



**A REPORT BY TONY ROGERS OF TONY ROGERS CONFERENCE & EVENT
SERVICES AND SUE BEVERLEY OF CHS GROUP UK**

TO

**THE NATIONAL COASTAL TOURISM ACADEMY
AND BOURNEMOUTH STAKEHOLDERS**

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A

**'CONFERENCE TOURISM ACTION PLAN FOR
BOURNEMOUTH'**

UNLOCKING TOURISM POTENTIAL



October 2013

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The conference, meetings and business events sector is now widely recognised globally as a major driver of national, regional and local economies, creating beneficial impacts through organiser and delegate/partner expenditures and activities. The sector also plays a key role in positioning individual destinations as centres of innovation, inward investment, professional development, cutting-edge scientific knowledge exchange, as well as attractive locations which can be revisited and enjoyed as leisure destinations in their own right.

Competition across the sector is intense, with over 200 countries competing internationally for their share of the lucrative conference and convention 'cake', and new destinations emerging and thus continually forcing more established destinations to invest and to reinvent themselves to ensure that they retain, and ideally increase, their share of this highly competitive market.

Within the UK there has been a noticeable trend, over the past 30 years especially, for former industrial cities to diversify their economies to embrace the service sectors and to attract major investments in visitor and business infrastructure (transport and communications, hotels, venues, attractions, retail, research parks, etc.), investments which many of the seaside resort destinations have struggled to match.

Bournemouth has recognised that, over the past few years, its share of the conference and business events sector has declined and its profile as one of the leading conference destinations has diminished. Key stakeholders have come together to address the issues which Bournemouth is facing and to find proactive solutions to the challenges being faced. This report seeks to summarise the issues and challenges and to make recommendations on the steps needed to improve perceptions of Bournemouth in the eyes of the buyer, to create a more integrated service delivery for buyers, to identify investments needed in the Bournemouth product, and to enhance the destination's success in bidding for and securing new business.

1.2 Opportunities

There is little doubt of the significance of the potential opportunities for Bournemouth. A recent study entitled the 'The Economic Impact of the UK Meeting & Event Industry' (published in July 2013 by Meeting Professionals International in conjunction with Leeds Metropolitan University) found that the sector:

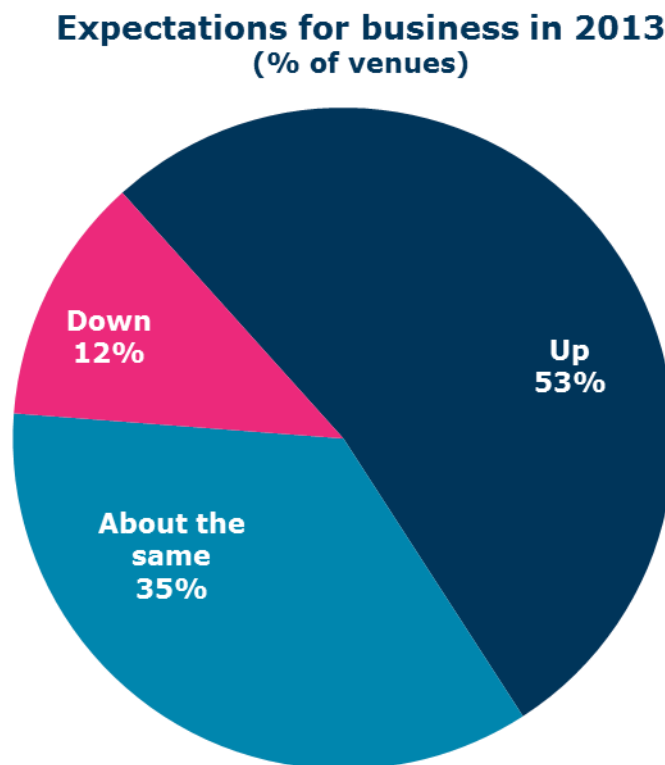
- generated more than 1.3 million meetings in 2011; 74,961 meetings were held in SW England, 6.7% of the total for England

- was responsible for expenditure by delegates and partners of just under £40 billion
- directly generated 423,500 full-time equivalent jobs across a wide range of industries and, when considering the direct, indirect and induced jobs supported by the meeting industry, this number rises to more than one million
- in total generated £58.4 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011.

The full UK Economic Impact Study reports may be downloaded free of charge at www.mpiweb.org/ukeis

Optimism for upward growth in the sector was revealed by Eventia's 'UK Events Market Trends Survey' research, also published in July 2013, based on feedback from 224 venues of all kinds spread throughout the UK, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.



1.3 Project Brief

Against this backcloth, therefore, the principal requirements for Stage 1 of this consultancy project have been to:

- Review existing research and reports on Bournemouth’s position in the conference market
- Meet key stakeholders in the local tourism industry including BH Live, Bournemouth Area Hospitality Association, Bournemouth Tourism, Bournemouth Council, Bournemouth University, Business Improvement Districts and the National Coastal Tourism Academy. Then hold a workshop in early September to bring together different perspectives
- Produce a recommended structure for a more holistic approach to conference marketing and sales for the destination, including proposals for funding, management and links to other aspects of destination management. Present this to the Conference and Convention Group at the end of September 2013
- Based on existing research, make recommendations to improve the delegate visitor experience
- Based on existing research, make recommendations for conference and convention markets which should be targeted to achieve best yield for the destination
- Make prioritised recommendations for further research and action research.

1.4 Strategic Context

- a) Bournemouth Tourism Strategy 2011-2020 – Bournemouth’s Tourism Strategy 2011-2020 acknowledges ‘business tourism’ as one of the core markets for the destination, alongside ‘international education’ and ‘leisure tourism (both staying and day visitors)’. Bournemouth is widely recognised as one of the most successful resort destinations in terms of its leisure tourism, a view confirmed through the consultants’ interactions with conference buyers, industry stakeholders, and general consumer perceptions.
- The strategy refers to Bournemouth’s three core markets as highly interdependent, with business tourism bringing high yield off-peak custom to complement the more seasonal leisure trade. However, while the strategy outlines a number of projects for the period to 2020 covering ‘sustaining’, ‘partnership’ and ‘intelligence’, it does not make any specific reference to projects designed to grow Bournemouth’s business tourism sector. There appears to be general recognition among Bournemouth stakeholders that eyes have been taken off the ball as far as business tourism and business events are concerned. Bournemouth’s continuing success and high profile as a leisure tourism destination have not been matched by its recent achievements in the business events field. It may also be opportune to realign Bournemouth’s business events promotional activity away from leisure tourism and closer to its other economic sectoral strengths (see below) to mirror developments in other countries and cities.

- b) Bournemouth's Economic Strategy / Sectors – Bournemouth has a well established financial services sector employing 11,500 people. Its digital economy was also identified by stakeholders as important and growing. It would make sense for such sectors to form a key focus in identifying and bidding to attract conferences and other business events for Bournemouth.

Bournemouth University has a number of academic programme strengths based on Research Excellence Framework (REF) ratings, including art and design; communications, cultural and media studies; geography and environmental studies; nursing and midwifery; tourism; computer animation; and archaeology – such programme areas should form the initial focus for the development of a conference ambassador programme for the town.

Stakeholders have also suggested that, in targeting events which fit the local economic strategy, a wider geographical area than just Bournemouth should be embraced ie. Dorset, the New Forest and Southampton, with appropriate alliances being formed. The consultant project team agree that, in the longer term, such an expanded strategy may well be appropriate and certainly offers exciting potential, but it does raise significant resource issues and we feel that, at least for Stage 2 of the project, the strategic focus should be on Bournemouth itself – with the aim of widening the strategy to encompass other areas and alliances once a new sales and marketing organisation is established and has clear plans in place.

There are numerous reasons for this recommendation:

- The key reason being that resources are scarce and that initially, therefore, activity should focus on Bournemouth
- A Conference Ambassador Programme relies up on attracting Ambassadors that live and work in the destination and are passionate about that destination. It is therefore more productive to attract Ambassadors from the immediate area, rather than further afield such as Southampton where the Ambassador's initial loyalty may lie to that destination itself. Our brief research into Bournemouth University suggests that there is a sufficient supply of potential Ambassadors within that organisation at this stage.

- c) Bournemouth's Current Approach to Business Events – at a destination level, Bournemouth's marketing activity is spearheaded by Meet Bournemouth, the town's convention bureau. The Conference and Convention Group, a sub-group of Bournemouth Tourism Marketing Board, acts as a coordinating forum for the town's conference promotion activity and meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Meet Bournemouth is staffed by a full-time manager (with some clerical support) – the manager’s post is funded by BH Live and the manager operates from the Bournemouth International Centre, where she sits close to the BIC’s own sales team. Enquiries for events of less than 250 people are circulated to Bournemouth venues in membership of Meet Bournemouth, while enquiries for events of more than 250 delegates are passed to the BH Live team.

The marketing budget for Meet Bournemouth comprises two main elements:

- Membership fees paid by hotels and other venues – however, such income has fallen dramatically over the years (from more than £70k in 2003-4 to well under £10k in 2012-3) in parallel with a fall in membership of, and support for, Meet Bournemouth
- Commission from conference business placed in Bournemouth’s hotels and other venues and also a commission-share arrangement with the town’s Delegate Reservations service. Again such commission income has fallen significantly and raised only £3k in 2012-3.

