

News Release

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Event Associations Give the Go-Ahead to Industry Professionalisation

The UK events sector took a major step forward in terms of creating a genuine profession for those working in it at a workshop held on 22 February. Convened by the Business Visits & Events Partnership (BV&EP), the umbrella organisation for the UK's business tourism and events industry, the workshop agreed to progress proposals for a cohesive framework of qualifications, skills development, continuing professional development (CPD) and supporting information and advisory services.

The workshop, held with support from 'International Confex', was attended by representatives from over 40 trade associations and more than 30 universities, plus leading events sector employers and national bodies including VisitBritain and People 1st, the sector skills council covering the events industry. Speakers included Martin-Christian Kent, People 1st's Research & Policy Director, Conor Moss, Workforce Development Fellow at the University of Derby, Susan Spibey of SJS International, and Roger McCartney, Regional Manager for the Chartered Management Institute. Peter Rand MBE, Director of Industry Relations at Zibrant, moderated the workshop.

Delegates debated issues and opportunities summarised in a consultation paper prepared specifically for the workshop (a copy of the paper is available on the BV&EP web site – see below). Key outcomes from the workshop include proposals to establish:

- an Institute of Event Management as an autonomous body to accredit the education offerings of educational institutions, trade associations and private training providers and to implement a structure for continuing professional development
- a dedicated web portal as a route to existing and new information on courses, qualifications, careers and career pathways

There was also widespread support for the importance of validating and embracing an individual's prior experience as well as their educational qualifications, as part of any assessment of their professional competence.

"I believe that we are now seeing a broad consensus on the way forward, both in terms of developing relevant qualifications and providing a cohesive professional development framework," commented Michael Hirst OBE, BV&EP Chairman. "I believe that the next step is to pull together a Business Plan and implement the process and deliver the framework to industry employers and employees through the various sector trade and professional associations and, where necessary, directly to major employers. We are keen to involve anyone interested in this process."

Martin-Christian Kent of People 1st said: *"Our recent research into the skill requirements of the events industry has found that, whilst employers are training, they clearly are looking for a more formalised continuing professional development solution. The workshop at Confex has enabled employers, educators and other partners to come together to start making this a reality. If we get this right, it will provide a route to recognise the broader skills of our workforce and highlight the professionalism of the events industry."*

A copy of the discussion paper presented at the workshop, as well as slides of the presentations given, can be downloaded from the BV&EP web site: www.businessstourismpartnership.com. Anyone interested in contributing to the implementation process as described above is invited to contact Tony Rogers at Tony Rogers Conference & Event Services (tel: 07887 596727 or email: tony@tony-rogers.com).

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