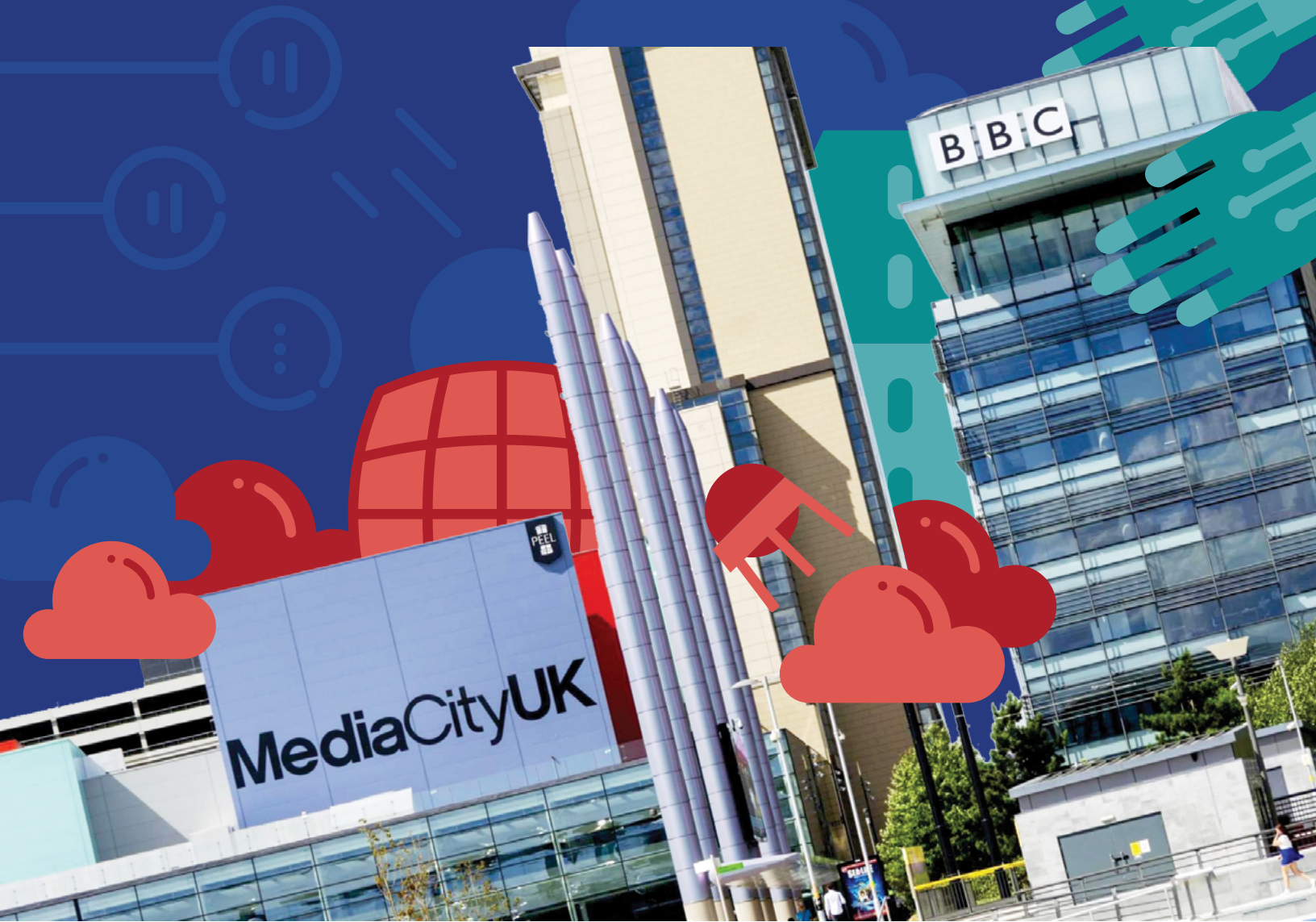


HOW UK CITIES EXCEL AT HOSTING CONFERENCES IN ADVANCED AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



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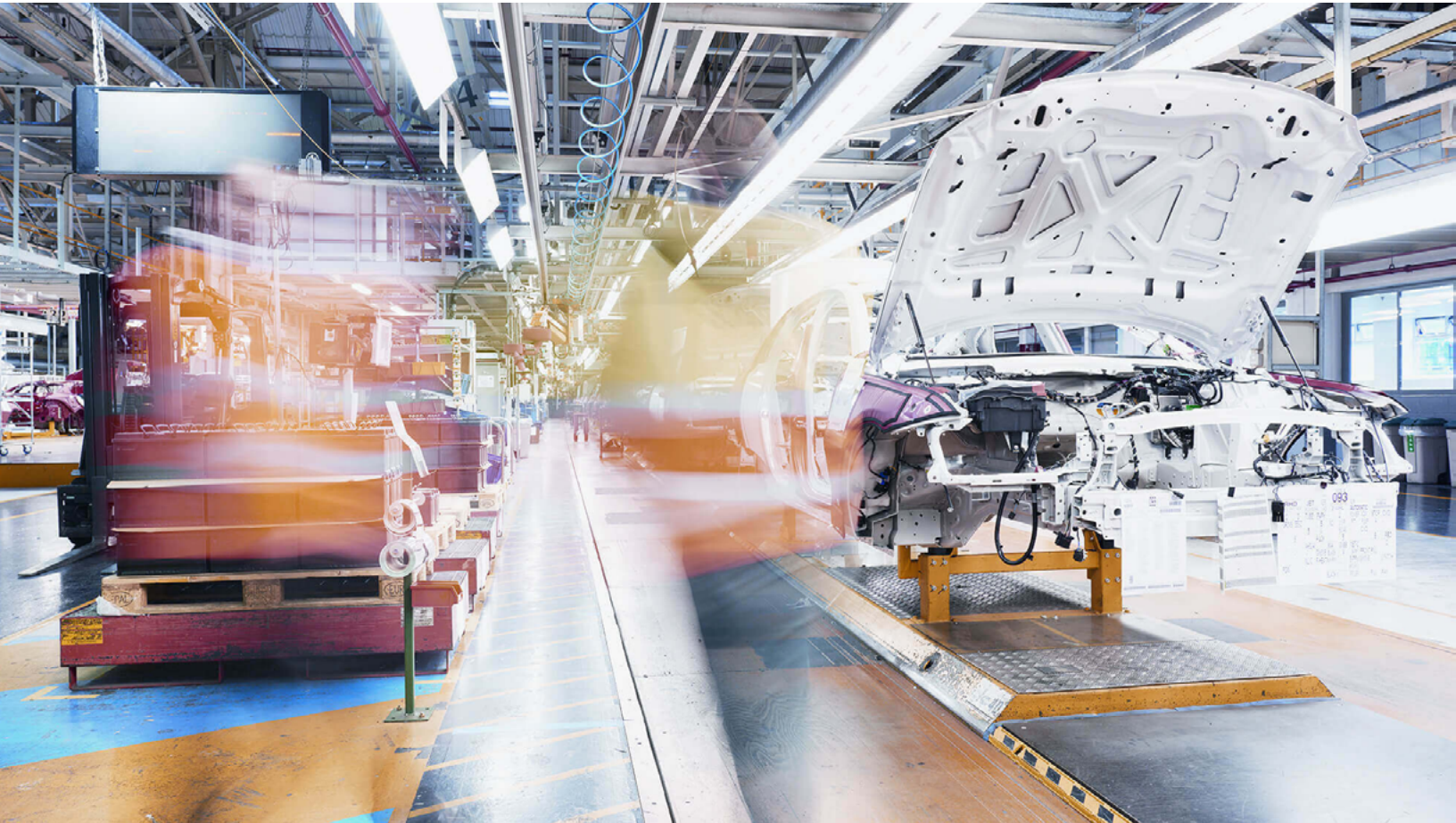
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SKIFT SUMMARY



The United Kingdom (UK) – home to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – is a preferred host for international meetings, conferences and events because of its economic, academic and industry sector strengths. That applies equally to the major gateway cities and the many regional cities spread across every corner of the UK, each with extensive clusters of expertise in advanced and creative industries.

This sector expertise is becoming increasingly important for international conference planners and decision-makers. Today, more organizations are choosing destinations for business events based on the availability of relevant sector expertise and investment within a region. Traditionally, cities have promoted their value proposition for international conferences based on their modern infrastructure and convenient accessibility. In the last decade, however, with the exponential growth of innovation across so many different sectors, city leaders are actively differentiating their destinations based on how well they can provide international planners access to their local knowledge base.

To facilitate that, convention bureaus throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are developing deeper networks of local ambassadors who are driving innovation in academia, science, and advanced/creative industries. Cities, of course, have always used ambassadors as liaisons to connect with international planners in specific academic fields and industry sectors. The difference today is the increasing level of collaboration between convention bureaus and their local public and private sectors to develop and leverage their ambassador programs more effectively.

In 2016, the UK Government formalized the new UK Event Support Program (ESP) to spur the development of international business events in priority industries. The initiative was designed to support identified growth sectors, and position convention bureaus as brokers of innovation in those industry clusters, to create more compelling reasons to choose a UK destination for an international meeting. The financial and advocacy support offered through the ESP to international organizations is tailored to the needs of the event, giving flexibility to create the right support at the right time.

VisitBritain is the industry-facing steward of the overall business events strategy in the UK, including the management of the ESP. The national agency is also one of the gateways for international organizations to access the UK's wealth and breadth of meeting and event destinations operating in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In effect, VisitBritain is a key portal into the future of innovation in advanced and creative industries on a world stage.

This report illustrates how the meetings and events industry is redefining its role on a world stage, by expanding on the conversation of dates, rates, spaces, pricing, and accessibility. The UK's ecosystem of convention bureaus are at the forefront of this industry shift, evolving from curators of meeting and hospitality spaces to incubators and accelerators of innovation, supported with an unprecedented level of commitment from the UK Government.

Throughout, a wide cross-section of convention bureau leaders, industry sector experts, local ambassadors, and international conference organizers define how this trend is redeveloping the meetings landscape, and the value that brings to the conference end user. Most importantly, that insight focuses on the UK as a whole – consisting of many different cities with four unique national identities – unified by their ambition to share knowledge and innovation with a global community of leaders driving the future of the meetings and events industry.

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ABOUT SKIFT

Skift is a travel intelligence company that offers news, data, and services to professionals in travel and professional travelers to help them make smart decisions about travel.

Skift is the business of travel.
Visit skift.com for more.

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BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

EXECUTIVE LETTER

We're ready to welcome you to Britain.

Britain is an outward-looking, global trading nation that engages all cultures, welcoming people and businesses from across the world. In Britain, we champion a modern and innovative approach. We are world leaders in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, financial services, aerospace technologies, education, energy and bio-economy. It is a list that could go on and on, with meetings and events close to the top.

My role, as Head of Business Events at VisitBritain, is to ensure the welcome and experience your business event delegates receive in Britain, is the best in the world. My team, along with our partners in the many vibrant and inspiring cities, destinations and venues across the country, dedicate themselves to ensuring every event hosted here is a success.

This report gives you an essence of the expertise that awaits you in every corner of the UK. It shows you how Britain's industry, academic and scientific research thought leaders have helped meetings and conference organizers deliver leading programmes and attendee engagement. It shows how UK convention bureau can help you access this expertise for your next business event, helping you create an unforgettable event in Britain.



Kerrin MacPhie, Head of Business Events
VisitBritain
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INTRODUCTION: REPOSITIONING MEETINGS DESTINATIONS BY SECTOR STRENGTHS

The global meetings and events industry is undergoing a systemic transformation.

Traditionally, convention bureaus have strived to differentiate themselves to meeting planners by highlighting their cities' infrastructure, including the volume and quality of their convention center districts, hotel inventory, airlift access, and wide variety of relevant amenities.

Today, the most progressive destinations are expanding on that. They're differentiating their value proposition for meeting planners and decision-makers by promoting their expertise in advanced and creative industries.

Most medium and large-size cities have priority growth sectors, such as technology and digital media, health and life sciences, advanced manufacturing and automotive, and many others. International corporations and associations active in these sectors are naturally attracted to destinations that have a greater cluster of thought leaders driving innovation in their related fields

For decades, convention bureaus have employed the services of local industry and academic "ambassadors" in their regions' priority sectors to act as liaisons with international organizations. These destination representatives are generally eager to champion their expertise in different sectors, with the intention of helping attract international conferences in their fields to their cities. Ambassadors are motivated for various reasons, but most want to showcase their work and knowledge, and that of their colleagues and industry partners in the region.

The big shift today is how convention bureaus are collaborating more intentionally with their academic and industry ambassadors, and the organizations with whom they're affiliated, to elevate how they engage meeting planners. Cities have a new story to tell when they showcase their local knowledge base as a point of differentiation unique to the destination.