It is apparent that this vicious circle of falling membership, falling budgets and consequent reduced sales and marketing activity leading to a fall in the amount of events business being secured for Bournemouth has created a sense of disillusionment and defeatism. There is also a feeling among stakeholders of inadequate communications and lack of transparency across the destination.

Meet Bournemouth launched an ambassador programme, known as the affiliate scheme, in 2012. However, to date, marketing for this has been limited.

In addition to the work of Meet Bournemouth, BH Live employs a dedicated sales team of 3 staff targeting corporate and association events. BH Live developed and launched a new brand identity, ‘Conference Coast’, in 2011 but this has not been adopted by other venues and suppliers in Bournemouth. Individual hotels and venues also have their own conference sales activity. However, as commented by conference buyers (see below), the impression to those outside Bournemouth is of fragmented, uncoordinated activity, at a low and largely ineffectual level, with no coherent brand messages and widespread ignorance of the current Bournemouth ‘offer’.

It is apparent to the consultant project team that there is a real determination, commitment and enthusiasm among Bournemouth’s stakeholders and suppliers to turn things around and to support a new conference sales and marketing entity and

coordinated strategy for the destination. There is also a widespread recognition that retaining the status quo is not an option.

This report describes Bournemouth as a ‘second tier’ destination. This is simply a recognition that the UK has 5-6 major premier league city destinations (London, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and potentially Liverpool) which have developed the infrastructure to bid successfully for major national and international conventions and other business events. Bournemouth should be towards the top of the second tier destinations but, in recent years, its ranking has declined and the focus must now be on ways for Bournemouth to regain its former status.

1.5 Project Methodology

The project team were provided with a number of background documents from the NCTA and other partners as follows:

- Bournemouth Business Tourism Report – Dominique Betts (April 2013)
- BH Live Convention Bureau Strategy – Steve Piper (May 2013)
- What is Conference Coast Presentation
- Extract of Davies Tanner Report for BH Live

In addition the team analysed a number of reports to inform the study including:

- Convention Bureau Benchmarking Report undertaken by the project team in 2012
- UK Events Market Trends Survey 2013
- British Meetings and Events Industry Survey 2009
- MPI UK Economic Impact Study 2013
- Bournemouth Tourism Strategy 2011 – 2020
- VisitEngland Business Tourism Action Plan

1.6 Stakeholder Consultation

In line with the project brief, the team undertook a series of one to one consultations, carried out both face to face and via skype, with stakeholders and partners in the Bournemouth area.

Our thanks go to the following consultees:

Alex Moss	NCTA
Stephen Godsall	NCTA
Tony Williams	Bournemouth Council
Mark Smith	Bournemouth Council - Tourism
Jon Weaver	Bournemouth Council - Tourism
John Beesley	Bournemouth Council
Dr Julie Whitfield	University of Bournemouth
Paul Clarke	Chair of Bournemouth Accommodation and Hotels Association
Mandy Payne	Chamber of Commerce
Rebecca Osbourne	Marriott Hotels
Andrew Francis	Marriott Hotels
Peter Gunn	BH Live
Karina Gregory	Meet Bournemouth
Alun Williams	Coastal BID
Rosie Wallace	Days Inn & BAHA
Dominique Betts	Green House Hotel

In addition, the project team would like to also thank the following people who contributed to the workshop held in September:

Pat Coyne	BH Live
Steve Turner	BH Live
Sarah Stainer	BH Live
Matt Goode	BH Live
Nicola Greene	Bournemouth Council
Sam Richardson	NCTA

Section 2. BUSINESS EVENTS MARKETS

2.1 Definition of Business Events

The terms 'business tourism' and 'business events' are often used interchangeably within the industry, although there is a feeling among some (shared by the project team) that business tourism is an oxymoron and can lead to negative connotations through its association with leisure tourism, especially for business customers for whom return on investment (ROI) and return on objectives (ROO) are now crucial factors in the events they organise. Rod Cameron of the Association Internationale des Palais de Congrès (AIPC) urges that, in order to promote a better understanding of the meetings and business events industry, a number of issues need to be addressed:

'Firstly, we need to emphasize the role that meetings play in economic, professional and educational development and downplay the leisure aspect. There has never been a greater opportunity for the industry, as the world continues to look at the course the recovery will take, and to search for any activities that can promise support in this regard. But to achieve this, we need to be taken more seriously.'

Secondly, we need to enhance both the content and perceived value of meetings in order to give planners and delegates the arguments they need to justify their investment of time and resources.

In particular, we need to put more emphasis on the ability to demonstrate measurable outcomes that will resonate with increasing corporate concerns about ROI.'

He concludes: *'The fact is, nobody holds a meeting in order to fill hotel rooms, that's simply a by-product, and yet most of our industry measures relate to what delegates spend, not what they actually accomplish. This trivialises meetings in the eyes of those who see them as engines for business and professional progress.'*

The widely accepted definition of a business event (for the purposes of measurement and research) is: *An out-of-office meeting of at least four hours' duration involving a minimum of ten people.*

2.2 Key Characteristics and Benefits of Business Events

Greater Profitability

Conferences and business events cater for the high quality, high cost and, therefore, high yield end of the visitor economy. In 2011, for example, business and conference visitors to the UK from overseas spent on average 72 per cent more per day than leisure visitors

(source: International Passenger Survey). The greater spending power of business visitors means increased economic benefits for the host destination and a greater return on investment in infrastructure and marketing.

All-Year-Round Activity

Conferences and business events take place throughout the year. Spring and autumn are the peak seasons of the year for conferences (with most of the larger, high profile association and political party conferences and meetings taking place at these times), but many smaller meetings and conferences are also held in the winter months. This activity complements the peak season for leisure tourism among resort destinations.

The all-year-round nature of conferences and business events also leads to the creation and sustenance of permanent jobs, as opposed to the seasonal, temporary jobs which are a frequent characteristic of the leisure tourism sector.

Future Inward Investment

Those organising a conference or incentive travel trip will always be keen to make sure that it is as successful as possible. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is by giving delegates and participants a pleasant, positive experience of the destination in which the event is being held. This can lead to delegates and partners returning as leisure visitors, while some may have been so impressed that they may decide to relocate their business to the destination or look to set up a subsidiary operation there. Strengthening the links between business events being staged and the key sectors of the local economy can also lead to networking opportunities and new research and development opportunities for local businesses. It could be argued that a single meeting of influential business executives can do more to increase a destination's exposure than years of promotion by economic development officials.

Professional Development

Large events like conventions are designed to bring the best people in any given field together in an environment where information can be shared and progress identified. When this happens, it creates a big boost to local knowledge and skills in any imaginable discipline.

Improved Quality of Life

Convention centres and the kinds of activities they support play an important role in enhancing the overall quality of life in a community. To survive, communities need some

kind of industrial activity, preferably one that brings in money from outside the local economy. But a lot of these industries are less than completely benign, particularly from a community or environmental perspective. The convention business, on the other hand, does more than simply avoid damaging its host community. It actually thrives on the kind of qualities people typically want around them: things like an attractive environment and cultural attributes, and provides a sound reason to support and enhance these qualities to everyone's advantage.

2.3 Business Events Segments

Table 1 provides a matrix of the main segments of business events and highlights some of their key characteristics.

Table 1

SEGMENT	CORPORATE ORGANISATION / CORPORATION	NATIONAL ASSOCIATION	INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION / INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODY	PUBLIC SECTOR / GOVERNMENT
Meetings	An out-of-office meeting of at least 4 hours' duration involving a minimum of 10 people. Includes sales meetings, training, board meetings and retreats, AGMs.	Board meetings, regional meetings, training events, information events.	Limited number of board-level meetings, typically lasting 1-2 days maximum. Also international meetings hosted by national associations.	Mainly organising non-residential meetings of up to 1 day's duration. Also training courses which may last for several days, and information events.
Conferences	Typically of 1 or 2 days' duration with a formal programme that has been promoted in advance. Delegates are often compelled to attend.	Usually an annual conference/congress/convention for members lasting 2-3 days.	An annual (or less frequent) congress or convention rotating around different countries or continents, with selection based on bids received from individual cities. Typically of 3-5 days' duration.	Mostly 1-day conferences (occasionally 2 days) attracting delegates from the local area or region.
Incentive Travel	A business tourism trip to motivate and reward employees and dealers, usually containing a conference element.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Exhibitions	Product launches, attendance as an exhibitor at trade and consumer shows organised by specialist exhibition organisers or trade associations. Also attendance as a corporate visitor ('buyer') at trade shows.	May include the organisation of an exhibition to run alongside its own conference; also participation in other industry trade shows as an exhibitor. Trade associations are also primary exhibition organisers.	May include the organisation of an exhibition to run alongside its own conference; occasional participation in other industry trade shows as an exhibitor.	Information/regional trade events.
Corporate Events (also known as Corporate Hospitality)	Hosted entertainment at major sporting events, concerts, and other high profile functions, and/or participation in sporting or outdoor pursuits-type activities.	Not common, although some professional and trade associations may organise golf days or other sporting events for their members.	Not normally applicable.	Not applicable.

Section 3. CURRENT PERFORMANCE OF BOURNEMOUTH

3.1 Business Tourism Volume and Value

There is limited recorded data for the volume and value of business events to Bournemouth. The most up to date available data is limited to regional volume and value national statistics via the Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) and International Passenger Survey (IPS). For the purposes of this report we have analysed the data in these surveys – however, it should be noted that these relate to the “South West” and therefore are not a true representative sample for the current business events activity in Bournemouth.

