hotels will be the level of pampering and service from the time they arrive in the car park to the booking for dinner in the restaurant. The less the guest has to do, and the less hassle endured in doing so will allow the hotel to score highly in the comfort experience. Conference and events organisers will choose between what I call high quality no frills products, where there is a good, but limited service, whilst at the other end there will be hotels where the service elements will be more comprehensive, and will come at a higher price."

"The middle market is already disappearing and if you look at the way people shop, they either go for the no fills route or the full everything. Like the airline business, lead-in times for meetings are getting shorter and planning periods are being squeezed accordingly. Meeting venues have to be able to respond to this and to provide off-the-shelf packages to planners."

But is it working? Len Louis: "the corporate customer understands brands, their positioning in the market and what they can get from that brand. So we've got to get across the quality and uniqueness of the property, endorsed by the Classic British hallmark, to add value to their meet and stay. For example, food is, in my view, best in independent hotels because there again within groups there's a lot of standardisation and corporate customers today are looking for that little bit extra. We've got to convince them that the consistency of standards within our group will meet their objectives because if you can guarantee quality, consistency and delivery we will be ahead of the groups."

CSR and the Greening of Meetings

People will look back at the turn of the 21st century as the start of a new era in business travel. And if one accepts that the function of business travel is the facilitation of meetings, the meetings industry will inevitably also embrace this new age for, in an increasingly litigious and stakeholder led environment, companies need to ensure that staff welfare is of top priority.

A culture of regulatory controls aimed at consumer welfare is upon us. Alongside the proliferation of travel taxes and charges, governments at local and regional level continue to increase the level of regulation on companies with regard to their social responsibilities. Companies must now view 'value' for its stakeholders in many different forms: direct and indirect, tangible and intangible. Companies can overcome these obstacles by ensuring that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is on the CEO's agenda and is a core element of overall company strategy.

Duty of care

Companies who practice CSR undertake a duty of care towards their travellers' safety, security and health, as well as the needs of the environment and society at large; they do not procure and maintain a business travel policy with economic cost as the sole measure. Now more than any time previously, providers are now beginning to tackle the theme of responsibility at a corporate level.

The consequences of these changes for corporations purchasing business travel, hotel accommodation and meetings services are huge. It is no longer acceptable to employees or shareholders to disregard the impact of social consequences of a company's activities. Failure to recognise this change can have dire consequences on a corporation for both its stakeholders and shareholders. They will eventually pay the price in economic and reputation terms. CSR covers 4 major areas; duty of care, environment, traveller health, safety & security. Duty of Care is employers' common law obligation to protect the physical and psychological health and safety of their employees. This common requirement is reinforced by occupational health and safety legislation which varies by country.

In the UK, the new manslaughter bill will create a new offence of corporate man-slaughter which will make it easier for companies who have shown little or no regard for the safety of their workers or members of the public to be prosecuted for a specific and serious criminal offence The 'way' an organisation is organised and managed is crucial. This new law makes very clear the level of responsibility a company has for its employees.

The UK Government makes it clear that all managers within an organisation have the responsibility to ensure proper practices and procedures are in place to take appropriate 'care' of employees. For example: do you select venues based on price or do you actively take into account the needs and welfare of employees? Do you scrutinize a venue's record on factors such as hygiene, doctor on call, infection control, cleaning services, air conditioning, water condition, fire regulations, electrical safety and so on? Do you check that your suppliers have effective 'duty of care' policies?

Staying in well known branded hotel chains doesn't mean you can assume everything is ok. How effective are their control practices? How often do they do independent assessments? Can they guarantee full 'duty of care' enforcement at every location? An organisation could face litigation from affected employees should a meeting be affected by an unforeseen incident, so it has to show that it places the welfare of employees first and foremost.

Environmental concerns

The biggest single challenge facing business travel, other than terrorism, is the issue of greenhouse gas emissions and sustainability. Companies have been slow to recognise the impact their journeys have on the environment. Failure to respond to these issues will undoubtedly affect the way that shareholders and stakeholders value a company's performance. We have seen environmental episodes repeatedly affect the share performance of large companies. This is the defining moment for a serious approach to this subject with the introduction of effective business practices.

All venues – hotels, specialist conference centres and the like - are a significant source of CO_2 emissions. According to data provided by the UK environment agency, DEFRA, the greenhouse gas emissions (CO_2) from staying one night in a hotel is the same as travelling by air from London to Manchester (average CO_2 per person using DEFRA estimates).