VisitBritain is helping lead this global transformation in the meetings and events industry. The national tourism agency's role, in collaboration with its partner convention bureaus, is to create a seamless platform to connect international meeting planners with leaders in growth industries across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

“In today’s world, international organizers have standard expectations from a destination relating to the quality of their convention centers, hotels, and basic amenities for creating meetings,” says Kerrin MacPhie, Head of Business Events for VisitBritain.

“So, what’s changing? It’s now about all of the other things that a destination can bring to the table in terms of access to expertise, opportunity for growth, leaving a legacy, and the local collaboration among all stakeholders. It’s really about going back to why we have face-to-face meetings and events in the first place – to exchange knowledge and develop new ideas to create a better future, and therefore, deliver real value to all participants.”

In cities such as Bristol and Cambridge in England, Cardiff in Wales, Belfast in Northern Ireland, and Aberdeen and Glasgow in Scotland, the last decade has brought a wave of new innovation in their leading priority sectors. The catalysts driving that growth in the UK include one of the world’s greatest higher-learning ecosystems, the highest foreign direct investment in high-growth industries anywhere, a collective political will to position the UK as a leader in tech, and the rise of so many well-funded startups to accelerate the digitization of industry everywhere.

“There’s so much opportunity to bring business to the UK based on the incredible strength of our sectors, such as Technology, Life Sciences, Financial, Energy, and Advanced Manufacturing,” says MacPhie. “We are thriving in the fiercely competitive global meetings industry, not just because so many of our cities have a wealth of experience in delivering large scale national and international meetings and congresses. Equally important, they are at the forefront of innovation in many different industry sectors, from a global perspective, which meeting planners can leverage to create spectacular programs.”

Altogether, the UK Government’s Department for International Trade lists 14 sectors where the UK has world-leading clusters of innovation: Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace, Automotive, BioEconomy, Consumer & Retail, Creative, Defense, Education, Energy, Financial Services, Food & Drink, Health & Life Sciences, Infrastructure, and Technology & Smart Cities.

As such, the UK is well positioned as one of Europe’s preferred hosts for international business events in advanced industries because of its economic, academic, and sector strengths. Furthermore, that sector expertise is complemented by a collective understanding among governments, both at the national and regional levels, of the importance of meetings to deliver increasingly higher business outcomes to delegates and decision-makers. That sense of collaboration among the public and private sectors is a key reason why the UK rose to third worldwide in meetings volume in the 2016 International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA) rankings.

THE PROXIMITY OF EXPERTISE IN THE UK

VisitBritain's overarching aim is to raise awareness of the extensive variety of conference destinations across the UK. The agency's research shows that U.S. meeting planners are very aware of London and Scotland, however, there are many destinations beyond those with robust international event calendars that aren't as top of mind.

Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham have increased their exposure considerably in the U.S. in recent years, and there's a growing appreciation among many U.S. meeting planners about the world-leading innovation in cities such as Belfast, Bristol, Brighton, Cardiff and Newcastle, to name but a few. Also, more and more international planners are seeing just how quick, easy and convenient they are to access.

"It's really easy to get around the UK, something that international meeting planners don't always realize," says MacPhie. "The volume of international airlift into regional markets beyond the major gateway cities, and the modern transport infrastructure within the UK, provide much easier and quicker connectivity than many U.S. organizers might expect."

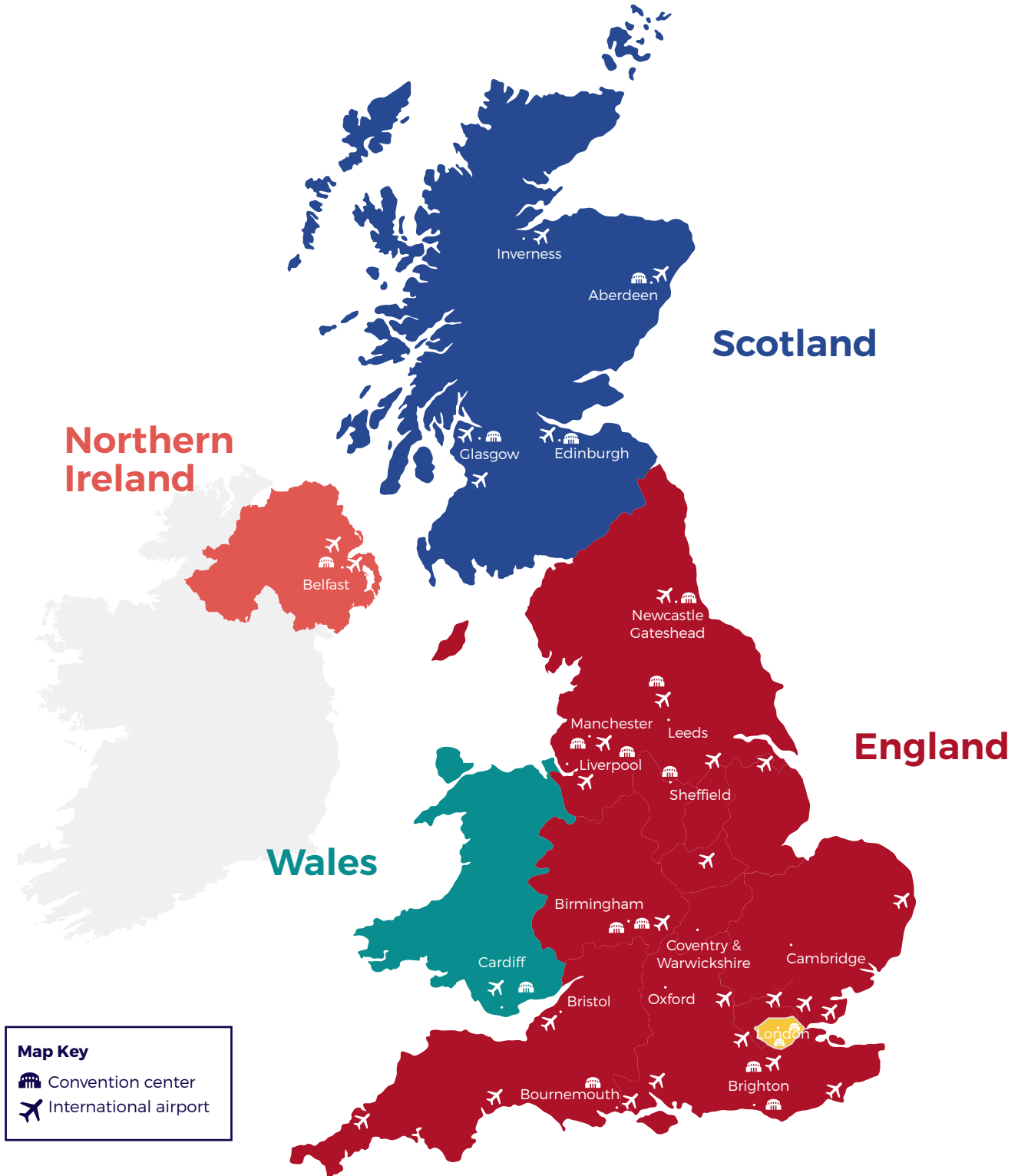
"What we know is that international meeting buyers are open to explore other UK destinations once they know the proximity, accessibility, and the infrastructure in place to support them."

— Kerrin MacPhie, Head of Business Events, VisitBritain

To put things in perspective, the UK is roughly 92,000 square miles with the longest north/south distance about 600 miles, and east/west just 300 miles. That's about 5,000 square miles less than Oregon, or one-third the size of Texas.

"What we know is that international meeting buyers are open to explore other UK destinations once they know the proximity, accessibility, and the infrastructure in place to support them," adds MacPhie. "These ingredients, coupled with a key sector strength that aligns with the planner's meeting objectives, make it easy to choose one of our amazing cities in the UK."

MAP OF GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND



UNDERSTANDING THE UK MAP

The UK cities mentioned in this report include: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Newcastle in England; Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow in Scotland; Cardiff in Wales; and Belfast in Northern Ireland.

The above represent just a fraction of destinations across the UK that have robust clusters of expertise in different sectors. The sheer scale of innovation throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland makes it impossible to cover the full breadth of available destinations for meetings in advanced and creative industries in one paper.

For many international planners, however, who perhaps haven't hosted a program in the UK, the variety of different countries, nationalities and geographies may first require some explanation.

The United Kingdom (UK) encompasses Great Britain (Britain, for short) and Northern Ireland. Britain includes the countries of England, Scotland and Wales. People who live there are British, but they generally identify themselves as English, Scottish or Welsh, specifically.

People living in Northern Ireland can choose to declare themselves British or Irish. It's important to understand that Northern Ireland and the capital city of Belfast are completely independent of Ireland, politically speaking.

Overseeing both Britain and Northern Ireland, the UK Government is responsible for political and economic policy-making for every citizen of the UK.

VisitBritain is connected to every convention bureau operating in the UK, so they can connect international meeting planners with any city in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Each of those four then has its own dedicated agency: VisitEngland, VisitScotland, Visit Wales and Discover Northern Ireland. All of them work in close collaboration with VisitBritain and their own regional convention bureaus.

HOW THE UK GOVERNMENT'S EVENT SUPPORT PROGRAM BENEFITS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES



In 2015, the UK Government published the Business Visits and Events Strategy to outline more ways that UK cities could attract more international conferences and events. Following that report, the UK Government established the UK Events Industry Board (EIB). In turn, they provided funds to VisitBritain to develop a UK Event Support Program in 2016 that provides cities additional assistance when bidding for conferences in sectors of importance for the future economic growth of the UK.

There are two ways in which assistance can be provided. It can be monetary-based to help convention bureaus enhance an international bid, support decision-makers' travel and site visits, and provide added value for meeting and conference planners to help drive international attendance. Assistance can also come in the form of advocacy support, whereby ministers and government officials will advocate on behalf of a region's strength as a conference destination to drive attendance, or sometimes speak at conferences, or host a welcome reception for attendees.

Photo: Scottish Event Campus (SEC) Glasgow, Scotland
Left: SEC Armadillo event space / Center: SSE Hydro arena

“The Prime Minister established the government’s new advisory body, the UK Events Industry Board, in 2016,” says Nick De Bois, the UK Member of Parliament who helped establish the Board. “Since then, international conference organizers should be in no doubt that our destinations and host venues are working with the full support of government to ensure we make their experience here an outstanding success. We offer delegates from around the world the very best of welcomes. This is combined with the fundamental understanding of the impact and legacy that they wish to create when they chose the UK as their destination for important congresses.”

At the national level, the UK Event Support Program shows a commitment to the UK’s business events community, with an integrated strategy to elevate how cities welcome corporate and association groups in specific sectors. At the local level, it helps cities in the UK compete more effectively against international competitors by providing additional funds and services.

“For a long time in the UK, there was a lot of focus on leisure and less focus on business events,” says Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism at Marketing Manchester. “I think that government and VisitBritain recently have recognized that, actually, the impact and the power of business events is not just about the number of delegates that come to a place. It’s also about the narratives that they take away about the city, the relationships that they build, and the potential investment that follows from all of that.”

Chris Foy, CEO of VisitAberdeenshire in Scotland, adds: “It’s certainly a very positive move for the UK, with an understanding at the heart of central government that meetings, conferences and events are not just good for the direct revenue from delegates, but they also have a major impact on investment, trade, and further developing our areas of expertise. The best way of explaining it is they’re putting their money where their mouth is. It’s not just, ‘Yeah, we get it.’ They’re putting their money up there to help cities like us secure major business events.”

CASE STUDY: BIM SHOW LIVE, NEWCASTLE



Building Information Modeling (BIM) is part of the advanced manufacturing sector, focusing on developments in digital design and construction. The annual BIM Show Live took place in previous years in London and Manchester, but it moved to Newcastle in 2017, in part due to the assistance of the UK Event Support Program.

The NewcastleGateshead Convention Bureau and the local Space Group architecture firm collaborated to bring BIM Show Live to northeast England, by engaging the cluster of design tech companies in the region, including the local Ryder Architecture firm and the BIM Academy inside Northumbria University in Newcastle. With that coalition in place, the convention bureau reached out to VisitBritain to secure funds from the UK Event Support Program.

“Newcastle has a high concentration of companies such as Space Group who are experts at BIM, and other Newcastle companies with some of the best brands working in BIM in the UK,” says Paul Szomoru, Head of Business Events at NewcastleGateshead Convention Bureau. “So we went to VisitBritain and said, “Look, we have this amazing event with some of the best people in the UK in this field based in Newcastle. We want to get an international audience here, and we want them to realize that Newcastle is the BIM capital of the UK.”

The event’s potential to drive economic development in a high-growth industry was evident, supported by the city’s robust local cluster. The fund helped build a more global audience around the event with expanded marketing, and it provided resources to host an international group of potential BIM investors in Newcastle during the conference.