In 2011 the South West Research Company estimated that there were 127,000 business visits to Bournemouth itself (35% of these were from overseas visitors). This accounted for 11% of the overall volume of visits and expenditure worth £28.6mn (10%) of the tourism expenditure.

More recently the GBTS release figures for the South West as a region. The GBTS is a national consumer survey measuring the volume and value of overnight domestic tourism trips taken by residents of the Great Britain (previously known as the United Kingdom Tourism Survey).

According to the GBTS 2012, domestic business tourism in the South West of England represented 15% of all domestic trips (i.e. 18.9 million) and 19% of domestic tourism spending (£4.5bn). In terms of international arrivals the South West attracted just over 2 million trips in 2012 just under a quarter of which were for business purposes (IPS).

Region	Business Trips Int'l Exp	Market Share	Business Trips Domestic	Market
London	£2605	40%	£954	26%
North West	£203	5%	£434	11%
West Midlands	£167	4%	£349	9%
South West	£134	3%	£413	11%
South East	£454	11%	£575	15%
Yorkshire	£78	2%	£320	9%
East Midlands	£118	3%	£248	7%
East of England	£185	5%	£324	9%
North East	£48	1%	£100	3%

Source: IPS 2012 & GBTS 2012

As can be seen from the above table, whilst the South West has the 3rd lowest share of the international business visits market, it has the 3rd highest share of the domestic market after London and the South East.

GBTS also records the type of location stayed at, showing that 9.6% of visitors stayed in a seaside location.

Type of Location Stayed At	millions
Seaside	1.96
Large City / town	12.11
Small town	4.92
Country side / village	1.47

Whilst IPS breaks down the business visit by type, GBTS does not, therefore there is limited information available. The data below relates to international visitors only.

3.2 Conference and meetings market

The table below shows the share of the international overnight conference market by region.

Region	Conference Market	Market Share
London	£555	71%
North West	£33	4%
West Midlands	£25	3%
South West	£17	2%
South East	£84	11%
Yorkshire	£10	1%
East Midlands	£11	1%
East of England	£37	5%
North East	£7	1%

Table 1: Source IPS 2012

As can be seen from the table the South West of England region has 4th lowest share of the overnight conference market.

3.3 Exhibitions Market Share

IPS also provides data on the exhibitions and trade shows market. Analysis of market share shows, not surprisingly, that the South West of England has only a 1% share of the UK international exhibitions market.

Region	Exhibitions/shows - value (Millions)	Market Share
London	169	80%
South East	4	2%
South West	2	1%
West Midlands	23	11%
East Midlands	3	1%
Yorkshire	1	0.5%
North West	1	0.5%
East of England	7	3%
North East	0	0%

Table 2: IPS 2012

3.4 Other Business Tourism

IPS defines “other “ business tourism is “taking the trip to do paid work on business” which therefore includes discretionary and non-discretionary business tourism. It is not possible to distinguish between the two.

Region	“Other Business Visit” (millions)	Market Share
West Midlands	118	4%
London	1882	63%
North West	169	6%

East Midlands	105	3%
Yorkshire	67	2%
South East	366	12%
East of England	141	5%
North East	41	1%
South West	116	4%

Table 3: Source IPS 2012

3.5 Occupancy

There is currently no occupancy data available on the South West or Bournemouth.

3.6 Research Recommendations

We recommend that Phase 2 of this project should consider establishing base line data on business events to Bournemouth to enable the destination to monitor its success in this market. The data for example could include:

- Volume – number of events, number of delegates, occupancy data
- Type of events - by economic sector, by type (conference, exhibition, meeting, incentive etc), residential v non-residential,
- Value – day rates, 24 hr rates, economic impact

3.7 Meet Bournemouth Current Performance

Currently business events for Bournemouth is delivered by Meet Bournemouth, the convention bureau for the destination, sitting within BH Live.

The Bournemouth Tourism Management Board steering group for the local tourism industry has representatives from the all the trade sectors and public sector bodies on the board and its Conference and Convention sub-group.

However, whilst BH Live is contracted via a service level agreement to Bournemouth Council and therefore there are key performance indicators prescribed in this, the KPIs are high level and there is little detailed communication between Meet Bournemouth and the Conference and Convention Sub Group.

This study reviewed the performance data of Meet Bournemouth against a number of KPI's. However, it should be noted that the data relates **only** to Meet Bournemouth and does not take into account the wider business that is placed into the town, ***in particular the business that is placed into BH Live.***

It should be also be noted that whilst conference placement is a key part of the services of a Conference Bureau, it does not represent the *only* function of a Bureau. A Conference Desk can play a key role in raising the profile of a destination, it is very often the only pan-regional organisation that offers an **objective and cohesive** approach to business events and event promotion. Therefore, the success of a Convention Bureau should not be judged solely on performance data such as conversion of enquiries, but on a number of criteria across the spectrum of destination management, which this report covers later.

a)Enquiry Generation

The results show that whilst the number of enquiries has grown this year, it is still showing a declining trend when the 3 year picture is viewed.

Compared to second tier cities across the UK, the number of enquiries is low. In the 2011-12 UK benchmarking study carried out by the project team which analysed in detail the performance of 6 of the UK's second tier cities, it was found that the average annual level of enquiries varied between 130 and 260 - clearly far higher than Meet Bournemouth are achieving. These enquiries also had a value of between £1.7mn and £3.9mn direct expenditure benefit.

b)Conversion Rate

The study also revealed that the average conversion rate was around 40%. Meet Bournemouth has achieved a 10% conversion rate to date this year and 23.9% and 19.4% in previous years respectively.

c)Confirmed and Completed Bookings

Confirmed and completed bookings have dropped considerably from 13 events in 2011 to 5 events in 2013 (obviously this is 8 months of a 12 month period); with the total value of these events also dropping significantly by 35% in 2013 compared to the previous year. In the benchmarking study, the project team found that the volume of confirmed and completed bookings over a 3 year period ranged from 59 to 113 per annum. Again, a far higher conversion than Meet Bournemouth.

d)Market Sector

Unfortunately it is not possible to determine which market sector is generating the most enquiries as, in the most recent year, 63% of enquiries were recorded as "other"; however, earlier evidence would suggest that corporate clients were the highest source of enquiries. Typically, other second tier destinations had a higher proportion of Association enquiries.

e)Forward Business

Looking forward, outstanding business was not strong with only 3 events worth a total of £23,000 being recorded as outstanding at the end of August 2013.

Summary

Whilst it has been acknowledged that this data is incomplete and does not take into account business placed into BH Live directly it does reveal that the performance of Meet Bournemouth is not strong compared to its competitors. There are a number of factors influencing this such as the lack of staffing resource for the Meet Bournemouth team and the growth in the Conference product in the UK generally.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

- Bournemouth undertakes research to establish a baseline for information
- Under the new structure, KPIs should be clearly identified
- the enquiry handling system be designed to ensure that data is captured accurately and staff are properly trained on recording , monitoring and report producing on the CHASER system

Section 4 CURRENT BUSINESS EVENTS ACTIVITY

Currently business event activity is undertaken solely by Meet Bournemouth working in as part of the BH Live team, with considerable support from the Sales Team at BHLive.

4.1 Governance

Currently Meet Bournemouth reports directly to BH Live, although it does not report directly to the BH Live Board. There is no discrete Convention Bureau strategy as Meet Bournemouth is presently governed by the BH Live strategy.

Meet Bournemouth does not report to the Conference and Convention Group of BTMB and, therefore, there is little widespread understanding of the aims, objectives and activity of Meet Bournemouth amongst the town's stakeholders.

4.2 Objectives

Whilst no objectives for Meet Bournemouth as a "stand alone" bureau exist, the key objective of a convention bureau is to raise the profile of the destination among national association, corporate and agency event organisers. Secondary objectives would be to provide the tourism industry in Bournemouth with a focus for business tourism: acting as a lobby to raise industry matters regionally and nationally, to support the members of the bureau in their marketing objectives and to generate meetings business through the provision of a free venue finding service.

As a leisure and cultural trust, BH Live's remit extends across numerous areas including venue management, ticketing and catering. In recent months this has extended beyond Bournemouth so that BH Live is now managing venues in other destinations. BH Live therefore, has a need to ensure sustainability and commercial viability for the business.

The remit of a destination convention bureau is very different from the current strategic aims of BH Live and many stakeholders acknowledged that there appeared to be an "uneasy fit" strategically between the two bodies.

4.3 Structure

Meet Bournemouth has only one full time manager who has some clerical support provided by BH Live. In addition BHLive provide ongoing marketing support, particularly with regards to sales activity and exhibition attendance such as Meetings Show UK, Confex etc.

4.4. Membership

There is membership scheme in place but currently this has only some 14 members and raised £7000 in membership in 2012/13 and £3000 in commission. There has been a

significant fall in membership income from £73,625 in 2003/4 to £7,287 in 2012/13. Membership income dropped by almost half in 2010 to £29,132 and has continued to fall.

There are several reasons for this:

- The trade has lost confidence in the current structure; in part due to the perceived lack of communication and failure to share common goals from Meet Bournemouth
- The lack of resource in Meet Bournemouth to enable the Manager to maintain and enhance the membership
- The lack of budget to offer marketing opportunities to the trade

4.5 Subvention

Many stakeholders are under the impression that a subvention fund exists and that the conditions governing its allocation and usage were laid out in the SLA between the Council and BH Live. The Council supports the hosting of major conferences in the town by providing indirect funding through contracting with BH Live for them to provide significantly discounted rates to clients who meet certain qualifying criteria laid out in the SLA. The policy applies to not for profit organisations/associations with delegate numbers of at least 300, staying a minimum of two nights in the destination, and allows for up to 70% discount on the full commercial rate for main hall(s) hire. Further discounts are applied at the discretion of BH Live management, particularly if the client is contracting for more than one year.

