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***The Leisure Review* symposium communiqué**

The Leisure Review symposium held in Oxford on the cusp of March and April 2011 brought together over 30 senior management professionals from across the breadth of the sport, leisure and culture sector to identify and debate the key issues for the industry and the people within it. Although self-selecting and not there to speak for any silo or organisation, the group clearly represented the sector and, made up of as it was of genuine thought-leaders, provided both a touchstone for the state of the sector and potentially a crucible for its progression. Thought-leadership was at the centre of the debate and the heart of the philosophy that brought the symposium into existence.

The agenda was set by the symposium's members and the outcomes selected through the filter of discourse. At the end of the 24 hours set aside for the symposium this communiqué was prepared. It is intended to inform and inspire action not to instruct and the decision to give credence, value or support to the communiqué rests with the reader. However, symposium members were convinced that sustaining the momentum of the debate and actions which flow from it will require a wider engagement with the communiqué and practical involvement from like-minded people not fortunate enough to have been in Oxford.

Thought leadership

All organisations need leaders and all professions and industries need thought-leaders. The symposium provided a physical space for its members to think individually and jointly and there was a clear desire to continue that process beyond the time and physical constraints of the event.

- *The Leisure Review* was charged with finding an electronic space in which that can happen and to "hold the ring" of future discourse.
- Members committed to maintaining the momentum created by the symposium and to inviting others to contribute.

Leadership

It was the consensus of the members of the symposium that they will get behind the newly formed Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (IMSPA) collectively and individually believing that is the best way to systematically develop leadership across the profession. The commitment is to take a leading role in shaping and supporting the institute's programme of work to better help it reflect and serve the sector.

- Individuals will convey this intention to identified sector agencies and seek their support.
- Individuals will undertake similar advocacy within their own networks and endeavour to ensure that the sector was not still trying to establish a unified voice in 15 years time.



Open space: Sue Isherwood explains the technology of the pen

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It was noted that the commitments expressed were not an attempt to commit the newly hatched institute to policies before it had established itself but rather a commitment from those individuals present to engage with the institute to shape the policies and practices of the new body, thus facilitating its efficacy.

Engagement with the NHS

It should be a priority for the sector as a whole and for organisations within it to establish partnerships with the NHS to meet the needs and agendas of the new localised public health commissioners.

- This will require close attention to NICE guidance.
- There needs to be a nationally co-ordinated programme of skills development.
- There must be an effective national voice of behalf of the sport, leisure and culture sector.

The impact of reduction in strategic capacity and the danger of this resulting in greater reliance on operators to build and maintain relationships was identified as a present threat.

- Action is required to focus on skills development, particularly the softer skills of relationship building
- Action is required to map the resources available and identify the gaps.

Information sharing

This is a digital age and the sector needs to accelerate the passage of information and the sharing of knowledge and learning to create a critical mass of engagement. Individuals need to create time to engage in this knowledge exchange.

- The promotion of the benefits of this approach, including case studies, webinars and word of mouth via organisations and networks is a priority
- The National Culture Forum Leading Learning Programme needs to be supported and developed
- Regional improvement networks should be instigated
- Individuals and colleagues need to buy into the use of technologies such as LinkedIn.

The Leisure Review, April 2011

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