“Newcastle is a really vibrant place to come and invest,” says Szomoru. “BIM is staying in Newcastle in 2018, and once again, we’ve secured funding from the Event Support Program to continue growing the conference. It’s like a snowball at the top of the mountain right now. We want to turn it into a much bigger one, using the BIM Show to shine light on Newcastle as a destination with proven expertise in tech-driven, next-generation sectors.”

NEW VISITBRITAIN RESEARCH IDENTIFIES DESTINATION SOURCING PRIORITIES

In July 2017, VisitBritain published new quantitative and qualitative research based on 327 planners who have a decision-making role about where to conduct events. The interviewees included senior corporate, association and third-party planners located in Europe, the U.S., and China.

Qualitative results from the research show that before any other factors are considered, corporate planners typically consider where their offices, customers, or prospective customers are based. They can then consider event destinations within that geographical scope to drive new business development. Meanwhile, association planners typically set an initial geographical landscape based on where their members, expertise in their specific field, policy makers, and sponsors are located.

The quantitative research showed that 77 percent of planners collectively ranked accessibility among their top three highest priorities when selecting a destination. That was followed by venue suitability (62%) and value for money (51%). Subvention (the availability of monetary incentives) ranked further down the list as a “nice to have,” but not something that planners always expect.

“It’s clear that destinations provide a higher value and better alignment for corporate and association planners when they have a greater strength in particular industries.”

Analyzing these results, it’s clear that destinations provide a higher value and better alignment for corporate and association planners when they have a greater strength in particular industries, and a high volume of potential customers and/or members in their sectors. That is illustrative of why cities are positioning themselves more and more as hubs of world-class innovation, by promoting their growing numbers of companies in advanced industries, to attract the consideration of senior meeting planners and decision-makers.

Lastly, based on interviews with U.S. planners for this report, smaller regional cities provide their own unique benefits for groups less than 1,000 people. Delegates say they’re often attracted to compact cities that are highly walkable, and where the group feels like bigger fish in a smaller pond. Also, the uniqueness of a lesser-known destination can be a strong attraction for attendees, which, for many, makes the extra travel time worth the effort.

For example, Sara Sterns, an executive event planner with San Diego-based PMMI Conferences, organized the IEEE International Conference on Micro Electro Mechanical Systems (MEMS) taking place in Belfast in January 2018. The reason that Belfast was considered in the first place was because Queen's University Belfast has a leading department researching micro-electromechanical systems. One of the reasons that the city ultimately won the bid was based on its mystique.

“Our steering committee wanted to see what Belfast is all about because most of our members haven't been there, we've never hosted MEMS in the UK before, the new waterfront convention center suited our needs, and it's totally walkable,” says Sterns. “There are a lot of flights from London into Belfast, or you can take the train up from Dublin. We haven't heard from any of our group, or our exhibitors, that they're concerned about getting to Belfast. Instead, everyone is actually really excited to explore the city because it's new and different, and seems super interesting.”



Photo: Titanic Museum & Shipyard, Belfast, Northern Ireland

SKIFT SURVEY DATA

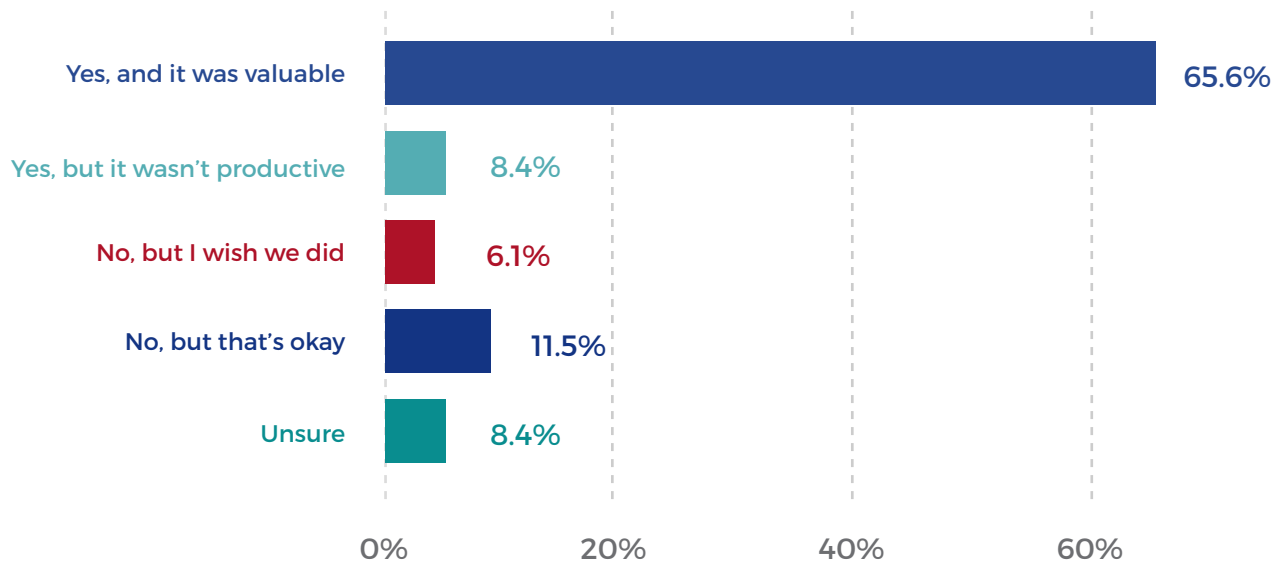
Skift surveyed U.S.-based conference attendees in December 2017 to first determine if they connected with local industry experts working in their specific field, within the last year, and if they valued that interaction.

About two out of three survey respondents replied that they did engage with local industry colleagues, and the exchange provided some kind of rewarding takeaway.

QUESTION #1:

At a conference you've attended, did you engage with local industry experts in your field to share knowledge?

393 respondents



SKIFT SURVEY DATA

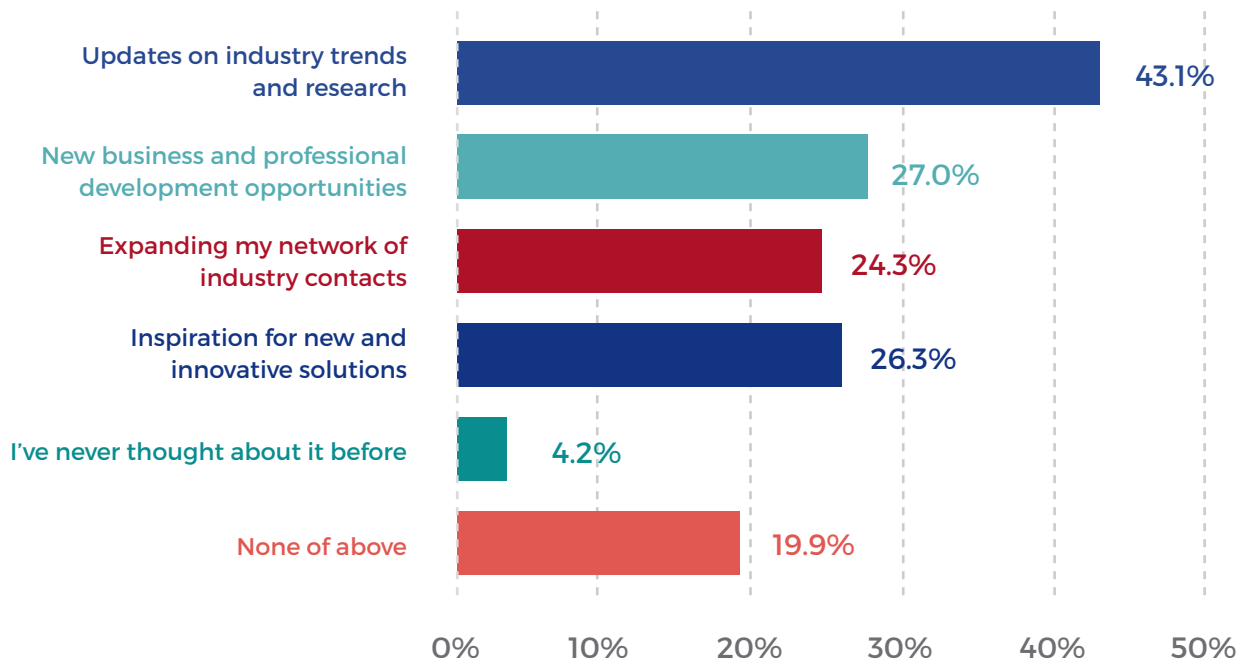
A second survey question asked participants what type of value they received when engaging with local industry and/or academic experts in their sector.

About 43 percent of people stated that their biggest takeaway was keeping up-to-date on industry trends and research. Developing new business (27%) and networking (24.3%) were also deemed important, but somewhat surprisingly, more than one out of four (26.3%) respondents said that inspiration was one of their most powerful rewards.

QUESTION #2:

What do you feel are the most valuable takeaways when engaging with local industry and/or academic experts in your sector?
(choose up to two)

563 answers from 393 respondents



WHY DESTINATION AMBASSADORS ARE CRITICAL LIAISONS TO LOCAL INDUSTRY EXPERTISE

The traditional Destination Ambassador Program has been around for many years. Most convention bureaus in major cities collaborate with a coalition of local leaders working in their region's priority sectors to connect with related international organizations that host large-scale events. UK bureaus pioneered this approach, and they're continually evolving their ambassador programs to benefit both the local community and international groups.

"We're one of the pioneers of ambassador programs in the world, and we have a very established program, encompassing over 500 academic ambassadors that we work with," says Amanda Ferguson, Head of the Business Tourism at Marketing Edinburgh. "I mean, Edinburgh has four universities and it's extremely strong in research over a wide number of fields. So we've got a very established procedure and history of working with academia in terms of attracting international conferences."

Over the last few years, Marketing Edinburgh has been acting more proactively to identify each ambassador's specific niche areas of expertise. Then, they've been building on that by reaching out directly to government and economic development agencies that are relevant for both a particular ambassador and potential international organization.

"In the last five to seven years, we've been reaching out to the inward investment organization, Scottish Enterprise, and Scottish Development International, which is their overseas arm," says Ferguson. "We'll work with them to get letters of support and to get their buy-in, and support a bid to bring a conference here."

"We're one of the pioneers of ambassador programs in the world, and we have a very established program, encompassing over 500 academic ambassadors that we work with."

— Amanda Ferguson, Head of the Business Tourism, Marketing Edinburgh

So, what is the added value for conference organizers, decision-makers, and attendees?

"The added value is demonstrating real relevance to that meeting planner, and helping them build on previous events," explains Ferguson. "If we can demonstrate a strong local appetite to host a particular group of experts in one of our ambassador's fields, and show that we can provide a platform that is relevant for them, with a relevant target audience, that can facilitate some really interesting discussions, collaborations, networking opportunities, and potential sponsorships for exhibitions."

Chris Foy, CEO of VisitAberdeenshire, agrees that ambassador programs rely on the networks of local experts working in priority sectors, but that's often just a catalyst to bring other regional partners together to create the strongest bid possible.

"It has to go beyond simply having ambassadors; this has to be a whole Team Aberdeen approach, which draws upon our expertise across the city," says Foy. "Drawing upon all of our expertise creates a collective voice, so when we're bidding for new business, the decision-makers are hearing from the ambassadors, they're hearing from me, they're hearing from the convention bureau, and they're hearing from the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre to articulate what we can provide as a city. Also, they're getting the commitment from city hall and from other businesses across the region.

Jennifer Jensen, Head of Business Tourism at Liverpool Convention Bureau, says her bureau's Club Liverpool ambassador program has shown significant and tangible results since it was restructured three years ago around Liverpool's priority sectors. Part of that included a new partnership with the ACC Liverpool convention center to collaborate more intentionally on developing bids. In the first two years of Club Liverpool's operation, with 155 ambassadors signed up with the program, the member ambassadors helped attract 27 events to the city, with an estimated economic impact of US \$68 million.

"We kind of took the program right back down to Liverpool City Region's key sector strengths, whether those are life sciences or advanced manufacturing or maritime, and say, 'These are the markets we need to focus on,'" explains Jensen. "So, we really needed to recruit new ambassadors to support those. But the Club Liverpool program is not just about the economic impact ambassadors deliver to the city. They also help the universities by bringing over global talent within a particular sector to see what we're doing. It can drive new innovation. It could help support them in getting more research grants or more investment from the private sector."

Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism at Marketing Manchester, reports that successful ambassador programs require a long-term strategy because they are very labor intensive to customize an ambassador strategy for each individual event.

"We look to partner with those ambassadors who are not only internationally recognized in their field, but also have the passion and drive to collaborate with the convention bureau over the long term, with the end goal of showcasing Manchester on the international stage," he says. "This approach continues to pay dividends for Manchester. Our analysis of the last seven years of international bids reveals an impressive conversion rate of 78 percent on those bids involving local ambassadors, which contrasts with a 15 percent conversion rate for those that don't."

