

# Digital focus for Confex

The annual Confex Trade Show saw a healthy turnout, with more than 500 attendees making the most of opportunities to trade, network and explore the free Confex app.

This year's Confex Trade Show, which took place at the De Vere Hotel, Cirencester, earlier this month, highlighted to more than 500 attendees a number of recent achievements by the family-owned buying group.

Wholesalers were given the opportunity to further explore the recently launched Confex app, which was downloaded by arriving members.

Representing the organisation along with managing director Nicky White, company director James Loffet, business development director Tom Gittins and marketing manager Jess Douglas was Martin Williams, newly installed as Confex chairman. More recent appointments at head office have included Matthew Norman as business development manager (foodservice, non-food, tobacco) and Simon King as business development manager (confectionery, grocery, alcohol).

The group has expanded its networking calendar with two Confex business sessions – 'speed dating' style

events bringing together supplier and wholesaler members – taking place at Goodwood in June and Warwick in November. These are designed to facilitate business opportunities in the face of declining supplier contact.

With a group turnover of around £2.84 billion, growth plans continue. This year so far, Confex has brought five new wholesaler members into its ranks – Phoenix Catering Solutions, Stuart Foods, T&J Fine Foods, Jon Dow Distribution and The Little Food Company – and is open to recruiting further new members that fit with its development plans.

"We're always up for new members, mainly because it will drive our growth, and our ethos is about numbers and diversification. On average, we get about 10 new members a year: that can be wholesalers coming from other groups and new wholesalers coming up," says Gittins.

At a time when businesses are experiencing some tough challenges, Gittins remains characteristically upbeat about



the future: "In 2013 we were at £1.7 billion as a group, in 2018 we were at £2.84 billion, and by 2022 our aim is to be at £3.5 billion," he says. "In nine years we have a projected growth of 40%; we've achieved some of it but we have a long way to go, and we're pretty hopeful. We're in the right place – our members are delivered wholesalers, they are local wholesalers so are able to deliver quickly and efficiently, and we at the head office have digital as our focus to help our members achieve these great targets." CCM

## Confex Green Wholesaler Awards champion a responsible approach

"When the awards were first launched in 2013, Confex realised that being environmentally sustainable as a business was important; now, five years later, it's clear that this is paramount," says marketing manager Jess Douglas. "That is why Confex is so proud of this award, and through our environmental consultant, Dave Hilton, Confex gets a chance to see how its members are dealing with environmental issues and realising the important link between environmental and economic success.

"It is clear that stopping waste, reducing environmental impact and being sustainably efficient can, and has, boosted Confex members' businesses."



David Storey of GWD Convenience (left) receives the Best Retail Wholesaler award.

**Winner: Best Practice Wholesaler**  
Nasco

**Winner: Best Retail Wholesaler**  
GWD Convenience

**Winner: Best Foodservice Wholesaler**  
Dunsters Farm