Stakeholders are not generally aware of the above criteria, and the relative lack of information about this to the business community means that the investment from the Council and BH Live is not understood or appreciated and this issue certainly needs to be addressed in phase 2 of the project.

4.5 Marketing Activity.

The bureau undertakes a number of marketing activities such as exhibition attendance and advertorial in key trade publications. However, the feedback from stakeholders is that this is not specifically targeted or in line with any known strategy.

Meet Bournemouth also launched its Affiliate scheme in 2012. Due to limited resources this has yet to have an impact on the destination and little activity has been undertaken to recruit Ambassadors.

4.6 Delegate Visitor Experience

Again this area is acknowledged by Meet Bournemouth and stakeholders to be an under-resourced area. Meet Bournemouth are keen to provide a delegate welcome experience but to date have not been able to do this. Whilst funding has been sought (from the Coastal BID

for example) on an ad-hoc basis there is no agreed strategy or co-ordinated plan to take this forward and therefore support has not been received by the wider stakeholders.

Appendix B contains practical suggestions from the stakeholders on ideas for creating a Bournemouth Welcome.

4.7 Summary

Both stakeholders and the potential clients conclude that current activity is fragmented and uncoordinated, at a low and largely ineffectual level, with no coherent brand messages.

4.8 Recommendations

We recommend that Phase 2 agrees the future structure of a Convention Bureau, its functions and objectives and prepares a detailed strategy for its development, support, function and performance. These points are considered later in Sections 7 and 8.

Section 5 PRODUCT OVERVIEW & PRODUCT MARKET FIT

5.1 Overview of the UK Market Segments

The Business Events market is made up, as described earlier, of a number of different segments each of which has slightly different needs. For the purposes of this study we have defined these segments as:

- International Association Conferences
- National Association Conferences
- National Corporate Conferences
- Exhibitions
- Incentive Travel
- Corporate Hospitality
- Regional and local meetings

Any consideration of the Bournemouth's product offer must be undertaken within the context of the market needs. The UK Events Market Survey and the Business Events Briefing provide commentary on the needs of these market segments which can be summarised as follows:

International Association Conferences

- International congress market is destination / city led – bids generally come from a city destination or a destination with a significant convention capacity like Bournemouth. The destination profile can therefore, play a key part in the selection process and it is vital that the destination is seen to be unified and co-ordinated.
- Usually rotational across continents.
- Lead in time can be up to 12 years if event is quadrennial
- Large congresses look for purpose-built auditoria with additional smaller breakout rooms, exhibition space, nearby accommodation and opportunities for a good social programme
- Subvention can be a deal breaker

National Association Conferences

- Locations can be rotational
- town centre hotels, university venues and purpose-built convention centres are preferred
- Key factors in venue selection are (in order); location, price/value, access, availability and quality of service
- Destinations are city/ large town led – infrastructure in rural areas is less likely to meet the needs

National Corporate Conferences

- Town centre hotels, purpose built conference centres and unusual venues are preferred venue types
- Key factors in venue selection are (in order); location, price/value, access, availability and quality of service
- Corporate conference organisers have high expectations for all aspects of their meeting experience
- Expectations are high in terms of the ability of venues to keep up with advances in technology

Exhibitions

- Most are annual and many use the same venue year on year
- Factors that influence choice of venue include; rental and service costs, capacity of venue, location of venue, contractual relationship with venue and accessibility
- An increasing number are looking for conference or seminar space as part of the facilities

Incentive travel

- Prefer four and five star hotel properties
- Aspirational destinations are favoured – examples include, Gleneagles, Turnberry, etc.

Corporate Hospitality

- Client entertainment is often event based and requires high profile events
- Participative event based client entertainment such as motor racing and clay pigeon shooting has slowed in recent years
- Buyers are more likely to focus on entertaining fewer but more senior clients

Regional and local meetings

- Smaller meeting rooms – more likely to be local to business
- Organisers have high expectations for all aspects of their meeting experience

5.2 Summary of the Market Segments

BH Live is currently targeting these segments, although the project team were not party to their sales and marketing strategy so cannot comment on the effectiveness of this currently.

From the limited information we have, it would appear that BH Live are targeting some sectors effectively such as the medical association sector and the stakeholder feedback was that there was further potential to develop this segment.

The table below summarises the key habits of each segment.

MARKETS:	International Assocn	National Assocn	UK Corporate	Intl Corporate	Incentives	Exhibition
Del spend	£364	£170 / £461	£120 / £459	£459	£459	£16 - £196
Ave (days) Duration	3	1.6	1.4	1 – 2	4	2.7
Size	552	340 – 400	129	129	58	10331
Lead in times	2years	16months	3months	6months	12months	12months
Origin of attendees	Worldwide	UK	Local (1.5 hr journey)	Europe Worldwide	UK Europe World	Local Regional

5.3 Bournemouth Product

Bournemouth has a developed business tourism infrastructure. The Bournemouth International Centre offers the largest convention centre in the south of England (4,100 seated in Windsor Hall, over 6,000 sqm of exhibition space). This is supported by approximately 19,000 bedspaces within a 2-mile radius – with 9,000 bedrooms with en suite facilities.

There is, however, an acknowledged lack of major chain hotels and 4-star and 5-star quality hotels. There are two new Hilton hotels currently in development.

Rail services could be improved upon, current journey times are 2 hours to London and 5 hrs to Manchester for example. Bournemouth has an airport with limited flight options, whilst Southampton Airport offers more connections and is a 40 minute train journey away.

The resort itself is a very attractive seaside town and has very positive perceptions as a leisure tourism destination. Over the last few years it has grown its cultural, retail and leisure offer and now has a reputation as a high end leisure resort, factors which unfortunately are not transmitted to the business market.

5.4 Product Market Fit

Bournemouth's existing product is more suited to some business tourism segments than others and the product offering should be considered within the context of the expectations of the various markets.

The following product market fit shows **briefly** how well the product currently fits with market expectations. The higher the number the better the product fit with the markets needs. This assessment is based on the findings of the national buyer research, our overview of the product, consultations with partners and discussions with a variety of venues. The scoring is based on the judgement of the consultancy team following this analysis and is intended to represent a consumer led view of the current product offer.

The assessment made was based on a number of factors including current appeal, bed stock provision, conference venue provision, resort hotel supply and access.

	International Assocn	National Assoc'n: professional	National Assoc'n: voluntary / leisure	UK Corporate	Intl Corporate	Incentives	Exhibition
Bournemouth	3	4	5	4	3	4	4
Limiting Factors:	Access Bed stock BIC standard	Access Bed stock		Bed stock	Access Bed stock	Lack of 4 and 5 star provision	BIC standard Access

5.5 Recommendations

The above table is meant to show the **process** for developing the marketing plan for business events in Bournemouth and needs exploring fully in phase 2 of the project.

We recommend that a full product market fit analysis is undertaken and a marketing plan developed as part of Phase 2 of the project.

The marketing plan should analyse the product in detail, update the current performance, create a detailed product market fit, set priority sectors to target, identify appropriate marketing opportunities and establish KPIs and monitoring procedures.

The resultant marketing action plan should detail the actions for the Convention Bureau. Although all activity is important given the scarce resources available, activity should be prioritised and should identify the lead body for each area of activity as in some instances it may be appropriate for bodies other than the Bureau to take the lead.

Appendix C provides details of a slightly different approach to market adopted by Perth Convention Bureau (Australia) which successfully targeted 'disability'-related conventions through a programme entitled 'Beyond Compliance'. This may offer the germ of an idea for Bournemouth, not necessarily related to disability but seeking an overall theme or subject area which would be of interest to a wide range of individuals and organisations.

Brand Architecture

5.6 Background

Meet Bournemouth currently utilises the "Conference Coast" brand and imagery that were developed by Davies Tanner for BH Live in 2011. The project team have considered the needs of a town-wide brand for business events and have reviewed the current brand's fit in light of the need for a unified approach to business events for Bournemouth and the need to get all partners agreeing a shared vision for the promotion of the town.

The key aim of a brand for business tourism is to create a unified sense of place by developing a branding strategy that will help increase the profile of the area in the national and international business market and subsequently increase delegate numbers.

A strong destination brand can bring great benefit to a destination – creating a unique sense of place, generating a strong positive image and creating a sought-after destination that drives up visitor numbers.

We therefore considered a number of factors:

- what are the current perceptions of the brand by customers i.e. the meetings buyers? We must consider the role of the current brand within context of consumer expectations and perceptions
- what are the reasoning and brand architecture behind the "Conference Coast" brand and the Leisure brand used by Bournemouth Tourism?
- How should the brand fit with the sales and marketing strategy? It is critical to identify a hierarchy of products and to articulate which market segments might respond best to each product. So, for example, is the use of a seaside image more appealing to certain markets than others?
- Bournemouth has a successful leisure brand and it is essential that the business brand does not conflict with this. The business brand should sit alongside this and add value to the tourism product creating a unique sense of harmony and place
- Does the brand inspire confidence in the town's stakeholders? Establishing a strong business tourism brand for Bournemouth requires the committed support of many partners. The partners in Bournemouth must be convinced of the benefits that are to be gained by creating this sense of place through a strong brand. This is the challenge of destination marketing - to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

5.7 Business Tourism – the wider context

The issue of the right “brand” for business tourism is wider than merely a logo or strapline. As a key part of the destination brand, it must embody the heart and soul of the area it represents. It must reflect the spirit of a destination to create a perception that inspires people to visit, live or work there.