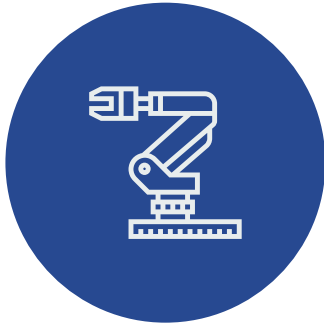
5 SECTORS MERGING BUSINESS EVENTS AND INDUSTRY EXPERTISE

The following sections define how UK cities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are building stronger alignments between business events and their expertise in five high-priority sectors: Tech & Digital, Health & Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing & Automotive, Energy & Renewables, and Business & Professional Services.

**From Paul Szomoru, Head of Business Events,
NewcastleGateshead Convention Bureau:**

“Talking about what our core sectors are is now part of our opening speech with conference organizers. It’s part of the script now. We don’t just talk about access and venues and hotels when we engage our audiences anymore. That’s what destinations used to do. I know certainly we used to do that. We would say: ‘Hey, look at us. We’re a beautiful city, we’ve got great venues and great hotels, and it’s all very accessible.’

“But now we’re talking very much about how relevant we are in the world in terms of innovation. That’s important for cities to demonstrate, and I feel it’s really important for us as a provincial city. We’re not a capital city. We’re the most northern city of England. We need to show people that it’s important that they know what’s gone on here, historically, and why we’re relevant to them today. Yes, the electric light bulb was invented here. Yes, the world’s first steam engine was built here. But today, we’re leading the way in our four core priority sectors: Tech and Digital, Medical Science and Sustainability, Business and Professional Services, and Offshore and Marine. So that’s always part of our script now when we’re engaging business events audiences.”



#1 TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL

The technology sector in the UK is larger than the rest of Europe combined. It has the highest number of IPOs, the most “unicorn” startup companies (with US \$1 billion valuation), and the largest e-commerce market in Europe. With technology underpinning every aspect of business development and economic growth today, the UK’s leadership in technology research and development fuels innovation across all sectors, from fintech to fisheries.

Furthermore, the UK’s tech industry is expected to continue to grow exponentially. According to the Tech Nation 2017 survey report: “In 2016, UK digital tech investment reached US \$9.1 billion – 50 percent higher than any other European country.”

In the same report, British Prime Minister Theresa May states: “The number of digital tech jobs across the UK has grown at more than twice the rate of non-digital tech sectors. From analysts to web developers to software architects, these pioneers of our digital economy are at the forefront of a great British success story. We will continue to expand the scope of our digital tech industries, funding artificial intelligence, robotics, 5G, smart energy, and more.”

London consistently tops the European Digital City Index, based on the level of venture capital pouring into the city’s tech sector. Building on that, London Tech Week launched in 2014, and today it’s the largest tech sector conference in Europe, supported locally by more than 2,600 clusters of tech companies spread throughout the city.



However, there’s been a massive surge of new investment in the technology sector in recent years outside London. The Tech Nation report explains: “Nearly 70 percent (68%) of total UK digital tech investment in 2016 was in regional clusters beyond London. Tech businesses in these clusters raised more than £4.6 billion (US \$6.1 billion) in funding,” with the largest investments in 2016 going to Edinburgh, Cambridge, Bristol and Bath, Oxford, Manchester, and Sheffield.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENTS: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL

Manchester has the second highest number of tech clusters in the UK with over 5,000 companies in advanced and creative industries employing more than 63,000 people. The MediaCityUK development completely revitalized the old city docks where the Industrial Revolution was born. Home to the BBC, University of Salford Manchester, ITV television, and numerous film production studios and creative venues, MediaCityUK marries the future of modern urban user experience and digital technology in Northern England. The success of MediaCityUK inspired the ongoing development of Corridor Manchester, designed as a “cosmopolitan hub and world-class innovation district, where talented people from the city and across the world learn, create, work, socialize, live and do business.”

The world’s leading figures in children’s digital and media content gathered in Manchester for the Children’s Global Media Summit in December 2017. It took place at Manchester Central Convention Complex, the purpose of the summit was to redesign the future of media for young people, with insight provided by companies such as BBC, Netflix, Disney, TalkTalk, YouTube, the Premier League, and Facebook. For the first time, the content of the event was curated by the BBC who worked with a group of broadcast partners, academic institutions and policymakers, creating a program that reflects the world of media through the eyes of a young global audience.

“Manchester is one of the big creative and digital hubs of Europe, and we are in a great position to get under the skin of broadcast media, and other sectors like creative and tech, to explore and find more niche areas within those sectors like children’s media,” says Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism at Marketing Manchester. “We can really forge a place at the center of business events activity around those niche areas.”

“Manchester is one of the big creative and digital hubs of Europe, and we are in a great position to get under the skin of broadcast media, and other sectors like creative and tech.”

— Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism, Marketing Manchester

Liverpool is a leading hub of innovation in IT and AI at the Hartree Centre at SciTech Daresbury, which houses the most powerful supercomputer in the UK dedicated to industrial R&D. In 2015, the UK Government invested US \$150 million in the Hartree Centre, while IBM dedicated \$267 million to deploy the first Watson cognitive computing research center in the country. Hartree Centre hosts a variety of conferences and events throughout the year to: “open up the power of data-centric computing, big data and cognitive technologies to industry and academia.”

In addition, the University of Liverpool was ranked first in the UK for “world leading and internationally excellent” outputs in computer sciences, and the school works in close partnership with the Hartree Centre, so international planners have access to some of the world’s brightest minds in cognitive computing.

“If the university is growing in a particular sector, and they’re investing money in it, they’ll attract higher levels of talent within that sector,” says Jennifer Jensen, Head of Business Tourism at Liverpool Convention Bureau. “So we have some of the world’s leading professors in different fields working in Liverpool. Our job is to find great ambassadors among them, who we can work with to bring their association conferences to our city. Then we’ve got a real story to tell.”

Edinburgh is the UK’s second-largest financial center and a leading digital tech cluster in Europe. The city is responsible for developing two unicorn companies – Skyscanner and FanDuel – and three world-class universities including the University of Edinburgh, renowned for its School of Informatics. CodeBase in Edinburgh is the UK’s largest technology incubator, and the new Codesk co-working space was established within the city’s first Techcube incubator. This tech ecosystem played a big role in Edinburgh winning the Entrepreneurial City of the Year Award in 2016.

“For events in the tech sector, if you’re able to open doors with startup companies, and local enterprise organizations, and put them in touch with young entrepreneurs, there is certainly a demand for demonstrating that you can facilitate that happening within your destination,” says Amanda Ferguson, Head of the Business Tourism at Marketing Edinburgh.

“From the meeting planner and attendee perspective, it gives a real sense of where the conference is being placed,” she continues. “It’s an opportunity to share knowledge and benchmark with these organizations, and potentially then grow their own membership with smaller organizations that maybe haven’t hit their radar yet, and to engage them. Also, most startups are flexible, they’re dynamic, they’re open to new ideas and doing things differently. That can be really exciting for delegates, and deliver some fruitful collaborations and discussions for them that they haven’t come across before.”

The Edinburgh Centre for Robotics hosted the 3-day European Robotics Forum in March 2017, comprised of researchers, engineers, managers, entrepreneurs, and public and private sector investors in robotics R&D. Brandishing the theme “Living and Working with Robots,” the event’s primary objectives revolved around identifying robotics applications for business, and strengthening collaboration between stakeholders in the robotics community.

“The Edinburgh Centre for Robotics, a joint collaboration between Heriot-Watt University and The University of Edinburgh, is raising the profile of Edinburgh as a center of excellence in robotics,” says Edinburgh ambassador Dr. Patricia Vargas from Heriot-Watt University. “We received fantastic support from Convention Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Ambassador Program while we were preparing our bid.” The event was also a recipient of VisitBritain’s Event Support Program, recognized for its role in promoting the UK and Edinburgh’s robotics and artificial intelligence capability internationally.

BRISTOL: VR WORLD CONGRESS



Bristol, England illustrates the level of innovation sweeping across the UK in regional cities. Ben Trehwella is a local software developer who launched a mobile app company over a decade ago, before shifting his focus to virtual reality. He started a meetup for local VR developers in 2014, which led to developing a VR conference in 2015. This past spring, Trehwella’s 3-day VR World Congress 2017 attracted 1,200 delegates from 37 countries, tripling attendance from the year prior. This event was

another recipient of VisitBritain’s Event Support Program, driving growth of international delegates as the event moved into a larger venue to accommodate its expansion.

“Nowadays, there’s an evolutionary explosion of different types of technology being created in Bristol and all around the UK, from simple things like web platforms to advanced industries like blockchain, AI, self-driving cars, and the Internet of Things,” says Trehwella. “What we’ve learned in Bristol, just plugging things together in new manners can create new products and services, and therefore new business models. There’s also a much greater awareness here now that international conferences bring a lot of value to Bristol to discuss new opportunities in tech to compete with the rest of Europe.”

Trehwella is typical of the kind of ambassadors elevating their city’s brand image for business events on a world stage. Aside from running VR World Congress, he founded the

Bristol Games Hub to support local VR developers, and he has launched the Bristol VR Lab in partnership with the University of Bristol, University of West England, and the Watershed “digital creativity” venue. The mission of the VR Lab is to connect and pool the resources of local industry and academia to further propel Bristol’s expertise in digital media.

“To further innovation in general, there’s definitely been a shift in Bristol where academia and industry are collaborating much more closely, because there are benefits for each,” says Trehwella. “If you’re running a business, that expertise from the universities is absolutely vital to stay ahead of the curve. From the university’s perspective, there’s the realization that there’s a lot of innovation happening in companies. So they’re keen to be part of events like VR World Congress, because they want to get their research out into commercial industry. And likewise, a lot of international companies are keen to learn about that research.”

“To further innovation in general, there’s definitely been a shift in Bristol where academia and industry are collaborating much more closely, because there are benefits for each.”

— Ben Trehwella, Founder of VR World Congress in Bristol, England

Other UK cities have approached Trehwella to bring VR World Congress to their regions, but he says the conference is staying in Bristol because of its knowledge base. “We have all the key players in digital and tech here, from industry to academia to all of the people in between, and to recreate that anywhere else would require an enormous amount of effort,” he says. “Whereas in Bristol, we can pull together leaders in government, industry and academia in fairly short order, and make things happen.”

BELFAST: CYBERSECURITY CAPITAL

The fast-growing cybersecurity sector is worth more than US \$30 billion a year to the UK economy, and it’s currently growing at around 10 percent yearly. Belfast is evolving as an important cybersecurity cluster in the UK, having hosted two industry conferences in 2017: The World Cyber Security Technology Research Summit and the OWASP (Open Web Application Security Project) AppSec EU, which hosted more than 1,000 attendees. Leading cybersecurity companies including Black Duck Software, WhiteHat Security, Rapid 7, Proofpoint, Repknight, Uleska, and Alert Logic have all invested heavily in Belfast operations, and Queen’s University Belfast is home to the Centre for Secure Information Technologies. The research facility is the UK’s Innovation & Knowledge Center for secure information technology.

“Hosting those cybersecurity conferences was big for us, and our ambassadors in that sector played a pivotal role to bring those events to Belfast,” says Laurie Scott, Director of Business Development at Visit Belfast. “We’ve got a lot of leaders in cybersecurity working here, along with people who are energized and potential leaders in the field, carrying substantive research forward. It’s easier for us now to track the piece of business here, where we’ve got all the infrastructure and the conferences now to build upon. The local people here can put together a strong committee, the rationale for why you should come here, technical trips, and all that sort of stuff to make a compelling case for Belfast.”

“We’ve got a lot of leaders in cybersecurity working here, along with people who are energized and potential leaders in the field, carrying substantive research forward.”

— Laurie Scott, Director of Business Development, Visit Belfast

Gary Robinson, founder of cybersecurity start-up Uleska, spoke to the Irish Times this year about Belfast’s rise as a cybersecurity hub. He said, “Northern Ireland tops the rankings for U.S. foreign direct investment in cyber. There’s no reason not to believe Belfast’s enviable talent pool and the blend of local and global companies can make it the cybersecurity capital of Europe.”

LONDON: THE RISE OF TECH WEEK

According to The Telegraph, “London dominates UK tech funding from U.S. investors, accounting for 90 percent of Silicon Valley investment in Britain.” Using American cities as an analogy, London has evolved into a global tech powerhouse because it combines the tech innovation in the San Francisco Bay Area, the national policy-making in Washington, DC, and the financial wealth in New York all in one city. Following Brexit, The Mayor’s Office of London and London & Partners have promoted the #LondonIsOpen message to showcase the city’s collaborative spirit with visitors and visiting companies. The message is predominantly aimed at the European Union, where Brexit was more of an emotive issue, but London’s synergies linking the public and private spheres are important to everyone.