The meetings industry has certainly started to address the issue, creating a 'Green Agenda' during the 2006 National Meetings Week. Meetings certainly generate a lot of waste, not least from partially-consumed F&B, but although most meeting RFP's now ask CSR-related questions, as Emma Bainbridge, Director of events at BI told Business Travel World in October 2006, "there is not a lot of demand, but it is incredibly important. When people send us a request for information or proposal there is a box asking about CSR, but even when clients tick it they don't pursue that line."

The majority of corporates' RFPs (Request For Proposal) now require suppliers to detail their environmental and CSR policies.

Lisa Lernoux-Dock is Sales Director at Chewton Glen Hotel, Spa & Country Club, rated 8th in the top 25 spas in the world and where meetings account for 25-30% of the business. "We're at the top end of the luxury market, and initially there might have been some thought of a conflict between green issues and complete indulgence. People might not want anyone telling them to reuse their towels or something like that. But both individual guests and groups are much more conscious of environmental and Corporate Social Responsibility issues now, so we're trying to embrace that."

Chewton Glen is hoping to achieve gold status in the Green Tourism Business Scheme, a self assessment-based scheme rating small B&Bs to large luxury hotels on everything from dripping taps to large recycling facilities.

"It's interesting to see that we're already doing things right. We source food locally as much as possible. The back of our menus shows where it's from. Initially, that was done because of the quality, but it also ties in perfectly with environmental concerns, such as transportation. In a lot of areas the five-star aspect marries perfectly with environmental considerations. We've found that so many things are compatible with our ethos of quality and luxury. They're not in conflict, they can support each other. It isn't just about using your towel twice!"

Chewton Glen has for some time been planting more trees to encourage wildlife, and the gardener has created an environmental walking tour of the grounds. The hotel has also formed a CSR committee, while increased community involvement includes supporting training schemes in the area and focusing on three local charities a year chosen by staff. Lisa Lernoux-Dock says: "This has positive workplace effects and acts as team-building within the hotel. You can't think of this as a fad.

You've got to be prepared to be in it for the long term. It's amazing how many things aren't that difficult to do or would add a value and are not going to be onerous to the guests."

Given that the statement 'the best way to make meetings green is not to have them at all' is naïve, companies should put in place an environmental policy and programme with supporting targets to reduce CO_2 emissions. Managing the environment is a real business issue. Putting into practice an effective environmental programme will undoubtedly result in an effective environmental programme, lower costs and real savings to the bottom line.

Traveller welfare

Traveller health and well-being should be a constant concern. The total financial implications to a company of the health of the workforce are increasingly being recognised. Current approaches to corporate health utilise a piecemeal approach to assess the welfare of a traveller – this, predictably, does not provide companies with an adequate picture. Stress, disease risk, sickness and 'presenteeism' all contribute to the concept of 'health productivity' as a comprehensive measure of the welfare of all of us. Year on year, procurement professionals drive down travel costs through buying smarter whilst at the same time reducing traveller comfort and convenience. The negative impact on traveller health and wellbeing has never been greater.

Thankfully, it also seems clear that the impetus for greener meetings is coming from the corporates, as PwC's Mark Avery confirms. "There is a lot of common ground between what we are doing on both transient and meetings activity where CSR and the green agenda is concerned, not least because we use a lot of hotels for both purposes. Waste management and energy management runs right through their product. It's about the whole package; we look for their overall commitment to corporate social responsibility, what they are doing with local communities, how they look after their workforce and what they are doing for the environment. We analyse our own business on the same basis."