While any destination brand must resonate with potential customers, the area will underperform if local businesses do not understand and buy into the brand values that underpin the areas’ external promotion.

5.8 The Bournemouth Brand

There are currently two brand identities being promoted in Bournemouth – the BH Live “Conference Coast Brand” and the Bournemouth Tourism brand used for leisure. A key issue, therefore, for the consulting team was to assess if Bournemouth already had an appropriate market-led, evidence-based brand architecture that stakeholders can understand and support.

The project team was only given access to the summary of the Davies Tanner “Conference Coast” brand development work and, therefore, cannot comment on the rationale behind this.

However, from the limited buyer research we undertook and our experience of working with other business tourism coastal destinations, perceptions are that the seaside / coastal imagery does not appeal widely to the meetings market.

Buyer research also suggests that location is one of the top 3 drivers to placing business and that generally buyers prefer city/town-led brands rather than “regions” or “themes”. For this reason the project team would recommend that more research is carried out into the perception of buyers with regards to the current Bournemouth image and their perception of seaside / coastal brands in the UK.

The team also reviewed the Bournemouth Tourism brand work that was carried out approximately 3 years ago and has the values of “beauty”, “warmth” and “different experiences” as its core values. This appears to be a good example of well thought out destination brand development following a widely used and accepted destination brand approach. It is vital that the business tourism brand embodies the same values as the leisure offering.

Recommendations:

We would suggest that, following the completion of further buyer research, Phase 2 considers the development of the brand within the context of the Bournemouth Tourism existing brand architecture.

5.9 Brand Name

Whilst the current “Meet Bournemouth” brand is used by the Convention Bureau within BH Live, we would suggest that the Phase 2 research considers the views of buyers on this and also the views of stakeholders. Going forward, other titles such as “Business Events Bournemouth” may be more appropriate.

5.10 Product Development

There are key areas that need to be developed to allow Bournemouth to regain its market share and ensure it can win business and grow its market share in today’s competitive market place.

Product knowledge

1) There is a lack of available data on bed stock, standards, current re-furbishment / redevelopment projects for the business tourism market in Bournemouth.

We would suggest therefore that Bournemouth:

- establishes / maintains and reviews annually a definitive and dynamic product database
- creates a tourism investment monitor to plot capital investment programmes within the area
- measures activity and impact by creating a local research model or encouraging greater participation in the UK studies which would allow a town-led report to be produced
- creates a programme to encourage greater understanding of the Return on Investment of business tourism-related development activity amongst the trade

2) We recommend that Phase 2 draws up a detailed project development plan to include the following:

- Conference and exhibition facilities: consider a feasibility plan for re-development of the BIC
- Quality of Venues: encourage participation by venues in business meetings accreditation such as MIA’s AIM assurance scheme. Consider grant-related schemes to encourage new investment and re-development
- Quality of accommodation: encourage venues to optimise their product in relation to target business markets by sharing best practice and engaging more fully with BAHA
- Transport infrastructure: preparing a business case for business events to lobby for improved rail links

Section 6 BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES FROM OTHER DESTINATIONS

6.1 This section looks at some examples of best practice among other destinations and highlights a number of emerging trends in terms of their approach to market and their alignment with key sectors of their local economies. Some comparative destination data were included in the research undertaken by Dominique Betts (based in large measure on earlier research undertaken by the consultant project team), looking primarily at second tier destinations. This showed:

- Funding streams: Cardiff, Liverpool, Newcastle operate membership programmes; they also offer tiers of corporate membership with fees ranging from £5000 to £50,000; and they generate revenue from joint marketing activities. Caveat: membership income is only a small percentage of their total income
- Commission: cities such as Leeds and Newcastle earn between £50,000 and £100,000 in commission
- Convention bureau marketing budgets: they range from relatively small budgets (i.e. less than £50,000) to approx. £200,000 for cities such as Liverpool and Newcastle
- Staffing and Job Roles: typically there are between 3 FTE staff (e.g. Cardiff) and 6 FTE staff, although many invest in additional external resources (e.g. for PR activity).

It was apparent from discussions with Bournemouth stakeholders that Brighton was viewed both as a major competitor but also as an example that many in Bournemouth would wish to emulate in view of its recent product investments and successes in securing events business. The project team spoke to VisitBrighton's convention bureau manager and elicited the following information:

- The convention bureau is administered by 4.5 FTE staff (1 x manager, 1 x sales manager, 3 x P/T sales officers; 1 x accommodation bureau manager)
- Marketing is undertaken by VisitBrighton's marketing team and is niche, focused marketing to tightly defined buyer groups
- The convention bureau does not operate a membership scheme: venues and suppliers pay a one-off joining fee to VisitBrighton but the convention bureau treats them as 'partners' – partners pay commission to the convention bureau for any business that is secured via the bureau's referrals, but no annual partnership fee. Partner retention is excellent with just a 10 per cent churn year on year
- The bureau has a very close relationship with the Brighton Centre but, in order to preserve the integrity of the bureau, 'clear water' is most definitely put between the two. There are quarterly meetings to discuss strategy and activity, allowing budget maximisation and ensuring there is no undue crossover or duplication. The sales teams deal individually with any bids they receive but, should the Brighton Centre receive an enquiry which they cannot accommodate, they will refer this to the bureau
- The bureau's main revenue streams are derived from commissions on conference delegate accommodation bookings and commission on venue hire

- In 2012 the bureau's sales team handled 138 conference enquiries (an increase of 11 per cent on 2011) worth a potential £136 million in direct economic benefit. In 2012 47 bookings were confirmed bringing £77 million of economic benefit to Brighton.

6.2 Alignment of Event Bidding with Local Economy

There is now a clearly discernible trend for conference destinations to focus their bidding activity on attracting events for which there is a real synergy with the local economy. For example, London & Partners (London's destination marketing organisation) has now set its sights on growing four specific industries: technology, life sciences, the creative industries, and financial/banking/business services. Through inward investment, it hopes to make London a world leader in these sectors – and an integral part of its strategy includes attracting high profile international events. Tracy Halliwell, Director of Business Tourism for London & Partners, is quoted in the September 2013 issue of 'Meetings & Incentive Travel' magazine, as saying:

'We have taken the four sectors London is already strong in. If we can attract more events in that space we'll get more support from the city to bring them in. Meetings and events can support foreign direct investment and growth in these sectors, have a take-up effect on study and create and support new jobs. We know our enquiries brought £100 million to £120 million in economic benefit in the Olympic year and we have a target of 8 to 10 per cent growth this year.'

In February 2013 Birmingham announced that it was considering taking political conferences off its agenda post-2014 in favour of hosting events more aligned with the city's economic growth, and designed to maximise investment opportunities with a range of events. Sir Albert Bore, Leader of Birmingham City Council, said at the time:

'Looking beyond 2014, we are aiming to attract events in sectors the city is also targeting for investment. These events will bring industry leaders and decision makers to Birmingham, creating opportunities for us to showcase the city's offer as a business destination. This will ensure that events held here act as a catalyst for the city's economic growth.'

In Manchester, Steven Small, Head of Business Tourism at Visit Manchester, writes (September 2013, 'Conference News'):

'In the North West we understand the value of business events, not only as a direct contributor to the local economy, but as a way of highlighting the region's strength in key academic and industry sectors. These events attract leading academics, industrialists, business people and entrepreneurs and are a great way to showcase the region and help attract investment and trade.'

6.3 Marketing Initiatives

There seems to be a trend for destinations to avoid spreading their marketing budgets too thinly by trying to do too many things and, instead, to work on perhaps one major promotional activity a year. Examples of this are:

- ‘From York Minster to Westminster’ – a buyer showcase and meal (held in Spring 2013) organised in London by Visit York, which attracted around 50 conference buyers. It took months in the planning and cost around £20k, but generated substantial profile and actual enquiries, with enquiries still being received six months later on the back of this event
- The Leeds ‘Big Sleepover’, organised by Leeds Hotel & Venues Association, held in May 2013 attracted around 150 buyers and media to Leeds for a 3-day/2-night fam. trip
- Meet Birmingham’s 2013 buyer showcase involved more than 50 hours of face-to-face meetings and 15 venue visits for 25 national buyers. The attendees collectively place over 15,000 events each year.

In parallel with this trend, Glasgow has launched two innovative schemes of support for conference buyers:

‘The Glasgow Model’, launched in 2010, is a form of risk-sharing with organisers of association conventions, which reduces venue hire costs for the Scottish Exhibition + Conference Centre in line with anticipated delegate numbers but sees the hire costs increase as delegate numbers build. The Glasgow City Marketing Bureau team are very proactive in helping associations to maximise their revenue streams and to maximise delegate numbers.