“We can see that the Microsofts and the Googles are having a big presence in London despite Brexit,” says Tracy Halliwell, Director of Business Tourism & Major Events at London & Partners. “So what we think is happening, this whole story about the value of being an intellectual capital means that whatever’s happening in the political arena, people are still seeing London as a relevant place. So it’s important for us to keep telling that same story.”

Back in 2010, The Mayor's Office of London and London & Partners launched the London Tech Week conference, positioning England's capital as Europe's most advanced, business-friendly, and well-funded gathering place for leaders in high-growth industries. Building on that, Mayor of London Sadiq Khan kicked off London Tech Week 2017 by stating that he "plans to transform London into the world's leading smart city," by leveraging the domestic and international innovation showcased at what is now Europe's biggest technology industry festival.

"We're an economic development organization and not just a convention bureau, because business events underpin economic growth in a destination," adds Halliwell. "We run London Tech Week and we work with central government and our trade and investment arm to bring hosted buyer groups to that. They're not business visits and events people; they are potentially inward investment people."

"A city is about much more than its assets. It's about what people feel when they visit a city. Do they feel welcome? Do they feel we want to work with them to help grow their business?"

— Tracy Halliwell, Director of Business Tourism & Major Events, London & Partners

Rather than just focusing on how to attract conferences today, according to Halliwell, London & Partners needs to make itself business-ready for how the world will conduct business 10 to 15 years from now. Part of that strategy, London & Partners is evolving as a platform to support companies in advanced industries that visit for conferences and also establish a base in the city. The strategy is effectively expanding the convention bureau's role into a long-term business incubator.

"A city is about much more than its assets. It's about what people feel when they visit a city," says Halliwell. "Do they feel welcome? Do they feel we want to work with them to help grow their business? We established a new team within London & Partners, which is a growth team, that's not just concentrated on bringing business into London today. When companies land in London, we want to help them grow over time. They might start off with 5 or 10 employees, so how can we help get them to 50 employees within a year? Part of that process, we have the Mayor's International Business Program, where we take small startup companies and we help them establish a foothold in Europe."



#2 HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

The UK receives more foreign direct investment in the health and life sciences sector than anywhere else in Europe. In large part, that's due to a tax structure that rewards innovation, world-class science and research in both academia and industry, and a delivery partner in the National Health Service (NHS) – the world's largest integrated health system. Today, there are over 5,600 life sciences companies operating in the UK, spanning the life sciences product development, supply

and services chain, which together employ more than 220,000 people. In the medical technology sector, the UK employs nearly 115,000 people, including the highest number of skilled engineers and researchers in Europe.

Britain boasts four of the world's top 10 universities for medical research, which have been responsible for many major scientific breakthroughs, ranging from the discovery of penicillin and the structure of DNA to advancements in neuroscience, medical imaging, stem cell production and in-vitro fertilization. Companies, both local and international, benefit tremendously from the opportunity to partner with this pool of research expertise and intellectual capital.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENTS: HEALTH & LIFE SCIENCES

One of six designated UK Science Cities, Newcastle is internationally recognized for its advancements in life sciences, biomedicine, healthcare, and especially, aging. The two primary local facilities driving innovation in the science of life sustainability are the International Centre for Life, and the Newcastle University Institute for Ageing (NUIA) – the largest facility of its kind in Europe. NUIA's mandate is to “bring together business, academia and the public to stimulate innovation of products and services that make older lives better.”

Due to the facility's success, the UK Government recently awarded US \$26.7 million to Newcastle University to build the new National Centre for Ageing Science and Innovation, scheduled to open in 2020 inside the emerging Newcastle Science Central innovation district.



“We are home to the largest medical sciences and sustainability cluster in the northeast, with over 250 companies and about 6,500 people, and we have one of the highest percentages of STEM students in England at our universities,” says Paul Szomoru, Head of Business Events at NewcastleGateshead Convention Bureau. “And the Newcastle Science Central urban development is the largest of its kind in the country.”

The Leeds City Region, which is a cluster of cities in northern England, is the headquarters to four of the five most important UK national health service bodies: NHS England, the NHS Leadership Academy, the Health & Social Care Information Centre, and Health Education England – the national body responsible for organizing health and healthcare education. Leeds is also home to Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, which includes the largest teaching hospital in Europe. This offers event planners unrivalled access to all of these major national organizations, as well as other healthcare companies located in the region, to plan a health and life sciences conference.

Recently, ConferenceLeeds launched a new ambassador program, helping attract business events including The Assessment of SpondyloArthritis International Society annual general meeting in January 2017, previously held in Rome, Madrid and Berlin. Jennifer Young, Head of ConferenceLeeds, says this demonstrates the strong collaborative relationship between ConferenceLeeds, Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust, and the University of Leeds.

“This shows the success of our conferencing city campaign, which focuses on utilizing our sector strengths within the city to proactively target sector-specific conferences,” says Young. “For Leeds to be achieving such results without the benefit of a large convention center in the city truly sets it apart from its competitors.”

Manchester’s life sciences sector is home to more than 30 NHS organizations and 250 core biomedical companies who employ over 24,000 people. The Christie Hospital is the largest cancer research and treatment center in Europe, and Marketing Manchester works closely with the Christie to build a portfolio of national and international conferences focused on oncology and related niche areas of expertise.

The Society for Melanoma Research is hosting their 15th International Congress at the Manchester Central Convention Complex in October 2018, which is the first time the event will take place in the UK. Previous host cities include Amsterdam, Sapporo, Boston, Zurich and Brisbane. The decision came about following a successful bid supported by the Christie, the Cancer Research UK Manchester Institute, the University of Manchester, Marketing Manchester, and Manchester Central Convention Complex.

“This comes as a recognition not only of the important work the Christie does in the field of melanoma research, but also of the global significance of Manchester’s wider scientific community,” says Professor Paul Lorigan, a melanoma oncologist at the Christie.

Marketing Manchester, in partnership with The Christie NHS Foundation Trust, and University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, helped secure the 58th Annual Conference of the Particle Therapy Co-Operative Group in 2019. The event will bring together more than 1,000 leading clinicians, physicists and other practitioners in advanced proton beam therapy, which is a less invasive form of cancer treatment. Manchester’s bid also included extensive support from the Secretary of State for Health, the Chief Executive of NHS England, the Royal College of Radiographers, CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research), the National Physics Laboratory, and VisitBritain.

“Each of these conventions were secured by establishing strong partnerships involving local research institutions, Manchester Central Convention Complex, and the Manchester Convention Bureau.”

— Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism, Marketing Manchester

In 2019, Manchester will host a number of other major international conferences themed around nuclear science in medicine, including the 16th International Congress on Radiation Research, and the IEEE Nuclear and Plasma Sciences Society’s Nuclear Science Symposium and Medical Imaging Conference.

“Each of these conventions were secured by establishing strong partnerships involving local research institutions, Manchester Central Convention Complex, and the Manchester Convention Bureau,” says Brooks-Sykes from Marketing Manchester. “In total we expect to welcome upwards of 5,000 of the world’s leading minds in the field of nuclear medicine, putting Manchester on the map as a global center for research and innovation in this area.”

BIRMINGHAM: THE INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF A FORENSIC TOXICOLOGY AMBASSADOR

Dr. Simon Elliott is a Consultant Forensic Toxicologist at the University of Birmingham in England, and the host chair of the organizing committee for the 57th Annual Meeting of the International Association of Forensic Toxicologists (TIAFT) in September 2019 in Birmingham. The city won the bid to host what's expected to be between 700-1,000 delegates in a competition with Paris, Istanbul, Cape Town and Dubai, bringing the event back to the UK for the first time in over 30 years. The bidding cities were chosen based on accessibility, accommodation, cultural offering, and an affordable, amenity-rich conference center district. The venue itself typically poses a challenge based on the size of the group.

"There's lots of venues in cities that can host tens of thousands of people, but not that many that can accommodate a thousand people at a decent price," says Dr. Elliott. "With a non-profit organization like ours, you have to keep the price as low as possible to encourage attendance. That was a significant factor for Birmingham winning the bid."

"With a non-profit organization like ours, you have to keep the price as low as possible to encourage attendance. That was a significant factor for Birmingham winning the bid."

— Dr. Simon Elliott, Consultant Forensic Toxicologist, University of Birmingham

However, Dr. Elliott explained that as an ambassador for both the city and the university, his 20+ years experience participating in the conference, and his contacts in forensic toxicology throughout the UK, were ultimately the deciding factors that brought TIAFT to England. Birmingham itself doesn't have a large cluster of forensic toxicology experts though, because there aren't a lot of them in the world to begin with. However, Dr. Elliott's network of colleagues across the UK do add up to a significant grouping of sector thought leaders. So in this case, it wasn't a city with specific sector expertise that secured a conference in that field — it was a country with a large decentralized group of people that could be brought together by an individual ambassador.

"So, my fellow toxicologists in the UK were willing to get behind me and behind Birmingham, which was really able to show the UK at its best," says Dr. Elliott. "That's the value of an experienced ambassador. It came down to what I can offer, based on my experience within the organization, and having been to these meetings for 20 years. It's about trusting that I could create a good meeting, while maybe some of the chairs in the other destinations were less tried and tested."

LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE



Founded in 1898 by Sir Alfred Jones, a local shipping magnate, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine was the first institution in the world dedicated to research and teaching in the field of tropical medicine.

The organization's mission statement reads: "Our purpose is reducing the burden of sickness and mortality in disease endemic countries. We do that through the delivery of effective interventions which improve human health and are relevant to the poorest communities. As a teaching

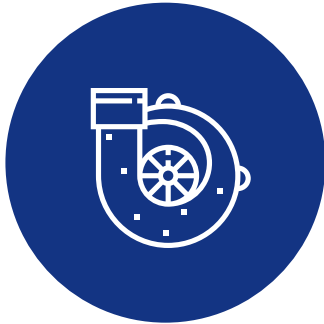
institution, we attract more than 600 students from 68 countries, from PhD research and Masters programs to a range of professional courses. We work in partnership with health ministries, universities and research institutions worldwide to train the next generation of doctors, scientists, researchers and health professionals."

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton, the ACC Liverpool, and Liverpool Convention Bureau all collaborated to win the bid for the 5th Health Systems Global Symposium in Liverpool in 2018. The theme of the event is "Health for All" to acknowledge the lack of health equity and social inclusion around the globe.

"The School of Tropical Medicine has a whole educational program at the Health Systems Global event where they're bringing people in to see what they do, and to learn from them as well," says Jennifer Jensen, Head of Business Tourism at Liverpool Convention Bureau. "For us, it's all about sharing knowledge, as well as bringing new talent and expertise to the city."

Professor Janet Hemingway, Director of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, adds: "Being in Liverpool ensures that we have access to world-leading universities, global pharmaceutical companies and strong support networks, and can continue to lead innovation to break the cycle of poor health and poverty, and to improve the health and well-being of millions."

Photo: Microsoft founder Bill Gates lecturing at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, England



#3 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND AUTOMOTIVE

Advanced manufacturing productivity grew three times faster than the rest of the UK's economy during the decade from 2005 through 2015. The sector consists of more than 90,000 companies, employing 2.7 million people across the UK. Advanced manufacturing contributes over US \$216 billion

to the UK's economy, making it 9th in the global economy, and it accounts for almost 70 percent of the total spend across all industries. The UK is especially competitive in metrology (science of measurement), and it's growing rapidly in 3D printing, advanced composite materials, sensors and micro-electronics.



In the automotive sector, the UK is one of the world's most attractive destinations for foreign investment, with more than US \$20 billion invested in Britain's auto industry between 2012 and 2015. In 2009, the UK Government and the UK automotive industry set up a partnership called the Automotive Council to grow the UK auto sector. This is now seen internationally as the gold standard for government and industry cooperation, and has led to a huge

expansion of both car manufacturing and automotive research and development in the UK. The UK is the largest ultra low emission vehicle (ULEV) market in the EU with over 110,000 ULEVs on the road, and it has the largest network of rapid charging points for electric vehicles in Europe. In 2016, one in five electric cars sold in Europe was made in the UK.

Looking ahead, the government is investing heavily in Connected and Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs), creating a US \$267 million fund administered by the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles, which is jointly funded by the industry and the UK Government. The UK offers substantial advantages in CAV technology. According to Eurostat, 40 percent of all large European software companies are based in the UK, stating, "With a history of early adoption of technology from home PCs to Internet shopping, the UK has all the right building blocks to develop CAVs."

