

providing delegates with more detailed information about the key skills needed in the competitive marketplace of today. Looking at the opportunities and challenges of the continuing evolution of the holiday sector, the debates will cover the current market landscape and marketing opportunities, the way new technology, consumption patterns and increased income levels are changing the travel brand landscape and the global economy and its effects on the travel industry. As their web site states, "the Travel Convention business sessions have been developed to ensure delegates will be ready to meet these continuing changes and seize the opportunities - they will be three days that could make a world of difference to your business." Additional activities will include excursions, golf and tennis tournaments and a football match, a cabaret and various celebrations including a welcome party at the Hotel Bahía del Duque.

For many people, the annual holiday is the high point of their year and booking through ABTA is seen as providing financial protection for consumers, a way to minimise the risk of problems on holiday and maximising their enjoyment, but ABTA are involved in a lot more behind the scenes, such as supporting the new disability legislation making it illegal for any airline to refuse a booking within the European Union on the grounds of disability. Mr Fleming sums up their role, "ABTA is involved in influencing government and canvassing its members and other trade association views to help provide a consistent opinion. At the moment we are also working with a coalition called Flying Matters, which brings together a wide range of industry bodies, companies, and trade associations to raise the profile of how important aviation is to our economy and social well being."

The current regulations governing the industry were provided by the 1990 European package holiday directive, which ABTA are seeking to scrap or rewrite. According to Mr Fleming at its inception it, "provided sensible legislation, but the industry has changed dramatically and it is out of date. All we are doing is seeking to make it relevant to the modern industry." Between 2000 and 2005, 63,000 passengers were stranded by the 50 European airlines

that went bankrupt in that period and the organisation feels that the legislation has not kept pace with the way consumers buy travel.

He also believes that the travel industry needs to lobby with one voice and that there are too many travel trade associations each fighting their own corner. As an ex vice-chairman of the FTO he sees a merger with them as a possible solution, a posi-

confirmed, "most travel agents on the high street have changed their business models. Many have specialised and focussed more on up-market and long haul destinations. Their unique selling points are their expertise and excellent customer service. There are still people out there who prefer to have someone else book for them. Although we work in



tion which is shared by new board member Mike Greenacre of Co-op Travel and TUI Travel's UK Managing Director, Dermot Blastland among others.

The role of the High Street travel agent is changing, with 85 per cent of people planning to research or book online over the next 12 months according to a recent study by YouGov. The same questionnaire showed that 40 per cent of the members of the public consulted had not visited a travel agent for at least the last two years. The industry is convinced that there will always be room for the personal touch but many are changing to meet the new travel demands. Mr Fleming

a price sensitive market, this is not exclusively the case as if everyone who went on holiday booked solely on price, then many (successful) companies would not exist."

Pollution is a hot issue politically and the subject of a report by Carbon Consultancy recently launched at the World Travel Market, but unlike other European customers, the UK customers don't seem to be particularly swayed by sustainable tourism arguments. ABTA are directly involved in trying to raise the joint consumer conscience on the problem. "Actually, many customers have consistently said that these things matter, but don't do anything about it," Mr Fleming affirmed. "This ac-

He used his old London black cab to drive around the resorts advertising a local discotheque



accordingly. Our members have over 7,000 registered internet sites.

Members of the Tenerife administration fought hard to bring the Convention to the island. Mr Fleming believes that the annual get together is important as it, "raises the association's profile among its members, the industry and the host destination." Apart from the instant hotel and conference centre-filler, knock-on effects for the destination where the Convention is held are, "to raise its profile to over 1200 travel industry professionals. In addition all those delegates who are directly or indirectly involved in the distribution or selling of holidays will enjoy first hand experience of the host destination." ABTA are convinced that their members still have an im-

portant role to play in the future of Britain's travellers as they provide them with, "peace of mind. ABTA has strict financial criteria members have to meet. Members provide financial protection and professionalism, as they all have to sign up to the Code of Conduct, and recourse can be sought through the consumer affairs department and the independent arbitration system," confirmed Mr Fleming. The ABTA Travel Convention 2007 takes place from the 28th to the 30th of November in the new modern congress centre Magma which the President has already visited and thought was, "stunning.

It will provide a very 'new' experience," he enthused.

His recent election address put it in a nutshell, "the issues are many, but one thing is certain, things are going to change. Licensing, Bonding and the cost of membership of our club are the tip of the iceberg," he claimed. Justin Fleming has already proved himself a modern and go-getting leader and his re-election to the President's position earlier in the year came as no surprise to those involved in the industry. As he himself asserted, "I have the time, energy and most important of all the relevant day to day involvement with Classic Collection Holidays to appreciate and understand the current issues facing our industry."

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