Glasgow’s ‘You 1st’ scheme was launched in 2012 and is designed to deliver real benefits to conference organisers and their delegates through innovative new-to-market solutions. The ethos of ‘You 1st’ is to create a unique partnership with the organiser to understand their conference ambitions and make it happen in Glasgow. For example, a series of ‘firsts’ was created for the Diabetes UK Professional Conference, held in March 2012 – these included a city Smartphone app and a 5k fun run, and both assets provided new revenue streams for Diabetes UK. For the European Congress of Immunology, a city lighting project was delivered to achieve the ultimate welcome for international delegates attending the conference. This involved illuminating the iconic Clyde Arc Bridge in the congress brand colour, and lighting the exterior and interior of the University of Glasgow to welcome guests to the President’s dinner.

6.4 Recommendations

1. Investigate the scope for corporate membership by major corporations in Bournemouth, especially finance companies. Also aim to attract funding support

from other bodies with an interest in business events and tourism sectors, identified by stakeholders, including the two BIDs, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and 'Business Angels' investors (via the Chamber).

2. Examine the modus operandi of VisitBrighton's convention bureau to harness ideas which will work for the new Bournemouth model
3. Build close links with Bournemouth Borough Council's economic development team in order to align Bournemouth's bidding for major events with the strengths of the Bournemouth economy and future growth sector potential
4. Work towards a major Bournemouth event for buyers in 2014, seeking a distinctive creative appeal
5. Build close, collaborative partnerships with buyers, à la Glasgow model, in order to personalise and make available to them Bournemouth's unique attractions.

Section 7: OBJECTIVES FOR BOURNEMOUTH

7.1 Current Issues - Stakeholder Feedback

The consultation process showed a number of key issues for the development of Business Tourism in Bournemouth (full summary is shown at Appendix B):

- There is universal support for Business Tourism and a strong bureau with a clear strategy and measureable KPIs
- Everyone agreed that a “one stop shop” is needed and that the current approach is disjointed
- There is a current lack of support for Meet Bournemouth from the trade, with no understanding of its strategy
- There is potential in the Association sector but it’s not being targeted appropriately
- Parts of BIC and hotel stock need upgrading.

7.2 Buyer perceptions

The project team undertook some limited research into buyer perceptions, seeking the views of 4 major Agencies in the UK - Banks Sadler, MCI, Zibrant and Index Communications Meeting Services (full details are shown at Appendix A).

The views show some interesting views on the product and brand:

- The perception is that Bournemouth is a leisure destination
- Lack of a national profile, buyers were largely ignorant of what the resort can offer
- General client feedback on hotels (e.g. The Village) used for smaller events has been good
- Marketing should focus on its accessibility and value for money
- Needs joined-up approach to marketing with everyone working together – put Bournemouth on buyers’ radar
- Impression that hotels are traditional and old fashioned
- Needs investment in infrastructure although there are some good hotel options in the wider destination for corporate meetings (e.g. Chewton Glen, Linewood, Hotel du Vin, Pig)
- Too few 4-star hotels within walking distance of BIC
- Hotels won’t give large bedroom allocations
- Transport links not good
- BIC is being overshadowed by new openings and developments elsewhere (e.g. ACC, EICC) and by high profile events (e.g. Commonwealth Games for SECC)
- International associations’ may be deterred as the resort is seen as too far west, with poor quality/range of accommodation and a bit ‘elderly’.

7.3 Needs

The consultations identified a number of needs:

1) Need for a “one stop shop” body / bureau that fairly represent all industries in the town
Kerrin McPhie, Sales Director ACC Liverpool explains the need for this:

“In Liverpool we are seeing the trend towards decision-making based on the destination appeal in addition to the venue, as it is considered a ‘given’ that, if we are talking to a client, we can accommodate the event and all of its requirements beyond the venue itself. Working together with Liverpool Convention Bureau, at ACC Liverpool we talk to clients about every aspect of their event, giving them a one-stop shop and single point of contact for every need, something association clients want in particular.”

2) Need for a product development plan and the lobbying of this plan for business events at a high level

3) the need for research on business events to establish a baseline

4) Above all there was a need for transparency and improved communication

The lack of a clearly defined prioritised business tourism / business events strategy and action plan for Bournemouth (as opposed to Bournemouth Tourism or BH Live) provides a situation where it is unclear what contribution any of the partners will make and, therefore, what is the demonstrable need for a Convention Bureau, and what role the current structure delivered via Meet Bournemouth plays.

Analysis of the current situation suggests that the lack of clear direction for Business Tourism in the current town-wide tourism strategy suggests that there is no acknowledgement of the importance of this sector, no integration with the clearly successful leisure function of the town and no agreed position for taking Business Tourism forward.

Furthermore, whilst Meet Bournemouth lacks a Convention Bureau strategy, the duties of the Convention and Conference Sub Group are not clearly articulated either. These two key issues manifest themselves in the activities of Meet Bournemouth lacking focus and the Conference and Convention Group being unable to influence / direct this activity.

The town needs a strategic lead for Business Events, an issue acknowledged and embraced by all stakeholders. There is 100% support for this which was clear from our consultations. However, this needs an agreement on the town strategy for Business Events and a complete realignment of the function and form of Meet Bournemouth.

7.4 Recommendations

We recommend therefore that:

- the current Bournemouth Tourism strategy is revised to encompass clear direction, support and priority actions for Business Tourism / Business Events
- the partners agree the need for a town-wide Business Events strategy and action plan that sets out the priorities for the destination in achieving its business events goals

- this strategy is approved by the Convention and Conference Group and Bournemouth Tourism Management Board as being the mechanism through which the objectives will be achieved
- that a “new” convention bureau is established which is a true, transparent partnership and is configured to manage and coordinate the delivery of this strategy ensuring that activities undertaken by the organisation are only undertaken where they can show a direct link to the strategy and action plan.

Recommendations for a Bournemouth Convention Bureau

With specific regard to a Bournemouth Convention Bureau we recommend the following:

- that the role and function of Meet Bournemouth be maintained at least in the short term pending the development of the new Bureau
- that the approach adopted by the new body should focus on developing targets that are quantitative as well as qualitative e.g. to raise the profile of Bournemouth in specific target markets over a period of time and not place too much reliance on short term measurement of business
- that Bournemouth develops a marketing plan that targets segments of the business events market that give best return on investment (ROI) and offer the best product market fit for the Bournemouth business events product
- that the marketing plan should also develop more targeted approach to CRM and e-marketing rather than undertaking generic marketing (e.g. attendance at national exhibitions) in order to demonstrate better ROI
- that Bournemouth develops a membership strategy that links membership contributions to the delivery of clear outputs. The Bureau should also work with its membership to develop a portfolio of marketing opportunities for the venues, this will not only increase membership involvement and encourage better engagement with the private sector but also provide additional revenue income streams for the bureau.

7.5 The Way Forward

Given that there is strong support from private and public sector partners it is vital that business tourism is seen as a key part of the overall Bournemouth tourism product.

The current framework that exists marginalises business tourism on a number of fronts:

- The position of Meet Bournemouth sitting within BH Live means that business tourism is seen as part of BH Live and not as a sector important to the town in its own right. It is not, for example, seen to be as high a profile as leisure tourism across the town despite the obvious potential overlap between the two areas.
- The performance of business tourism is analysed currently on the business placed via BH Live and Meet Bournemouth, without taking into account the wider remit of raising the profile of Bournemouth as a destination in which to do business

7.6 Options appraisal

As part of the brief, the project team has undertaken an options appraisal for the way forward for Bournemouth.

The 4 options considered were:

- The new bureau remains within BH Live
- The new bureau forms part of Bournemouth Tourism
- A new body is created, autonomously of both BH Live and Bournemouth Tourism, funded by all partners but self-governing and delivering all activities in house
- A “hybrid” approach whereby a new Bureau is created independently of both Bournemouth Tourism and BH Live but utilises staffing resources and expertise from the both bodies (for example via secondment of existing staff or sub-contracting of specific functions).

Option1: Remaining within BH Live

The advantages of this option are:

- Close working relationship with sales team at BH Live maintained
- Marketing and admin support from BH Live
- Harnesses skills within BH Live

The disadvantages of this option are:

- The new bureau would not be seen as a town-wide resource and would not therefore gain the support of the trade
- The new bureau would continue to report to the BH Live board
- No alignment of the needs of the town with the strategy of BH Live
- Lack of engagement with the Convention and Conference Sub group

Option 2: The new bureau forms part of Bournemouth Tourism

The advantages of this option are:

- Business tourism will be considered alongside leisure tourism when looking at available resources
- Better integration of tourism activity with less duplication of effort
- Skill sharing amongst staff
- Harnesses skills within Bournemouth Tourism

The disadvantages of this option are:

- The convention bureau would not be viewed as independent and would not therefore gain the support of the trade
- The bureau would not have a high profile across the town and nationally

Option 3: A new body is created, autonomously of both BH Live and Bournemouth Tourism, funded by all partners but self-governing and delivering all activities in house

The advantages of this are:

- Establishes an independence and enables all trade partners to buy into the concept
- Creates a much needed and vital transparency

The disadvantages of this are:

- It is the most costly option
- It does not utilise existing skills
- It creates more reporting structures and boards for a town that already has an structure in place
- May not achieve full buy-in from all stakeholders

Option 4: A “hybrid” approach whereby a new Bureau is created independently of both Bournemouth Tourism and BH Live but utilises staffing resources and expertise from the both bodies

The advantages of this option are:

- Establishes an independence and enables all trade partners to buy into the concept
- Creates a much needed and vital transparency
- Business tourism will be given a much needed higher profile at a town and national level
- The reporting structure will be simplified and utilise existing structures but more effectively than at present
- better integration of tourism activity with less duplication of effort
- Skill sharing amongst staff
- Maintains the close working relationship with BH Live

The disadvantages of this option are:

- It will require skill and strong leadership to maintain its independence
- Governance and day-to-day reporting will require careful evaluation.

