

THE VSG CONFERENCE 2015:

WHAT OUR DELEGATES SAID

We were delighted that 30 delegates who attended our two day conference this year provided feedback on their experience. We have detailed below the key findings from the evaluation of the Conference and it will help to inform the development of the next Conference in March 2016. We have already started to think about the venue and the theme!

The majority of respondents worked in the field of visitor research although many covered a range of roles including visitor evaluation, education/learning, marketing, interpretation and exhibitions. We know it is important that our Conference, its theme and speakers address the needs of the wide range of roles delegates juggle on a daily basis.

Year on year, delegates tell us that the main reason for attending a VSG Conference is for professional development, networking and *“to be inspired”*. This year was no exception! We also discovered through the evaluation process that respondents wanted to hearing about new ideas/concepts, examples of best practice/case studies and the current state of the profession.

“A better understanding of the sector and tools to go back to work with to advise and make change.”

“Hear case studies, meet other content developers and interpretation developers, gather evidence to support our desire to do more visitor research in our organisation.”

“Hearing different perspectives – practitioners, academics, consultants, funding bodies. Keeping abreast of what is happening in visitor studies – recent developments and ideas for the future.”

Did we deliver respondents' hopes and expectations from attending the Conference? We are delighted that feedback suggests that we did!

“The Conference worked really well for me partly as a result of the breath of perspectives represented by the presenters and panellists, partly as a result of a focus on case studies and practical examples and partly because of the opportunities to network during breaks and to have conversations as a group through Q&A and panel discussion sessions.”

“It was a great opportunity to share ideas, hear new ones and really ensure we are all in the same place in terms of what is needed for the sector and beyond.”

“I was interested to hear about the experiences of practitioners working across the field, to listen to case studies and have an opportunity to debate and reflect on broader issues impacting on our work.”

“Hearing different perspectives – practitioners, academics, consultants, funding bodies. Keeping abreast of what is happening in visitor studies – recent developments and ideas for the future.”

How could we have improved the Conference? Respondents' suggestions included more opportunities for networking just love networking, focus on methodologies and reporting, more interactive sessions, more group activities, more emphasis on outcomes and learnings, more focus on specific methodologies, and emails added to the list of delegates. All great thoughts welcomed by the Committee for feeding into the plans for next year.

In 2014 we introduced the concept of a keynote speaker on each day and continued this in 2015. Our keynote speakers this year – Piotr Bienkowski () and Kerstin Mogull (Managing Director, Tate) – were well received with each receiving their fair share of tweets across the two days. Each element of each day was well received by respondents with the majority of elements from “*time well spent*” to “*range/variety of topics*” receiving a “*very good*” rating. The Committee is always concerned that our Conference provides its delegates with value for money and we were delighted that the majority of delegates gave each day a “*very good*” or “*good*” rating for this element.

Did delegates enjoy the Conference? Did it meet their expectations? Here's what they told us about what they most enjoyed:

“The opportunity to network with sector colleagues, great positive energy and a sense of a genuinely supportive and collaborative group of people working together to grow and develop our practice.”

“Time went by so fast always a good sign. Very easy to strike up a conversation among delegates. The speed networking helped a lot.”

“It was a great opportunity to share ideas, hear new ones, and really ensure we are all in the same place in terms of what is need for the sector and beyond.”

“Nice and friendly atmosphere, warm yet very professional at the same time. It was nice to alternate presentations with hands-on (more interactive) sessions.”

Some final thoughts:

“Very inspirational. Reminded, reinvigorated, refreshed, fired up and ready to take on the world.”

“Exciting and made me want to change the world ... well, my little part of it.”

If you have suggestions about next year's Conference - its theme, its location, keynote speakers or any other element – please don't hesitate to get in contact with the Committee on admin@visitors.org.uk. We would love to hear from you and look forward to welcoming you to our next VSG Conference.