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENTS: ADVANCED MANUFACTURING & AUTOMOTIVE

The annual Advanced Engineering Conference in Birmingham is the largest gathering of advanced manufacturing, materials, and engineering professionals in the UK. Exhibitors include the biggest names in industrial manufacturing, including Airbus, Boeing, Jaguar, Land Rover and Dassault. In 2017, the event included a new Connected Manufacturing track exploring the convergence of new manufacturing technologies, such as 3D printing and robotics, and the rise of connectivity via the Internet of Things. Attendance was up 15 percent this year, and bookings are ahead of pace by 35 percent for next year.

“Our new zone, Connected Manufacturing, was hugely popular with a particularly well-attended open forum, demonstrating the importance of Industry 4.0 to companies of all sizes,” says Alison Willis, Industrial Divisional Director at Easyfairs, which produces the show. “Next year, we’re looking at even more expansion with the addition of our new Nuclear Engineering zone, addressing nuclear energy build, operation and supply chain.”

In Liverpool in November 2017, the Manufactures Live event consisted of two co-located conferences hosting one of Europe’s largest-ever gatherings for innovators and investors in advanced manufacturing. The Manufacturers Leaders Summit and the Smart Factory Expo in November 2017 provided dedicated education and networking tracks in Additive Manufacturing, Big Data, Digital Transformation, Factory Automation, and the Industrial Internet. The exhibition component showcased the latest products from companies including Sony UK, Rolls Royce, Siemens, Dell and BAE Systems.

“This was the first year we hosted Manufacturers Live, which relocated from Birmingham after 14 years there,” says Jennifer Jensen, Head of Business Tourism at Liverpool Convention Bureau. “It was the biggest British manufacturing conference and exhibition ever in the UK, and it’s the base for the entire sector in Europe, so that’s a great new story for Liverpool.”

The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) – the city’s economic development agency – is repositioning Liverpool and the region as “LCR 4.0” to show the area’s progressive mindset. The “4.0” alludes to the rise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which the World Economic Forum defines as: “The range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human.”

Simon Reid, Sector Manager of Advanced Manufacturing at the Liverpool City Region LEP reflected on Manufacturer Live moving to Liverpool, stating: “As a City Region we are delighted to host this important conference and showcase the lead the City Region has taken with LCR 4.0 – the UK’s first business support program for SME manufacturers adopting the Fourth Industrial Revolution.”

In the automotive sector, the industry cluster in Birmingham, Coventry and the greater West Midlands region is responsible for 60 percent of automotive industry R&D in the UK, and more than 20 percent of the UK’s overall manufacturing capability. Home to companies such as Jaguar, Land Rover and Rolls Royce, the region has long attracted automotive industry conferences, such as Automechanika Birmingham and Autosport International events. Automechanika Birmingham is an extension of Messe Frankfurt’s successful international Automechanika brand, promoting the strength of the UK’s automotive sector. In three years the event has grown to more than 500 exhibitors.

New this year, Birmingham hosted the inaugural Connected and Automated Vehicle Engineering Conference. In 2017, the UK Government announced US \$133 million in new funding to support new R&D in CAV technology, which will “use some of the UK’s existing CAV testing centers to create a concentrated cluster of testing facilities in the UK’s automotive heartland in the West Midlands.”

“I want the new automotive technology park to become renowned as a center for the development and application of next-generation technologies for intelligent transportation.”

— Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Transport. Welsh Government

Wales is also growing as a base of automotive innovation. In June 2017, the Welsh Government announced it was investing US \$7.8 million to help develop a new production facility for Aston Martin in the Vale of Glamorgan county borough just west of Cardiff. According to the BBC, “Wales beat off more than 20 other competitors across the UK and Europe to secure the deal.” Furthermore, the government is investing US \$135 million to build the new Ebbw Vale Automotive Technology Park as a testbed for autonomous vehicle production.

“I want the new automotive technology park to become renowned as a center for the development and application of next-generation technologies for intelligent transportation,” says Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy & Transport in the Welsh Government. “The park and our investment needs to be future-proofed to develop and take advantage of the cleaner technologies of the future.”

MANCHESTER: THE RISE OF GRAPHENE

Graphene is considered the world's thinnest and strongest material, measuring just one atom thick, with exceptional conductive and elasticity properties. It was first discovered at the University of Manchester in the early 2000s, and the two researchers who discovered graphene won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2010. That, along with worldwide R&D into industry applications for graphene, were the catalysts behind the development of the US \$82 million National Graphene Institute at the University of Manchester, the new \$80 million Graphene Engineering and Innovation Centre opening in 2018, and the new \$315 million Sir Henry Royce Institute for Materials Research and Innovation opening in 2019.

"The region is now a designated Center of Excellence for Advanced Materials, with a comprehensive ecosystem of partners," says Nick Brooks-Sykes, Director of Tourism at Marketing Manchester. These three facilities will combine to reinforce Manchester's position as 'Graphene City' – offering a globally leading knowledge base in graphene research and commercialization."

The graphene story illustrates a critical piece of the UK business events story. Due to the diversity and wealth of knowledge spread across Britain, there's a strong pipeline of collaboration among many different cities. For example, the Sir Henry Royce Institute in Manchester will be supported by six partner universities in Cambridge, Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool, Oxford and London. The organizational structure provides a wide range of themes related to the development and application of advanced materials, which different institutions can plug into.

The University of Cambridge is leading on the materials for energy efficient information and communications technology research, while the other partner universities will explore: Biomedical devices (Manchester), energy storage (Oxford), 2D nanomaterials and devices and nanofabrication (Imperial, Leeds, Manchester), advanced materials processing and materials for demanding environments (Sheffield and Manchester), nuclear materials (Manchester, National Nuclear Laboratory and Culham Centre for Fusion Energy), and chemical materials discovery (Liverpool).

This spirit of collaboration is especially relevant in Manchester for international meeting planners, because Manchester Airport welcomes the third highest passenger volume in the UK after Heathrow and Gatwick in London. So the city is quickly evolving as the gateway to Northern England due to the growth of international flights into Manchester Airport, which saw a 10.7 percent rise in passenger traffic in 2016 year-over-year. "If you want to fly to the very center of the UK, then Manchester is ideally placed to be that global gateway to the UK, and particularly to the North of England," suggests Brooks-Sykes.

“Increasingly we’re looking at our partners across the North, whether it’s Newcastle or Liverpool or York or the Lake District. We’re starting to have conversations with all of those destinations, where we’re saying, ‘You know what? If people are coming to the UK, they arrive in Manchester and then they can go to Edinburgh or Birmingham or Newcastle or York.’ That’s really the ambition for Manchester in the decades to come.”

GLASGOW: IEEE SENSORS CONFERENCE

Chris Dyer, President and CEO of Conference Catalysts in Gainesville, Florida, organized the IEEE Sensors 2017 conference in Glasgow for 900 delegates. The annual event is the flagship conference for 26 different IEEE societies specializing in electronic engineering, sharing the latest research on advancements in sensor manufacturing. Dyer says that IEEE conferences typically require a local contingent of ambassadors who’ve participated in previous IEEE conferences. For 2017, the local organizing committee consisted of Professor Deepak Uttamchandani at University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Professor Krikor Ozanyan at University of Manchester, and Professor Ravinder Dahiya at University of Glasgow.

“The Glasgow Convention Bureau was by far the best bureau we’ve ever worked with.”

— Chris Dyer, President & CEO, Conference Catalysts, Gainesville, Florida

“To successfully win a bid for us, it really comes down to the local tech and conference chairs who have the local connections to the right people in industry and academia,” says Dyer. “That’s a big decision factor whenever bids come in to evaluate where we go.”

Typically, the IEEE Sensors’ delegate list consists of about 90 percent academia, but there’s a big push to bring more industry into the program to convert more ongoing research into industrial applications. Dyer says, aside from the program chairs, the Glasgow Convention Bureau and Glasgow-based CENSIS Innovation Center – which connects industry and academic leaders in smart technology industries – were pivotal in helping bring more industry exhibitors to the conference.

“We have to have more industry participate as much as possible, because ultimately, each of these organizations want to further their membership and touch more people,” says Dyer. “The Glasgow Convention Bureau was by far the best bureau we’ve ever worked with, and we’ve been doing this for 11 years. They’re a big part of the reason why we exceeded our previous maximum attendance by more than 10 percent in 2017.”

CAMBRIDGE: THE ROI OF PRESTIGE

Cambridge and Oxford Universities were ranked as the top two centers for education and research in the world by the Times Higher Education 2018 World University Rankings. Jumping ahead of U.S. schools like Caltech and Stanford, the two UK institutions rose to the top based on the level of incoming research grants.

In Cambridge, the city is attracting a higher number of conferences in advanced industries. For example, the International Conference on Technology of Plasticity – also known as the ‘Olympics of Metal Forming’ – took place in Cambridge in September 2017, marking the event’s debut in the UK. Hosted by the Department of Engineering at the University of Cambridge, and chaired by Professor Julian Allwood, the 6-day conference was attended by 630 delegates from 30 countries for a diverse agenda of lectures, social events, technical tours and industry visits. During the event, Allwood said, “Our short, informal meeting with Meet Cambridge that took place four years ago led to this wonderful event where we celebrated today’s research, inspired future generations, and lifted a veil into a rich world of imagination.”

“Hosting our conference in Cambridge elevates the credibility of our program because of the reputation for academic and research excellence at the University of Cambridge.”

– Brianne Lamm, Marketing & Events Manager, International Microelectronics Assembly and Packaging Society

The University of Cambridge was also the host venue for the International Conference and Exhibition on High Temperature Electronics Network (HiTEN) in June 2015 and 2017, exploring the future of microelectronics manufacturing. Based in North Carolina, Brianne Lamm, Marketing & Events Manager for the International Microelectronics Assembly and Packaging Society, organized the conferences. She says the association consistently hosts the event in the UK because one of the chairs is a professor at Oxford University, and because the organization requires a large cluster of industry expertise to satisfy the educational requirements for the group.

“Hosting our conference in Cambridge elevates the credibility of our program because of the reputation for academic and research excellence at the University of Cambridge,” says Lamm. “And the atmosphere of the destination itself encourages a contemplative, relaxing atmosphere for networking that a lot of other cities just don’t have.”



#4 ENERGY AND RENEWABLES

The UK public and private sectors are investing significantly to improve energy efficiency, expand research and development in renewable and low carbon energy, and maximize domestic production of oil and gas. Today, energy projects totaling over US \$260 billion account for approximately 60 percent of the UK's total infrastructure project pipeline. Because of that, the UK is considered one of the best places in the world to invest in renewable energy, with significant supply chain opportunities

across the sector, including waste energy, electrical networks and offshore wind. The energy sector has also set out proposals to develop 18 gigawatts of nuclear generating capacity at six sites. With nuclear accounting for 20 percent of the UK's electricity demand, the UK is presently investing more than US \$330 million in nuclear research and development.

More than 350,000 people are employed by the oil and gas industry in the UK, which includes over 50,000 experts in subsea production, who have pioneered deep-sea exploration and extraction. In 2015, the UK government introduced a US \$1.75 billion package of tax measures for the oil and gas industry to ensure that the UK Continental Shelf remains an attractive destination for investment.

On the renewables side, clean energy investments in the UK have more than doubled since 2010, rising from US \$10.8 billion in 2010 to over \$25 billion in 2016. Today, the London Array is the largest operational offshore wind farm in the world, and the UK generates more electricity from wind energy than any other country. Overall in 2017, renewable energy in the form of wind and solar generated more than three times the amount of electricity as coal in the UK through mid-December, based on new data provided by BM Reports and Sheffield University, showing both record solar generation and falling prices for new offshore wind farms. The UK Government is increasingly investing in offshore wind in 2018, because, according to the BBC in September 2017, "Energy from offshore wind in the UK will be cheaper than electricity from new nuclear power for the first time."



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENTS: ENERGY & RENEWABLES

In November 2016, the UK Government and Scottish Government agreed to invest US \$1.1 billion over 10 years to support the Aberdeen City Region Deal to develop various priority growth sectors in northern Scotland. One of the results of that was the new Oil & Gas Technology Centre in Aberdeen. It opened in February 2017 to help unlock the full energy-producing potential of the UK North Sea and make the region a global hub for oil and gas innovation. In December 2017, the Centre created a US \$2.7 million platform to crowdsource new ideas for digital tech that can improve exploration efficiencies.

“We believe that sophisticated analytics techniques, such as machine learning, could help identify remaining oil and gas accumulations and consequently impact the extent of life of nearby fields and maximize economic recovery in an area,” says Steve Roberts, Digital Transformation Solution Advisor at the Oil & Gas Technology Centre. “There are significant volumes of industry data collected during oil and gas exploration and production, but they are often held in different formats and are of variable age and quality. A digital solution could extract key information from these difficult to analyze data sets.”

Chris Foy, CEO of VisitAberdeenshire in Scotland, adds: “With the Aberdeen City Region Deal, we are looking at around 300 new jobs a year for the next 10 years to be generated from that investment. That’s important in the context of meetings and events, because that helps to diversify the expertise within our city, so we are in a stronger position to host major energy events because of the knowledge and expertise that’s being nurtured in the region.”