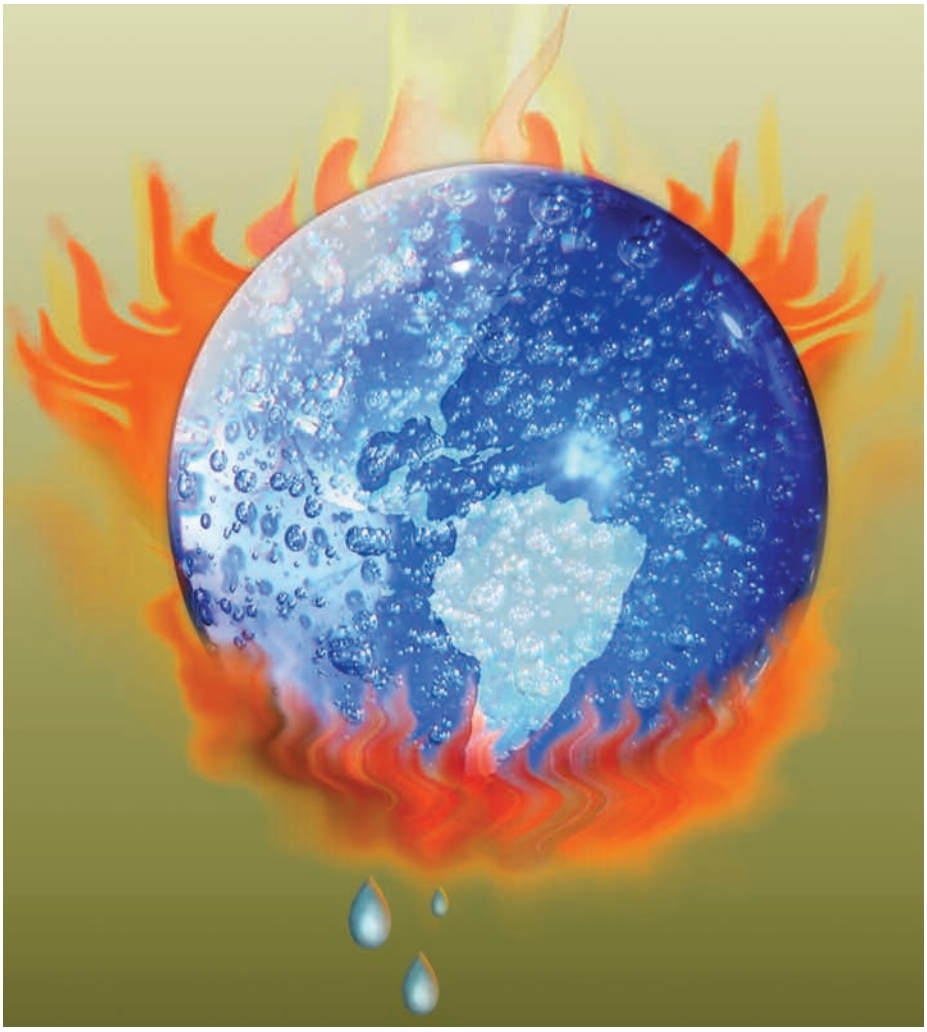
The hidden cost to companies of travel policies which are purely price focused and do not take into account the impact on the traveller are only just starting to be understood. In fact, a sample of frequent travellers shows stress levels to be up to 40% greater than non-travellers. The areas causing most risk are travel to and from the airport and hotels, with the most common complaints with hotels being the bed, noise and lack of facilities.

Focusing on the price of the air ticket and delegate costs does not take into account the perils of getting to the airport or the impact of a lack of sleep in a noisy hotel or a taxi driver who gets lost taking you to your meeting. All these factors are drivers of increased stress levels and poor productivity which costs a company real money.

Although "green" issues are the big emerging subject, the one subject that continues to dominate is traveller safety and security. Crisis management planning, tracking of travellers, emergency evacuation, repatriation are now part of a responsible company's governance policies. These policies need to be taken serious and require constant management and review.

Whilst safety and security traditionally refers to personal security (notably anti-terrorism) with tracking closely linked to this, we are now seeing developments in other areas such as insurance of travelling executives, cultural and social impacts, equality/diversity and human rights. Hotels are perhaps the most vulnerable in this area, but how many procurement heads check the performance of their hotel suppliers? What is their diversity policy? Do they allocate safer rooms for single women? Are the levels of security up to standard in higher risk areas?

Numerous traveller surveys have shown that while a majority of business travellers are comfortable with their personal safety and security while travelling, they do value security assurances in locations. A company has a duty to ensure appropriate policies and programmes are in place to protect employees; supported by ongoing communication and monitoring systems.



There's still a long way to go however, as HBI's Des McLaughlin points out. "We've not seen any real evidence of CSR as yet playing a significant role in meetings procurement. Some of the elements of CSR are contrary to the ethos of the meetings business. There's no question that flying 20 people down to the south of France on an incentive trip is not as environmentally responsible as sending them by train. The fact is that the business factors that predicate air over rail in that scenario currently override CSR considerations. The impetus for change has to come from the corporates. Health & safety is the perfect case in point, but it has taken over 10 years for health & safety to become a major item in most organisations' check lists when planning a meeting. It is now, because company directors can be held personally liable for injuries to their employees."