Recommendation

The Project Team recommends that Option 4 is explored in Phase 2 of the report

7.7 Roles of a Convention Bureau

The project team has listed here the roles of a convention bureau to assist with phase 2 of the project when reviewing the form and function.

The key roles are as follows:

- Management – defining strategy, lobbying locally, regionally and nationally for business events in Bournemouth, high level negotiation
- Sales
- Marketing & PR including social media
- Conference Ambassador Programme Management
- Membership Development & Management
- Enquiry Handling
- Accommodation Booking
- Administration
- Subvention Administration

SECTION 8 MEASURING SUCCESS

8.1 It was clear from the stakeholder workshop held on 5 September that people understand and accept the need for future marketing and development activity to be focused on the buyer or customer, and the products and service levels that buyers expect and demand if they are to bring business to a particular destination and its venues and suppliers.

The Body Shop retail company has expressed the importance of the customer in its mission statement as follows:

A customer is the most important visitor on our premises. She is not dependent on us. We are dependent on her. She is not an interruption to our work. She is the purpose of it. She is not an outsider in our business. She is part of it. We are not doing her a favour by serving her. She is doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to do so.

There is no reason why Bournemouth could not encourage and develop such a strong customer orientation, both from the top downwards and from the bottom upwards.

It is crucial for destinations to present a united front to the buyer, to be seen to act collaboratively and to bring together the services, facilities and attractions of a host destination through a one-stop shop or holistic approach. As one of the buyers we approached commented: "Sell Bournemouth more as a destination. I'd like to see all of the venues working together to win business for the destination and not just for each other." There are many examples of the lack of a joined-up approach with, for instance, convention bureau staff and convention centre staff working to separate, uncoordinated strategies, and it quickly becomes apparent to the customer that fragmentation and disunity will pose a major threat to the success of their event. Bournemouth's re-launch and re-positioning in the business events sector must, therefore, be underpinned by a strong, coherent, holistic structure and approach.

8.2 KPIs

Measurements of performance and success are likely to be based on a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which should feature, inter alia:

1. Recruitment of new members or partners
 - a. *Number of members/partners recruited for the new entity*
 - b. *Value of their contribution to the entity financially or with in-kind support*
 - c. *Participation in joint marketing initiatives*
 - d. *Retention of members/partners in years 2, 3 and beyond*
2. Recruitment of conference ambassadors

- a. *Number and quality (ie. likelihood of bidding for an event and the synergies of the event(s) with the Bournemouth economy) of conference ambassadors recruited*
 - b. *Links with Bournemouth's existing 'Affiliate' scheme*
 - c. *Number of conference bids led by ambassadors with CVB support*
 - d. *Successful outcomes of bids and value of business achieved through ambassador involvement*
 - e. *Positive impacts for the wider Bournemouth economy in terms of inward investment opportunities, development of research projects, professional development of key individuals, enhanced reputation of Bournemouth universities, companies and organisations*
3. Effectiveness of PR activity
 - a. *Targets for activity and exposure across a range of broadcast and digital media*
 - b. *Measurement of the effectiveness of such PR activity in combating ignorance of the Bournemouth 'offer' and in changing perceptions of destination Bournemouth*
 4. Take-up and use of the business events destination branding theme(s) by venues and suppliers
 - a. *Use of the destination brand by venues and suppliers in their own marketing collateral*
 - b. *Use of the brand in venue reception areas, at the railway station, airport, visitor attractions*
 - c. *Ensuring an ongoing linkage with, and alignment to, the overall Bournemouth brand*
 - d. *Agreement to a new destination marketing event/programme (e.g. Bournemouth Showcase, You 1st or similar) to be promoted at a pan-destination level*
 5. Alignment of conference/business events marketing strategy with strategies for inward investment, economic development and the universities' research and curriculum priorities
 - a. *Identify and agree key economic and academic sectors*
 - b. *Devise and implement joined-up strategies for promoting conferences/business events, inward investment activity, research activity*
 6. Sales activity of CVB staff and new leads generated
 - a. *Measuring the volume of sales calls and other sales activity by CVB staff against agreed targets*
 - b. *Monitoring the number of leads generated and circulated to Bournemouth venues*
 - c. *Assessing success ratios and value of this sales activity*
 7. Transparency in communications, reporting and partnership across the destination

- a. *Establishing agreed methods, frequency and content for trans-destination communications*
 - b. *Securing buy-in to new hotel accommodation bookings systems for conference delegates*
 - c. *Securing buy-in to conference target markets formulated and agreed at a destination level*
 - d. *Establishing and communicating a clear subvention policy*
8. Number of site inspections coordinated at a destination level
- a. *Set targets for number of site inspections by conference buyer type (corporate, association, agency, plus media)*
 - b. *Establish ROI methodology for such inspections*
9. Number of conference and event bids made and conversion rates
10. Delegate bed nights and delegate satisfaction
- a. *Assess total numbers of delegates and numbers staying residentially in Bournemouth*
 - b. *Carry out satisfaction surveys among delegates to gain insights into product and service development enhancements*
11. Volume and value of business confirmed
- a. *Number of events secured*
 - b. *Value in terms of direct and indirect impact of such events*
 - c. *Estimates of jobs created/sustained*
 - d. *Percentage of clients retained (including lost business reporting)*
12. Education, training and quality improvements
- a. *Assess the levels of conference sector knowledge, expertise and skills across the destination (among venues, hotels, suppliers)*
 - b. *Investigate and implement education and training programmes to address any skills and knowledge deficiencies identified*
 - c. *Assess the benefits of achieving 'AIM' accreditation for Bournemouth venues*
13. Highlighting and publicising the achievements of conferences and events held in the destination
- a. *Set targets for promoting the achievements of specific conferences for individuals (e.g. in terms of professional development, networking benefits), for organisations (e.g. launch of new collaborative research or curricular programmes for the universities), local businesses (new business partnerships created, new investment funding generated), local population (e.g. educational presentations by international experts, healthcare activity in the community delivered by conference attendees who are experts in their respective fields – CSR element)*
14. Customer satisfaction and feedback surveys

- a. *Implement annual surveys among key buyers/customers to glean feedback on Bournemouth's performance, identify areas for improvement, publicise changes and developments being made in response to the survey findings.*

Criteria

Initially we suggest that the most vital criteria are as follows:

- Profile raised (monitored via evaluation of press coverage)
- Enquiries handled and business converted (monitored via CHASER and to include targets for customer retention and regular monitoring of lost business reports)
- Overall performance of the town (monitored via research)

8.3 Targets

Bournemouth Convention Bureau should develop targets in line with the above indicators; however these can only be agreed once the final budget situation is clarified.

The project team would suggest that, based on the recommended activity outlined above, the following targets would be appropriate (however, these will obviously be subject to change once the final plan and budgets are known):

Activity:	Measurement	Target
PR	Press coverage secured	Coverage of Bournemouth in national trade publications once per month and twice per month regionally
Lead Generation	CHASER enquiry report	Increase number of conference enquiries to 130 per annum with 15 of these Association conferences generated by the Affiliate programme (see below)
Enquiry conversion	CHASER enquiry report	Convert 40% of the leads per annum into confirmed business
Ambassador programme	CHASER enquiry source report	Secure 15 residential Association conferences per annum via the Affiliate programme
Membership	Level of membership	Increase membership, aiming for 50 members in year 1
Research	UKEMS	Secure 15 partners' participation in the UKEMTS 2014 to enable an annual sub-regional report to be produced

Section 9 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that Phase 2 of this project should consider establishing baseline data on business events in Bournemouth to enable the destination to monitor its success in this market. The data, for example, could include:
 - Volume – number of events, number of delegates, occupancy data
 - Type of events - by economic sector, by type (conference, exhibition, meeting, incentive etc), residential v non-residential
 - Value – day rates, 24 hr rates, economic impact

2. We recommend that:
 - the current Bournemouth Tourism strategy be revised to encompass clear direction, support and priority actions for Business Tourism / Business Events
 - the partners agree the need for a town-wide Business Events strategy and action plan that sets out the priorities for the destination in achieving its business events goals
 - this strategy be approved by the Conference and Convention Group and Bournemouth Tourism Management Board as being the mechanism through which the objectives will be achieved
 - a “new” convention bureau be established which is a true, transparent partnership and is configured to manage and coordinate the delivery of this strategy, ensuring that activities undertaken by the organisation are only undertaken where they can show a direct link to the strategy and action plan.

3. With specific regard to a Bournemouth Convention Bureau we recommend the following:
 - that the role and function of Meet Bournemouth be maintained at least in the short term pending the development of the new Bureau
 - that the approach adopted by the new body should focus on developing targets that are quantitative as well as qualitative e.g. to raise the profile of Bournemouth in specific target markets over a period of time and not place too much reliance on short term measurement of business
 - that Bournemouth develops a marketing plan that targets segments of the business events market which give best return on investment and offer the best product market fit for the Bournemouth business tourism product
 - that the marketing plan should also develop a more targeted approach to CRM and e-marketing rather than undertaking generic marketing (e.g. attendance at national exhibitions) in order to demonstrate better ROI
 - that Bournemouth develops a membership strategy that links membership contributions to the delivery of clear outputs. The Bureau should also work with its membership to develop a portfolio of marketing opportunities for the venues, this will not only increase membership involvement and encourage better engagement with the private sector but also provide additional revenue income

streams for the Bureau.