“We are in a stronger position to host major energy events because of the knowledge and expertise that’s being nurtured in the region.”

— Chris Foy, CEO, VisitAberdeenshire, Scotland

A big boost to Aberdeen’s renewable energy industry, Hywind Scotland launched as the world’s first floating wind farm in October 2017 off the coast of northern Scotland. The new technology provides the ability to build wind energy sources in deep water, which has previously limited the scalability of the offshore wind sector.

“As the windiest country in Europe, and with some of the deepest waters and most promising offshore wind sites, Scotland is perfectly placed to capitalize on floating turbine technology,” says Claire Mack, CEO of Scottish Renewables. “Our unique offshore supply chain and the skill set it supports put us at the forefront of the deployment of these innovative machines.”

In Newcastle, the region is a major hub for clean tech industries, and it's designated as one of six Centres for Offshore Renewable Engineering in England. The city is also home to the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, the UK's flagship technology innovation and research center for offshore wind, wave and tidal energy. Capitalizing on the strength of the local energy sector, Newcastle University is investing US \$9.5 million to develop the new Neptune National Centre for Subsea and Offshore Engineering research facility, which is the first of its kind in the UK.

In Edinburgh, the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult is supporting the local ACT Blade company to develop an entirely new form of offshore wind blades, based on advanced and proven sail-rig technology. Using UK expertise in composites and high-tech textiles, ACT Blade's innovative lighter and longer design is currently being tested at the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult's wind facility at Blyth. The design has the potential to not only reduce the cost of energy and extend the lifetime of the UK's wind machine fleet, but also establish novel manufacturing processes in the UK.



Photo: Hywind Scotland floating wind farm, Aberdeen, Scotland

ABERDEEN: SPE OFFSHORE EUROPE

Aberdeen has hosted the SPE Offshore Europe conference since the 1970s, bringing together more than 35,000 professionals working in oil and gas exploration and production. It is the largest business event of its kind in Europe. Chaired by Catherine MacGregor, president of Schlumberger's drilling group, the 2017 conference featured presentations from leading industry figures, including BP CEO Bob Dudley; Royal Dutch Shell CEO Ben Van Beurden; Petrobras' chief exploration and production officer Solange Guedes; and Andrew Jones MP, Exchequer Secretary to the UK Treasury.

The show's central theme was "Embracing New Realities: Reinventing our Industry," focusing specifically on how the oil and gas sector can embrace new technologies. The Oil and Gas Technology Centre in Aberdeen "believes technologies such as robots, composite materials, additive manufacturing and augmented reality are all currently underutilized in offshore oil and gas, despite being part of a general industrial transformation in other industries."

VisitAberdeenshire is one of four members of the Energy Cities Alliance, along with Abu Dhabi, Calgary, and Stavanger across the North Sea in Norway. The Alliance's mission is to connect meeting planners in the energy sector with the relevant people in the member cities, including both convention bureaus and industry leaders.

"We work very closely with Stavanger, across the water in Norway, and the other Energy Cities around the world to collaborate on best practices, and sometimes on collective bidding as well," explains Chris Foy at VisitAberdeenshire. "We agree on who is going to be the best city to throw a hat in the ring for a particular event, and that type of collaborations give us a different viewpoint on the world, so we're not just operating in a vacuum."

When SPE Offshore Europe returns to Aberdeen in two years, it will occupy the new Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre opening in 2019. The facility will encompass more than half a million square feet of exhibition space, a 12,500-person arena, and three hotels. Foy says this will significantly help Aberdeen attract more conferences in advanced industries.

"This is going to be a major installation for our city, and the contract to manage it has gone to a major U.S. facility management company, SMG Philadelphia," he explains. "So we're insuring that the specifications for this new venue will meet the highest expectations of American event planners."

RENEWABLES: POWER WITH A PURPOSE



Hosted by WindEurope and RenewableUK, the Offshore Wind Energy conference in London is the largest offshore wind event in the world. On the first day of the June 2017 event, WindEurope stated: “Wind could churn out enough power to meet at least 25 percent of the EU’s power needs by the end of the next decade.” Fronting the UK’s entire east coast, the blustery North Sea is seen as the initial pivot point for Europe’s most significant conversion from carbon-based to renewable energies.

A new report developed by The Crown Estate, which grants seabed rights in the UK, states that the level of development activity in the UK offshore wind sector – with projects containing 830 turbines under construction – is the highest seen since 2010.

“This report offers growing evidence of offshore wind’s competitiveness as a low-carbon energy resource,” said Huub den Rooijen, Director of Energy, Minerals & Infrastructure at the Crown Estate, during the conference. “Growth has been driven by three main factors: world-class offshore wind resources, strong policy support, and an industry that has risen to the challenge of becoming a mature power player.”

Glasgow and Edinburgh are also hosting numerous conferences in the clean energy sector. In Edinburgh, the Scottish Renewables’ Annual Conference in March 2018 will address the impact of public policy on developing a stronger green energy industry. In Glasgow, RenewableUK’s 14th annual Wave & Tidal Conference and Exhibition in February 2018 will bring together leading developers, manufacturers, financial experts, technical professionals, regulators, and government stakeholders in the international marine energy supply chain.

Photo: Wind farm

NORTHERN WALES: SURF PARK SUMMIT EUROPE



The Welsh government is supporting the development of conferences in advanced industries that help propel economic growth across the country. For example, the Surf Park Summit Europe 2017 brought together leaders and investors in inland surf park construction at the Surf Snowdonia facility in northern Wales. The goals behind the public-private partnership include promoting technology and sustainable development expertise in Wales, and establishing a stronger identity for the nation on the world stage.

Surf Snowdonia provides continuous surfable waves in a landlocked facility, created by “WaveGarden” technology first developed in Spain. To build the surf park, local engineers developed a power grid and water reservoir that use electricity and recycled water from an adjacent hydropower plant. The environment surrounding the plant had been heavily contaminated from an aluminum smelter previously operating in the area, causing concern due to its close proximity to Snowdonia National Park. Therefore, the Welsh government wanted to bring together conference attendees at Surf Park Summit Europe who could provide leadership in sustainable land use.

One of those experts was Dr. Jess Ponting, Director of the Center for Surf Research, and Associate Professor in Sustainable Tourism, at San Diego State University.

“Surf Park Summit is really meant to be an incubator and accelerator for the surf park industry, so we bring together all of the different stakeholder groups that are involved in making surf parks real,” says Ponting. “I wanted to be involved in making sure these developments are as sustainable as possible. I’m in the process of developing sustainability certification standard for surf parks, and we know pretty much all the developers are interested in this. So I think there are ways to develop surf parks that are quite sustainable, which can then be leveraged for broader sustainability imperatives.”

With the rise of surf parks opening worldwide, Ponting thinks greater links can be created between people having surfing experiences outside of the ocean and a larger conversation relating to issues of ocean health. He says, “If those links are made explicit, and come through in the surf schools and education components of a surf park, that could be an opportunity for the Welsh government to create a platform where ocean and climate advocates could be recruited in great numbers far away from the coasts.”

Photo: Surf Snowdonia, Wales



#5 BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Many of the world's leading banking, insurance, financial management, fintech (financial technology) and legal institutions are based in the UK, which together make up the business and professional services sector. London, recognized globally for its leadership in regulating capital markets, topped every category in the Global Financial Centres Index in September 2017, including: Business Environment, Human Capital, Infrastructure, Financial Sector Development, and Reputation.

Many of the regional cities throughout the UK list financial services as one of their priority sectors based on the quality of their universities and growing cluster expertise in fintech. Worldwide, fintech is fundamentally changing the way financial services firms operate, because it's transforming the way people and companies transfer, borrow, protect and manage their money.

The UK is the world's fastest growing region for fintech, benefiting from strong demand from a sophisticated market, excellent IT and transport infrastructure, and one of the largest pools of financial and entrepreneurial talent in the world. Many different sources of finance are available and the sector is well served by angel and private equity investors, accelerator and incubator schemes.

This concentration of financial services activity means great opportunity for fintech solution providers, particularly in the areas of trading, regulation, data and compliance.

The business and professional services sector is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, which helps companies develop new business models through their Project Innovate and Innovation Hub. Meanwhile, the central government offers a range of tax incentives and programs to promote innovation including: the Enterprise Investment Scheme, Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme, and Patent Box scheme, where companies pay a lower rate of corporate tax on profits earned from patented innovations.

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENTS: BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES

The Leeds City Region is England's second largest economy and financial center after London. It is home to 30 national and international banks, the headquarters of three of the UK's five largest member-based lending organizations, and nine higher education institutions – representing the largest university cluster outside of London. Also, seven of the 25 largest law offices in the UK have significant presence in Leeds. Based on those assets, Leeds and the surrounding area are benefiting from “north shoring,” whereby companies in the financial and business services sector are moving or expanding north from London to capitalize on the region's sector strengths and talent pipeline.

“We are well placed to relieve the financial pressures of locating middle and back office roles in the capital because we have an excellent talent pool of graduates and experienced hires suitable for operating shared services and centers of excellence efficiently,” says Jennie Frost, Head of Inward Investment Operations at the Leeds City Region Economic Partnership. “Our strong tradition in banking stretches back to the early 19th century, and is built on the wealth and business demand generated from the manufacturing industries of Victorian Northern England and the needs of its growing workforce.”

“Our strong tradition in banking stretches back to the early 19th century, and is built on the wealth and business demand generated from the manufacturing industries of Victorian Northern England.”

— Jennie Frost, Head of Inward Investment Operations, Leeds City Region Economic Partnership

For example, luxury retailer Burberry opened a new business services office in Leeds in 2017, bringing together staff from Burberry's finance, HR, procurement, customer service and IT teams. During the move, Julie Brown, CFO and COO at Burberry, said: “Our choice of Leeds underlines our belief in the strong talent available in the North of England, so we see it as an attractive destination for our business.”

In the field of law, the UK Government's legal department is opening a regional center in Leeds to take advantage of “one of the fastest growing legal sectors in the UK,” says Stephen Braviner Roman, Director General, Legal Services Directorate for the UK Government. “We have been keen to expand out of London and make the most of the strong skills base in the regions, [and] we saw there was a compelling argument for increasing our investment in the north, and Leeds specifically.”

Seeking to boost Leeds's reputation as a center of expertise in legal services, the Leeds Law Society launched the inaugural Leeds Conference in June 2017. Bill Barton, President of the Society, opened the conference with a call for the city's law firms to collaborate in the promotion of the city's legal sector. Tom Bridges, Chief Officer for Economy and Regeneration at Leeds City Council, said Leeds has seen the fastest growth in the private legal sector of any UK city.

HSBC, one of the world's largest banking and financial services organizations, announced in 2017 that it was moving its UK headquarters from London to Birmingham. HSBC UK is investing more than US \$270 million in Birmingham, and will bring more than 1,000 head office roles from England's capital to the city by January 2019. "We had been looking at options for the head office of our ring-fenced bank for some time," says Antonio Simoes, CEO of HSBC UK. "It became clear to us that Birmingham would be the right location. The city is close to London, but also brings us within easy reach of our 16 million customers based across the UK."

In Edinburgh in 2015, HSBC opened its UK center for global risk and compliance. In 2017, HSBC UK expanded the center's operation with 500 new hires based on the constant demand from the banking industry for up-to-date risk management strategies.

"When it comes to managing financial risk and compliance, Edinburgh, with its long history as a banking and financial center has a global reputation for excellence," says Paul Kelly, Group Head of Policy and Oversight at HSBC. "Our new base also gives us access to a top pool of talent, a pool that is being fed by Scottish universities offering dedicated degrees in risk management. These courses support our activities in financial risk, compliance risk, and operational risk."

Cardiff's growth as a finance capital was accelerated by the creation of a designated Financial Services Enterprise Zone in the city center in 2012, which offers incentives such as training grants and assistance with business rates for small businesses. In 2015, the UK government designated South Wales a Financial Centre of Excellence – one of eight outside London. That year, the number of financial companies in the Welsh capital grew by 11.2 percent, the highest of any city in the UK. Today, companies such as Deloitte, Admiral and Lloyd's Bank are continually expanding their presence in South Wales. For example, Deloitte expanded its Cardiff-based staff in 2017 to nearly 800 people working in the professional services firm's quality and risk operations unit.

"We have been able to recruit and train our highly effective operation, thanks in large part to the abundance of graduates from local universities and the support received from the Welsh Government," says Ross Flanigan, Managing Director Shared Services for Deloitte.

FINTECH: THE FUTURE OF MONEY

Part of the UK Government, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is rolling out a new set of policies on January 13, 2018 supporting “Open Banking,” whereby the nine largest UK banks will need to be more transparent about their operations. The banking industry will also be required to give smaller financial firms and fintech companies the same level of access to customer credit and banking data that the legacy banks have. The goal is to make the financial services sector in the UK more competitive, and therefore more innovative.

