



Gambling Business Group

It may not be viewed as the sexy side of the gaming and gambling industry, but the **Gambling Business Group** gave a perfect example of how trade bodies can enliven a party with a forum for energetic and meaningful connections. The ARE Expo saw GBG bring together the industry, licensing officials and police authorities against the backdrop of vibrant technological innovations and business exchanges - and it was a balance that produced one of the highlights the new show's debut outing.



The Gambling Business Group High Street Hub comes

There's a lot to be said about last week's ARE Expo which added a little sparkle to the industry events calendar in a Spring slot that has laid bare for many years.

It was small, distinctly boutique, but it was the versatility that really helped deliver a show for any season.

And rest assured, it's a definite 'watch this space' event.

One of the major contributors to that versatile offering was the Gambling Business Group which staged its third annual High Street Hub - and the initiative has certainly found its mojo.

Last year, the Hub operated from the centre of the world's greatest and largest industry event - ICE - where it trialled its unique offer of seminars and tours for both the industry and London and South East based local authorities. Amid the hullabaloo and the energetic global atmosphere of ICE, the GBG's

High Street Hub, one to remember

Local authority official said...
Thanks to the GBG, IOL and ARE Expo for organising this fabulous interactive session. Great speakers providing details of all the latest developments in gambling along with hands of opportunities to try new and industry adopted technology all in one place...

Greater Manchester Police said...
We are expected to visit gambling premises but we don't get any training. This has been fantastic...

unique programme was greeted with wide acclaim.

But, fifteen months later at ARE, the High Street Hub came of age: up to 20 businesses engaged in the seminars and tours on the opening day, 40 representatives from local authority and police forces attending special workshops, a tour of the exhibition incorporating and SR product demonstrations on the second day.

It was an exchange of ideas and viewpoints that served the industry well, in fact, very well.

The team behind the schedule, GBG chief executive Peter Hannibal and general manager Charlotte Meller, were in no doubt of the import of this year's High Street Hub. "Given the current state of affairs of a stalling by the government in its intent to seriously modernise the industry landscape and probably the most serious and justified fears for the survival of the high street economy, this year's Hub managed to serve up a note of optimism," said Hannibal. "The exchange between

the industry and local authority and police officers at ARE was one of the most positive we've seen in years. There was a real willingness to understand and question developments from both sides."

In fairness, the local authority relationship has been two plus years in the making - the GBG has been building bridges with the Institute of Licensing for some time and the fruits of that programme were certainly evident not just at ARE, but also at IOL events throughout the year.

Charlotte Meller has been at the heart of this targeted project. "The relationship between local authority officials and high street operators is one of the most important as far as day to day licensing issues are concerned and the barriers to understanding either positions have, in the past, been far too common. We are breaking this down and last week's ARE was an excellent example of how far we have come," Meller noted.

"The interest and surprise at how new



ss Group's nes of age

technology is working was an eye-opener and I think all the officials went away with a greater sense of how big a driving force social responsibility is in our research and development."

It was a timely assembly given the current wave of hostile voices sounding out over high street licence applications. So why the negative discourse? Peter Hannibal offered an explanation: "Gambling has been a highly contentious issue during the Gambling Review debate, in fact far too divisive and very emotional rather than evidential. But the licensing officers understand the rules and the guidelines, and play a far more active role in the high street activity. But that's not necessarily the case with councillors and I'm hoping we can develop the Hub's offering to bring in more councillors and engage with them far more regularly."

Meller agreed. "When the officers saw the age verification developments at Innovative Technology and the data collection at Boomerang Digital, they weren't just surprised, they were enthused by the progress,

and interested in how some of the technology can be applied to other age restricted products and services. I sense that when the councillors get sight of these innovations, the conversation on the high street will shift."

And Hannibal sees this as an opportunity of seismic proportions. "We are the one industry that wants to invest in local economies, local communities and local jobs - we are dedicated to the revival of high streets all the around the UK with millions and millions waiting to be invested. Add to this our commitments through the Statutory Levy, our compliance commitments as one of the most regulated industries in UK plc, and our dialogue with bodies such as the IOL and DCMS, councillors will have a far greater understanding of what the industry is doing."

Until then, the High Street Hub will go on the road, of sorts, with the Hub's vision taking in stops at the IOL National Training Conference event and other licensing assemblies over the year. And it will be doing so on the back of a highly successful outing at the ARE Expo.

Why was the Gambling Business Group's High Street Hub hailed a success?

Last week's inaugural ARE Expo played host to a jam-packed schedule of workshops and hands-on events hosted by the Gambling Business Group, in which a number of the industry's leading businesses such as Novomatic, Inspired Entertainment, Boomerang Digital and Innovative Technology all took part.

In a post to LinkedIn after the two days of the show in Manchester, GBG general manager Charlotte Meller thanked both "GBG members as well as external partners" for what she said had been a "very successful" outing of its High Street Hub learning event.

On the show's first day, the schedule comprised of four industry workshops on customer

interaction, positive play, Martyn's Law, age estimation, and digital ID, all of which Meller said were "well attended ... generating discussions during and after the sessions."

On the following day, the GBG invited hosted 40 licensing and police officers from the Greater Manchester area and beyond to attend the show where the trade body delivered a series of mini-talks and provide hands-on tutorials of the very latest technology currently being used in the gambling industry's social responsibility efforts.

"Being the industry point of contact for local regulators is one of the GBG's strategic aims," she added. "Based on the positive feedback from attendees, we think we're hitting that mark."