This article is reproduced from the newly-published Hotel Brokers International Meetings Industry Report 2007, copies of which are available priced at £95 plus VAT, from www.hotelbrokers.co.uk

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CSR and the Greening of Meetings

3 ways to reduce emissions from using hotels and accommodation

1. Cut emissions

- Review travel policy – is the meeting really necessary and do all the people need to attend?
- Identify viable alternatives - Using more video and audio conferencing is very effective. Saving 5% of the trips will have a significant impact
- Travel 'smarter' - optimising travel and meetings management through better scheduling & route planning to reduce overnight stays

2. Reduce emissions:

- Supplier selection and engagement
  - > Investigate the environmental policies for all suppliers
  - > Select the best performers as preferred suppliers where financially possible – negotiate exclusive deals in return
- Change company culture & approach
  - > Lead from the top of the organisation - but make the responsibility of all
  - > Creating a bottom up inclusive approach to responsibility will improve performance
  - > Measure and reward CO_2 reductions by employees
  - > Staff inclusion and cultural change are the keys to a measured approach to reducing emission e.g. CO_2 calculators, awards, rewards, internal trading etc.

3. Compensate for emissions:

- Partial offset or to balance company targets using 3rd party offset specialist supplier
- Include suppliers in targets and gain commitment for offset

Fact File - Green Meetings

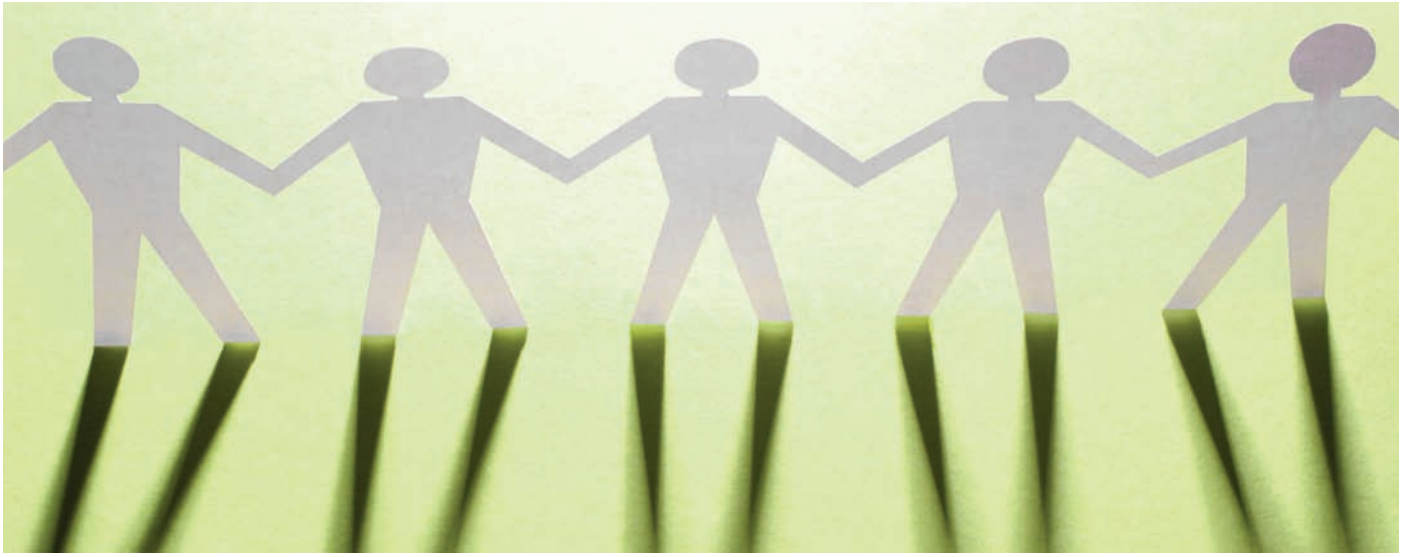
- In 2005, Lex Vehicle Leasing saved 377,745 road miles and 11,804 gallons of petrol (which meant 115 tonnes of CO_2 was not pumped into the atmosphere) by using video conferencing instead of face to face meetings. This allowed their staff to spend an extra 7,538 hours at their desks instead of on the road, and saved the company £185,118 (IT Week)
- A typical 5 day conference for 2,500 attendees will use 90,000 cans or bottles, 750,000 cups and 87,500 napkins (Meeting Strategies Worldwide)
- The San Francisco Hilton recycles approximately 800 pounds of cardboard daily and 5000 pounds of glass, plastic, and metal weekly. In addition, by composting organic waste the Hilton has eliminated almost 5 tons of waste per week and cut its rubbish by 50% (Association Meetings)
- Initiating a linen and towel reuse programme can conserve 200 barrels of oil - enough to run a family car 180,000 miles (Green Suites International)
- Green meetings have been defined as a "meeting that incorporates environmental considerations throughout all stages of the meeting in order to minimise the negative impact on the environment."

