

Close connections



Event planners respond with detailed itinerary suggestions to four different UK airport-related event briefs. By *Annie Makoff*

Brief The client's 50 store managers and ten board members are flying in from across Europe and the US to join 30 UK managers for a meeting and launch of a new product range. The client is looking for a venue at a UK airport, which can provide a meeting room that can hold 90 delegates, along with three smaller breakout rooms, and a separate exhibition space to showcase the new product range.



Response Claire Buchan, senior PR and events consultant, Sorted PR
The Doubletree by Hilton Newcastle International Airport hotel was purpose-built for every kind of corporate event, including conferences, team-building initiatives and product launches.

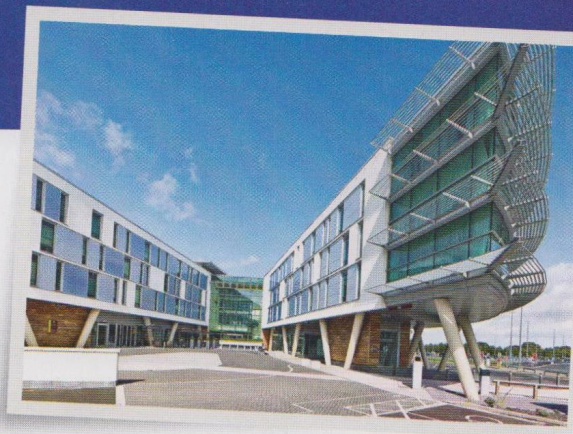
The 190m² ballroom – a light-filled glass atrium that caters for up to 150 guests – offers a memorable exhibition space for use throughout the day and the venue's four smaller meetings rooms, such as the Berwick or Hadrian Room, are ideal breakout spaces.

After flying in to the airport terminal, which is just yards away, delegates would meet in the hotel's large function suite – complete with two private entrances, bar and bathrooms.

As an added incentive, delegates could enjoy pre-arranged refreshments or dine in the hotel's Fratello's Italian restaurant, with the opportunity to stay overnight and make full use of the other facilities, including a 24-hour fitness suite and business centre.

On departure, delegates can return to the airport or travel on to the North East and wider UK using the nearby A1 road network and Metro train line.

High flyers
(above) Concorde at Manchester Airport; (right) Doubletree by Hilton Newcastle



Brief Gala dinner for 120 people at a venue at Manchester Airport. Delegates will be staying overnight, so accommodation must be included. For the dinner, the client is keen to find a venue with strong sustainable and gourmet credentials.



Response Jane Baker, business development director, CWT Meetings & Events

For gala dinner-style events at Manchester Airport, the Runway Visitor Centre at the airport itself provides banqueting facilities built around Alfa Charlie, the second Concorde built to join the BA fleet in 1976.

The large aircraft hangar can be easily transformed for corporate branding purposes, by using dividing graphic panels, drape and lighting to create a unique dining space. Guests can enjoy catering courtesy of Heathcotes Outside – part of The Lindley Group – where double Michelin-starred chef Paul Heathcote uses locally sourced seasonal ingredients to create bespoke and sustainable menus.

The venue too boasts great sustainability credentials after the airport owners launched a group-wide corporate responsibility strategy in 2011.

After dinner, use a live band or DJ alongside tours of the famous Concorde to complete the gala. Transfers can take guests to the nearby Radisson Blu Hotel, which connects directly to the airport terminal for easy delegate departures the following day.

UK AIRPORT VENUES



Easy access (left) Lowland Hall, Royal Highland Centre, not far from Edinburgh city centre

Brief Non-residential venue for a team-building event for 50 delegates, at or within a mile of a UK airport. The event will take place in the morning before delegates fly home that evening. Half will be travelling around the Midlands, half around Scotland, so an airport near one or the other is needed.



Response Claire McCauley, events director, In Good Company Events
Located just minutes from Edinburgh Airport and within easy reach of the stunning city centre, the Royal Highland Centre offers a range of indoor and

outdoor facilities including four event halls, outdoor theatre, extensive outdoor space and on-site catering.

The event itself would take place at the MacRobert Pavillion, a versatile conference space catering for up to 500 people with three additional breakout rooms.

This would be where the main team-building activity would take place.

The main event, the Highland shoogles – an alternative Highland games – involves teams or ‘clans’ of delegates competing in various tournaments and championships such as haggis-throwing, skittles, Highland-dancing and races – all complemented by traditional regalia such as kilts and bagpipes.

Delegates would arrive for refreshments served with traditional drop scones before taking part in the various activities throughout the morning.

Brief The client is looking for a London airport venue for its AGM. Delegates will be flying in from across the UK and Europe, so the venue needs to be near one of London’s major airports. The venue must also have conference space for 200 and accommodation for 150.



Response Jo Greenstock, venues director, AOK Events

The Sofitel London Heathrow is the only hotel directly linked with Terminal 5 and has established itself as the premier hotel in the Heathrow area for business guests

as well as those attending meetings, incentives, conferences and other corporate events.

Just 21 minutes from central London via the Heathrow Express, the 605-room hotel radiates luxury and has an air of tranquillity despite its proximity to the airport. It has some of the largest events facilities in Europe, with 45 meeting rooms, while the largest conference room accommodates up to 1,300 delegates. ■

CASE STUDY La Senza

Pre-event planning UK lingerie retailer La Senza needed a suitable venue for a conference following its recent takeover by Middle Eastern retail group Alshaya. The event needed to bring together store managers and senior executives to allay redundancy fears, reiterate the new focus of the company and showcase the latest product launches.

The Radisson Blu Edwardian Heathrow was chosen for its proximity to a major airport, its pricing structure and its expertise in organising corporate events. With more than 70 meeting rooms and several large conference spaces, the venue was the ideal choice for a company needing space for a series of presentations meetings, and product launches.

Challenges Most of the event organisation was carried out by the hotel’s own conference team, making the process



BRAND WATCH

Premium space
Delegates were impressed with the opulence of the Radisson Blu Edwardian Heathrow

direction, it was important for the event to have an unwinding element, too.

Tea and coffee were served from 9am to 10am in the hotel’s plush foyer, before the main two-hour meeting in the Royal Suite, which included presentations, discussions and a short catwalk show modelling the latest Christmas range.

A traditional Christmas lunch was then served from noon onwards followed by further refreshments at 4pm.

straightforward. Delegates were mainly local and coaches transported them to and from the venue. Eight attendees who were flying in from further north stayed in executive rooms.

Solution Events agency CTMS Travel put in an initial inquiry to the venue, but the hotel’s conference team took over the organising from then on.

As the focus was about bringing people together to allay fears and discuss La Senza’s new

Post event analysis The event was a huge success. Delegates were wowed by the opulence of the hotel and it did much to improve staff productivity in the event’s aftermath.

Berni Moir, brand marketing manager at La Senza, says: “The venue was perfect. Delegates loved it – it was a real treat for them to get out of their stores for the day, catch up on business and just enjoy themselves.”

FACTFILE

COMPANY	La Senza
EVENT	Christmas conference and meeting
GROUP SIZE	80
AGENCY	CTMS Travel
DATE	8 November 2012
VENUE	Radisson Blu Edwardian Heathrow Hotel