The official CMA position is: “Older and larger banks do not have to compete hard enough for customers’ business, and smaller and newer banks find it difficult to grow. This means that many people are paying more than they should and are not benefiting from new services. Central to the CMA’s remedies are measures to ensure that customers benefit from technological advances and that new entrants and smaller providers are able to compete more fairly.”

According to Forbes in December 2017: “This is — potentially at least — very good news indeed for the burgeoning fintech industry, both inside and outside the UK. Britain’s fintech companies are on something of a roll at the moment. According to London & Partners, technology-driven financial services companies based in the UK raised more than US \$1 billion in venture capital between January and October 2017.”

Illustrating the growth of fintech, the Funding Circle peer-to-peer platform provided US \$154 million in new net lending during the first three weeks of September 2017, compared to \$128 million among the four largest banks. Furthermore, according to a survey conducted by Decision Technology: “43 percent of bank retail customers would consider sourcing a personal loan from a fintech provider.”

Christoph Riech is co-founder of the London fintech company Iwoca, which lends money to small businesses. Speaking to Forbes, he said: “Open Banking will help remove many of the barriers to finance that UK small businesses face. Finance providers, like Iwoca, will be able to use Open Banking data, which only the banks can currently access, to eliminate endless form filling and make fairer credit decisions — helping small businesses and unlocking faster economic growth.”

UK FINTECH CONFERENCES

Cities of all sizes across the UK are aggressively developing their fintech clusters to answer exponential demand worldwide for new online money management and distribution platforms. Therefore, the UK is hosting a growing range of fintech conferences, and other business events with expanded fintech tracks, exploring how advance technologies are disrupting the financial services sector, especially machine learning and blockchain.

According to Invest Northern Ireland, Belfast is the world's number one destination for fintech development investment projects, and the number one international location for U.S. cybersecurity development projects. The Digital DNA conference in Belfast in June 2018 includes a dedicated fintech track with sessions ranging from regulation to peer-to-peer lending platforms.

FinTech North is taking place once again during the Leeds Digital Festival in April 2018 to “generate collaboration and knowledge share within the financial services community, and to generate tangible economic benefits for the region.” Last year's topics focused on innovation, alternative finance, big data and analytics, machine learning, digital identity and authentication. FinTech North also holds monthly seminars in Leeds, where speakers like Mark Lumley, partner at Leeds-based Shulman law firm, speak about fintech disruptors such as bitcoin and blockchain. In December 2017, Lumley asserted that: “People clumsily compare bitcoin to the dot.com bubble. But, don't forget that out of that bubble we have built a new world with new companies that are now a crucial part of our daily lives.”

London hosts the lion's share of fintech conferences in the UK, including the Innovate Finance Global Summit in March 2018. The scope of knowledge is exhaustive, with sessions focusing on topics such as Cognotech. That's defined as: “Tech that makes individual employees smarter - enhancing their cognitive powers, enabling them to get more reliably into highly productive ‘flow’ states of consciousness, boosting their creativity, and being more aware of potential cognitive biases and prejudices.”

Other high-profile fintech conferences in England's capital include: Finnovate Europe in March, the International Fintech Conference in April, FinTech World Forum in May, London FinTech Week in July, and Fintech Connect Live in December. As well, Blockchain Expo Global in April has grown into the largest blockchain conference in the world, with extensive content exploring the future impact of crypto-currencies in financial services.

On the Blockchain Expo blog in October 2017, Ettiienne Reinecke, Group CTO of Dimension Data, says: “In the financial services sector, we've seen the U.S. and European capital markets moving onto blockchain platforms, and similar activity in markets such as Japan. Considering how conservative and compliance-focused this sector is, that's quite remarkable.”

LIVERPOOL: INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS FESTIVAL



Few events celebrate the convergence of innovation across so many different advanced and creative industries as the bi-annual International Business Festival in Liverpool. The agenda focuses on one of nine sectors each day, including: Global Economics; Urbanization & Cities; Sustainable Energy; Future Transport; Manufacturing; Global Logistics & Shipping; Health & Life Sciences, Creative Industries; and Sports, Culture & Travel. The biggest

value of this conference is the cross-pollination of ideas that impact many of the different industries, illustrating how multiple knowledge clusters in close proximity can build on each other's strengths.

HRH Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, announced he will be the Festival Patron of the 2018 International Business Festival. During a presentation at Lancaster House in London, he said: "The UK's prosperity relies on its wealth of innovative and ambitious small and medium-sized businesses. Whenever I have had the chance to meet the people who run such enterprises, I have been struck by their ingenuity, drive and commitment. They demonstrate the best qualities of our national character."

Max Steinberg, Chairman of the International Business Festival, added: "Having the Duke on board as Festival Patron will be a huge boost to our presence in key international markets, helping us to attract even more delegations to Liverpool next June. The opportunities for businesses in the city region, as a result, will be huge."

Festival Director Ian McCarthy, speaking to Conference News, explained how the multiple-sector framework of the event offers an abundance of ways for conference organizers to plug into the festival's thought leadership.

"With the International Business Festival, conference organizers have a chance to tap into the global reach of the world's biggest business festival," he said. "The development of our program around nine key high-growth sectors will additionally enable event holders to provide additional value to their delegates, who will be able to access industry-specific content and networking opportunities."

VISITSCOTLAND LAUNCHES NEW 'LEGENDS' CAMPAIGN



VisitScotland Business Events launched a new two-year initiative in November 2017, called “Scotland: Where Ideas Become Legend,” to attract conference planners active in advanced and creative industries. The goal is to promote a different industry sector every two months with stories and videos highlighting how the various cities are leveraging their expertise to create more productive conferences.

The launch is unique in the global meetings industry because the campaign brands Scotland’s sector expertise with a very engaging delivery. Part of the overall strategy relies heavily on Twitter and LinkedIn content using the #IdeasBecomeLegend hashtag.

“This is a way to position Scotland as very forward-thinking and innovative in research and academia, and give that more visibility as it relates to business events and conferences,” says Richard Knight, senior marketing manager for VisitScotland Business Events. “Conferences and business events in these sectors are really a bridge to further investments in Scotland, so we’re linking those to continue driving growth in our economy.”

The Legends platform kicked off with a focus specifically on technology expertise in Scotland, with a new video from Stephen Taylor, CEO of Technology Scotland, highlighted the need for the country to share its technological expertise with outside audiences. “It’s rare in the modern world that an idea can develop by a single entity or single country,” Taylor says. “So international collaboration and creating connections is essential, and large conventions help to keep Scotland’s profile high.”

The Legends theme will shift to Education in January and February 2018, and then Creative in March and April. The other sectors following through 2019 are: energy, life sciences, engineering, marine, medicine, digital, space and culinary. And within those 2-month windows, VisitScotland Business Events will highlight the innovation in each city in 2-week increments to give everyone an opportunity to showcase their specific sector expertise.

“We wanted to do this in a way so it’s not just the national body talking; it’s also all of our cities and all of our regional areas throughout Scotland telling their own stories,” says Rory Archibald, Business Development Manager, Associations & Sectors at VisitScotland. “So we’re creating more engagement with an online community and involving every one of our convention bureaus. In fact, we’ve been tracking the hashtag use regularly and there’s been cities liking and retweeting other cities’ stories, so it has really created a collaborative team spirit.”

For example, in December 2018, VisitScotland Business Events retweeted a video from Glasgow Convention Bureau with David Smith, Director of Digital at Scottish Enterprise. He talked about how Scotland has the highest level of foreign direct investment in the UK after London, based on “the skill and strength of our technology sectors.”

“We have a foundation of innovation and creativity, but with business events sometimes, it’s almost like a social club where we’re all huddling together too much,” says Shona Brierton, Sales Manager at the Glasgow Convention Bureau. “So let’s get attendees into the community to share knowledge. Glasgow is really a living laboratory inspiring the next generation of citizens. For conferences that come here in our key clusters, where visitors can interact more with our students, that feeds us for the future.”

“It’s not just about finding the right conference center and the connectivity. It’s also finding that extra hook, which is our experts and innovators who can really make an event experience exceptional.”

— Rory Archibald, Business Development Manager, Associations & Sectors, VisitScotland

But, how is the sector expertise theme resonating with international meeting planners?

“I’m certainly seeing interest increasing exponentially over the last few years in the North American market, when we go to speak to them at international trade shows, such as IMEX America and IBTM,” says Archibald. “We volunteer information about engaging with our local community of experts and innovators, so it’s adding another layer to the potential that an event has in Scotland to become more successful than it has been before. It’s definitely something that’s growing. We’re explaining how it’s not just about finding the right conference center and the connectivity. It’s also finding that extra hook, which is our experts and innovators who can really make an event experience exceptional.”

THE PLANNER PERSPECTIVE



At the end of the day, the success of any international business event comes down to the strength of relationships between committed and creative people in both local communities and outside organizations.

Here is a perfect example of that in action.

Helena Dean, Director of Communications at the Society of Architectural Historians, based in

Chicago, organized her association's 70th Annual International Conference in Glasgow in June 2017. It was the Society's first meeting outside the U.S. in 40 years.

"The purpose of the event is to present research on the built environment and celebrate the host city," says Dean. "The Glasgow Convention Bureau was extremely, extremely helpful, which is part of the reason why we chose to go there. VisitScotland was also very helpful promoting our event to get the word out, more than we could have accomplished alone."

The program included 36 academic paper sessions and numerous networking events at the University of Strathclyde and University of Glasgow; industry roundtables with architects, preservationists, and technical experts; and 33 professor-led architecture tours and seminars open to the public. By making so many events available for residents, the Society was able to begin building a legacy around the event by educating Glaswegians interested in better understanding, protecting, and developing their city responsibly.

"It was also a chance for our attendees to really explore the city firsthand by meeting the local people and exchanging knowledge face-to-face," says Dean.

Christopher Kirbabas, Director of Programs at the Society of Architectural Historians, adds that the dedication of the regional stakeholders in the urban development sector fostered a spirit of collaboration among all of the attendees, local and international.

“The great thing about regional cities like Glasgow is there’s usually a much deeper pool of community availability, because they’re so eager to showcase their city,” he says. “I felt like it was easier to have access to people in Glasgow than a larger city. We also had an extraordinary local planning chair (Marina Moskowitz at the University of Glasgow), and having her support and access to people helped fill out the conference.”

Kirbabas especially acknowledges the academic community at the University of Strathclyde and University of Glasgow. “So many times an organization comes into a city, invades it for a few days, and then leaves,” he says. “For us, we relied on the universities, pulling their knowledge and access to people, to create what we hope is a long-lasting conversation about the future of cities between us and the people of Glasgow.”

Aileen Crawford, Head of Conventions at the Glasgow Convention Bureau, says the biggest value that convention bureaus and their ambassadors provide is relevance. They deliver that by customizing the destination experience and expertise to produce a higher return on investment, as they did working with the Society of Architectural Historians.

“We constantly ask ourselves, ‘What do conference organizers need from the convention bureau of the future?’” says Crawford. “I believe that just offering information on new hotels is not representative of the era we’re in anymore. Maybe it was 10 years ago. Now, I think it’s all about being as relevant as possible to planners and relevant to our city and stakeholders. The level of support and expertise that we provide isn’t available in other European cities.”

“We constantly ask ourselves, ‘What do conference organizers need from the convention bureau of the future?’ I think it’s all about being as relevant as possible to planners and relevant to our city and stakeholders. The level of support and expertise that we provide isn’t available in other European cities.”

— Aileen Crawford, Head of Conventions, Glasgow Convention Bureau

Crawford sums up the theme of this report. Access to sector expertise is the new currency for delivering the world’s most innovative, exciting and productive meetings and events.

“Our ambassadors are always up to date on the latest research in their fields, so they’re also a direct resource for us to keep up with the trends in each sector,” she says. “So for us it’s about being smarter about what’s happening across our sectors, recognizing when there’s new world-class research, and plugging that in with conferences in that sector.”

FURTHER READING

[UK Government Business Visits and Events Strategy](#)

[UK Government Advanced and Creative Industries Overview](#)

[VisitBritain Event Support Program Overview](#)

[Events Are GREAT Britain](#)

[Visit Scotland Business Events](#)

[Visit Wales Business Events](#)

[Discover Northern Ireland](#)

[TechNation 2017 Report](#)

[The UK's Tech Clusters](#)

[TechBritain: UK Tech Sectors](#)

[Tech Sector Growing Faster Than UK Economy With 72% of Investment Outside London, Report Says](#)

[Destinations Join Forces To Share Best Practice For Ambassador Programs](#)

[Great Exhibition of the North](#)

[2018 International Business Festival](#)

[London Tech Week](#)

[Scotland: Where Ideas Become Legend](#)

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