4. We recommend Option 4 as the preferred option for creating a new Conference Bureau: A “hybrid” approach whereby a new Bureau is created independently of both Bournemouth Tourism and BH Live but utilises staffing resources and expertise from the both bodies.
5. We recommend that:
 - Under the new structure, KPIs should be clearly identified
 - the enquiry handling system be designed to ensure that data is captured accurately and staff are properly trained on recording , monitoring and report producing on the CHASER system
6. Build close links with Bournemouth Borough Council’s economic development team in order to align Bournemouth’s bidding for major events with the strengths of the Bournemouth economy and future growth sector potential
7. Build close, collaborative partnerships with buyers, à la Glasgow model, in order to personalise and make available to them Bournemouth’s unique attractions
8. Investigate the scope for corporate membership by major corporations in Bournemouth, especially finance companies. Also aim to attract funding support from other bodies with an interest in the business events and tourism sectors identified by stakeholders, including the two BIDs, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and ‘Business Angels’ investors (via Chamber)
9. Examine the modus operandi of VisitBrighton’s convention bureau to harness ideas which will work for the new Bournemouth model
10. We recommend that a full product market fit analysis is undertaken and a marketing plan developed as part of Phase 2 of the project.
11. The Affiliate programme should be developed, deferring the extension of the Conference Ambassador programme to a wider geographical area (i.e. Southampton, New Forest, Dorset) until Stage 3 of the project.
12. Further buyer perception research should be undertaken to robustly inform the development of the Business Tourism strategy
13. Phase 2 considers the development of the brand within the context of the existing Bournemouth Tourism brand architecture.

14. With regards to product development we would suggest that Bournemouth:
- a. Establishes / maintains and review annually a definitive and dynamic product database
 - b. creates a tourism investment monitor to plot capital investment programmes within area
 - c. Measures activity and impact by creation a local research model or encouraging greater participation in the UK studies which would allow a town-led report to be produced
 - d. Create a programme to encourage greater understanding of the Return on Investment of business tourism related development activity amongst trade
15. We recommend that Phase 2 draws up a detailed product development plan to include the following:
- a. Conference and exhibition facilities: consider a feasibility plan for re-development of the BIC
 - b. Quality of Venues: encourage participation by venues in business meetings accreditation such as MIA's AIM assurance scheme. Consider grant-related schemes to encourage new investment and re-development
 - c. Quality of accommodation: encourage venues to optimise their product in relation to target business markets by sharing best practice and engaging more fully with BAHA
 - d. Transport infrastructure: preparing a business case for business events to lobby for improved rail links

ENDS

Sue Beverley, CHS Group

Tony Rogers, Tony Rogers Conference and Event Services

September 2013.

APPENDIX A. COMMENTS FROM BUYERS

Feedback on their and their clients' perceptions of Bournemouth was gleaned from several leading conference and event management agencies, including Banks Sadler, Index Communications Meeting Services, MCI UK, and Zibrant. Research among buyers had also been undertaken by Dominique Betts while working on a limited term assignment with BH Live. A summary of the key comments is set out below:

The work by Dominique found that Bournemouth's main attractions and advantages were (with percentage of respondents shown in brackets):

- Attractive/seaside destination (66%)
- Image/service/facilities (21%)
- Accessibility (4%)
- Value for money (2%)

The main disadvantages were identified as:

- Location/too far south/not central enough (55%)
- Image/service/facilities (13%)
- Poor transport links (11%)
- Quality of venues and accommodation (6%)

One of the largest barriers was identified as travel and transport: Bournemouth is perceived as too far from northern cities and London; there is no international airport; transport from the train station for delegates could be improved.

Agency comments were:

- Bournemouth is perceived as a leisure destination
- Location should be sold differently (e.g. sell as a 'Southern' option to organisations with a rotating pattern of conferences) and better access needed. Transport links are not good
- Bournemouth offers a choice of accommodation and prices, sea views and seafront with southern English weather and reasonable transport links. It offers a reasonable quality of life while there on business or as a delegate. Clients feel it is a bit of a hike to get there but links from Hurn Airport and Southampton Airport give some advantage for flying in speakers – London Heathrow and Gatwick are an effort but the transport is well organised, though somewhat pricey

- Bournemouth lacks profile – buyers are ignorant about what Bournemouth can offer
- General feedback from clients on Bournemouth hotels used for smaller events has been good (e.g. The Village). An alternative comment was that there is an impression that the hotels are traditional and old fashioned. It was also suggested that there are some good hotels in the wider destination for corporate meetings (e.g. Chewton Glen, Linewood, Hotel du Vin, Pig). Lack of 4-star hotels within walking distance of BIC. Also good to hear that there have been some recent investments by existing hotels in Bournemouth
- Hotels won't give large bedroom allocations
- Has a major proactive hospital
- Numerous small businesses offering experiences nearby (e.g. outdoor pursuits)
- There needs to be a joined-up approach to marketing with everyone working together, in order to put Bournemouth on the buyers' radar
- Focus on Bournemouth's accessibility and value for money
- There needs to be an investment in infrastructure
- Inconsistent level of service offered by Bournemouth's accommodation providers – still many low budget services
- Still a weak brand image: seaside, old population (though this is not actually the case)
- Discounted rail travel is lacking
- Hotel price hikes are excessive when conferences are in town
- BIC needs to be better trained and more professional in handling clients, though there are some good people at higher management levels
- The BIC is not agent-friendly: they request written confirmation from the end-user client that an agency is working for them before they will do an availability check
- The BIC has been overshadowed by new openings and developments elsewhere (e.g. ACC Liverpool, Edinburgh International Conference Centre) and by high profile events (e.g. Commonwealth Games for SECC, Glasgow)
- International associations' reasons for not choosing Bournemouth included: too far west; poor quality/range of accommodation; a bit 'elderly'
- A positive, coherent approach to conference business is needed from the major suppliers (BIC, hotels, etc.)
- Improve the general level of front of house training, support staff attitude. Create a mentoring system alongside training events
- BIC sales staff are efficient and helpful; event management staff need to improve as they lack awareness of clients' needs
- One agency suggested that tourist destinations only succeed as conference destinations if there is a strong local ambassador or a great social programme (where social programmes are a strong draw for delegates).

- The same agency asked: what is Bournemouth's unique selling proposition (USP)?

APPENDIX B

Perth Convention Bureau's 'Beyond Compliance' Programme

Perth Convention Bureau (PCB) in Western Australia has pioneered an initiative with the State's Disability Services Commission and a local university that aims to see Western Australia become the nation's leading convention destination for people with disabilities. Known as 'Beyond Compliance', the project seeks to bring about social change by rewarding tourism industry operators who are proactive in improving their accessibility.

It is a best practice example of how a convention bureau can partner with local organisations to help them achieve their objectives and, by so doing, directly stimulate more conference activity in their destination.

'Beyond Compliance' has developed as a component of the PCB's Customer Relationship Management Programme. Each of the PCB's 14 staff members, from the accountant to the managing director, is allocated a specific industry portfolio and charged with the responsibility of developing convention leads from that sector as part of their role. They also become experts in that field and follow trends, innovations, research grants and findings, and trade deals, as well as developing a network of industry relationships in the sector for which they are responsible.

When Scott Campbell, PCB's Research Manager, took on the disability sector portfolio in 2003, he was amazed at the sector's receptiveness and willingness to work in partnership with PCB. Initially, the programme involved researching the potential size and value of the disability sector and obtaining statistics demonstrating its impact on the State economy. This work was done in association with Curtin University (Perth) and undertaken by students as part of their curriculum training at no cost to PCB.

From this initial research it became clear that the disability sector organisations were quick to respond to new opportunities and, by facilitating business links between PCB's members (the tourism suppliers) and the State Government agency charged with representing the needs of the sector, the programme grew to the point where the State tourism body and Disability Services Commission formed a joint venture to work co-operatively in order to achieve social change.

Objectives

The objectives of the 'Beyond Compliance' programme are to:

- 1) Promote Western Australia as a leading tourism destination for people with disabilities
- 2) Improve accessibility and facilities for disabled visitors
- 3) Secure or create disability sector conferences to be held in Western Australia.

While objectives one and two are broader than PCB's business tourism charter, they form the methodology by which objective three, the Bureau's objective, is achieved.

PCB's primary target audience was the 96 associations within the sector that were represented in Western Australia and had possible links to national and international conferences. The initial objective was to create awareness of the project and motivate these associations to consider bidding or to create new meetings.

The initial sales target was to generate five convention bid leads from the disability sector and convert at least two of them for the destination within 12 months.

The sector has traditionally been serviced rather than sought after and so is not used to being viewed or courted as a resource and opportunity. The association network, therefore, responded enthusiastically to the new opportunities presented to them and were keen to participate.

Results

By the end of 2004 PCB had sourced three international and seven national convention bidding opportunities in the disability sector, of which six were secured for Western Australia, one elected not to proceed to bid, and three were at the bid development stage.

The Future

Phase 1 of the program was such an outstanding success that the program has received a funding boost and will be profiled internationally with the objective of generating international conference business from within Europe.

The 'Beyond Compliance' programme won the Best Marketing Award at the International Congress and Convention Association's congress held in Cape Town in October 2004.

(A more detailed version of the 'Beyond Compliance' case study is available from the project team)