

Confex Group's confidence on show

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL Confex Trade Show made the perfect platform for the buying group to voice its confidence in the face of a turbulent trading landscape.

The event, at the De Vere Hotel, at the Cotswold Water Park in South Cerney, Gloucestershire, recorded its highest-ever attendance and saw more than £5m worth of deals completed throughout the day.

Speaking to the 600 guests, including more than 100 wholesale members and 85 suppliers, attending the Awards dinner, business development manager Tom Gittins said the group, which

now employs 20 people, had come a long way since the very first Confex event in 2010.

“And just as the Confex Group has grown during this time – we now collectively turnover £1.32bn more per annum than in 2010 – so has the strength and diversity of the Confex membership. He stressed that working together and a strong customer service ethos gave the group an ‘extra layer’ to a member order and was one of the central pillars driving the Group’s double-digit growth each year.

“Thank you all for making Confex what it is today, a fit-for-purpose, forward-thinking, versatile group of wholesale businesses, which will continue to over-achieve in the future,” he added.

And he had a direct message regarding the industry merger on everyone’s mind: “I have just three words for Booker/Tesco... Bring It On!” **WN**



The eighth Confex Trade Show was the busiest yet



Confex MD Nicky White speaks to an exhibitor



More than £5m worth of deals were done at this year's show

Greener by far

THOMPSON'S Foodservice, of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, walked away with Confex's overall Green Wholesaler of the Year award, beating competition from Lansdell Soft Drinks, of Whitstable, Kent, which won the Green Retail Wholesaler of the Year award.

Judging was led by David Hilton, an expert in sustainable building and energy efficiency services and a sustainable building expert to the Grand Designs Live Shows, supported by Fiona Sinclair, of Elas, the business support services company.

Hilton said comparing wholesalers was often difficult because they all potentially operate in different markets and geographical areas and it's not enough to just look at solar panels and low energy lights, as many buildings can't support the weight of the panels, while others have skylights for natural lighting.

“What I had to do this year was put each business into context and look at what ‘extra steps’ each was taking to lower its operational impact, improve employee and customer experience and develop plans for

short and long term stability and growth,” Hilton said.

He praised Stuart Lane, of Lansdell Soft Drinks. “The office heating system has been upgraded, working hours adjusted to suit staff, especially weekend hours, and events planned to encourage team morale. He is leading the business from the front,” he added.

Hilton also highlighted the work of Ryan Thompson, of Thompson's Foodservice, who transformed the business through photovoltaic panels, an electric car charger, newer, more efficient refrigeration plants and a café-diner serving value, daytime meals. “He has created employment through the expansion of opportunities in his business, plus awards service contracts,

such as skip hire etc. to local businesses. Construction and maintenance work is also given to local trades,” he said.

Hilton also commended Thompson's for how it handles recycling and waste, pointing out that it helps customers to recycle and donates short-dated food products to a local homeless shelter.

Summing up why Thompson's had won, Hilton concluded: “For a small business they have shown enormous vision in a turbulent market and that coupled with the exemplary waste management principles as well as the approach to the sustainability and growth of the business, creating employment and going the extra mile for their customers makes them unanimous overall winners.” **WN**



Green Wholesaler Award (Left to right) Judge Dave Hilton, Eddie Thompson of Thompson's Food Service, Nicky White, Confex and Tracey Thompson



Suppliers of the Year Awards David Lunt of Confex, Andrew Legge of Tate & Lyle, Nicky White of Confex, Matt Sommerville of PepsiCo UK and Tom Gittins, Confex