For more information, visit www.meetingstrategiesworldwide.com

10 top Tips for holding Green Meetings

1. Use technology to save paper; for large events take registration on-line. For internal meetings, use a laptop or projector to conduct the meeting instead of printing out agendas.
2. Re-cycle. If you have to print agendas, print double-sided and collect unused papers.
3. Use meeting rooms with natural light to improve delegate concentration and save electricity. Turn off lights and air-conditioning at the end of the meeting.
4. Cut food waste by not over-providing.
5. Go to the top. Gain management support by emphasising the range of environmental benefits, enhanced public image, and potential cost savings that result from holding green meetings.
6. Get your priorities straight. Identify environmental issues that are especially significant to your organisation, community, or region. Then select environmental priorities reflecting those particular issues.
7. Inform and motivate. Make sure all staff are aware of the new policies with regards to green meetings and the potential benefits.
8. Stay close. Reduce distances travelled by delegates; suggest public transport options or a shuttle service; arrange car shares to reduce emissions.
9. Green venues. Research venues' environmental policies and try to choose venues and accommodation which are considerate to the environment e.g. a hotel that offers a linen reuse service.
10. Put it on the agenda! Adding the environment to your meeting agenda will serve as a reminder to move forward towards more responsible environmental practices.

Source: National Meetings Week/Meetings & Incentive Travel magazine



MPI UK members may access checklists, documents and resources on sustainability by logging in to the **www.mpiuk.org** website and visiting the Knowledge Bank.

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Faculty	€165 per annum (Approx £112)

The costs are quoted in Euros with approximate £ Sterling values. Fees should be calculated at the time of applying. New members can be invoiced in £ at the applicable exchange rate on the day

Membership fees are non-refundable and are due annually on the anniversary date of acceptance.

Where to find Membership Form
Go to http://www.mpiuk.org and select "Why Join MPI" on the left hand menu.

Send your completed application form to:

Fax to: +44 (0) 871 2516936

Mail to: Secretariat, MPI UK Chapter, 16 Glebe Close, Lightwater, Surrey GU18 5SY

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Committed to sustaining a 50-50 ratio of planners and suppliers, MPI offers a number of

Membership Categories

Corporate Meeting Professional – a person who is primarily employed by a corporation to plan and/or oversee the strategic and financial management and/or logistics of that corporation's meetings.

Association/Non-Profit Meeting Professional – a person who is primarily employed by an association or not-for-profit organization to plan and/or oversee the strategic and financial management and/or logistics of that organization's meetings. This category also includes private universities.

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Student - enrolled full time in a post-secondary academic programme, with emphasis in the meetings, hospitality, events or tourism industries.

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Retired, Life and Honorary Member categories - Contact membership secretary or secretariat for more details.

We invite you to join MPI, the meeting industry's global knowledge and business network community.

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Sumaira	Isaacs	MCI Middle East (L.L.C)	Managing Director	Corporate Meeting Professional
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Sarah	Jones	Olive 360	CEO	Meeting Management Professional - Planner
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Severine	Ougier	Visit London	Business Marketing Manager	Supplier Meeting Professional
Sian	Pelleschi	Conference Guide	Managing Director	Meeting Management Professional - Planner
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Bob	Postins		European Events Manager	Corporate Meeting Professional
Duncan	Reid	Confex Group	Director	Corporate Meeting Professional
Kristen	Sarpalius	Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association	Manager, Conferences & Marketing	Association/Non-profit Meeting Professional
Susan	Seares	Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd	Event Executive	Corporate Meeting Professional
Kathryn	Smith	Visit London	PR Manager Europe	Supplier Meeting Professional
Mariann	Solberg	Visit London	Sales Executive UK	Supplier Meeting Professional
Mandy	Struthers	Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK Ltd	Event Manager	Corporate Meeting Professional
Joy	Thomas	Fair Isaac House	Corporate Events Lead	Corporate Meeting Professional
Sarah	Vandenhende	Securities Industry & Financial Association	Conference Coordinator	Association/Non-profit Meeting Professional
Helen	Winstanley	Barbican	Business Development Manager	Supplier Meeting Professional

First name	Last name	Name of College/University	Title	Membership category
Kezia	Kerswell			Student

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