

British Athletes Commission launch athletes Benefits Scheme and new website at their annual conference.

The BAC Annual Conference kicked off on Thursday 20th November with a networking event on a Thames river cruise. The event gave over 90 corporate guests the fantastic opportunity to mingle with athlete delegates from 30 different sports, many of whom returned from the Beijing Olympic & Paralympic Games with medals.

The following day saw the launch of the BAC's new website (www.britishathles.org) and athlete benefits scheme. Pete Gardner, CEO of the BAC and former Olympic rower, said, "The new website offers a higher level of interaction with our membership and the national governing bodies for each sport. It also provides a perfect platform for our benefits scheme partners to advertise their athlete discounts. We have carefully selected specific sectors to ensure a true benefit is realised by the athlete community and the partners. Lloyds TSB, Friends Provident, Charles Porter/O2, Thomas Cook, InterContinental Hotels Group, GM Vauxhall Leasing, Enterprise-rent-a-car, Europcar, Premier Training, Physical Fix, Canterbury Clothing and Natural Balance Foods have already signed up and the BAC would like to thank them for their support. We will continue the search for partners in a number of specific sectors." With the partners offering between 5% and 50% discounts to the 1500 Lottery Funded athletes and 400 TASS athletes the BAC has shown that with careful planning and a targeted marketing campaign sport is still high on the corporate agenda even in such a difficult financial climate. (An additional 400 TASS athletes will join the scheme in January.) Two athletes, Ian Rose and Paul Wycherley, have joined the BAC to run and market the Benefits Scheme. Paul will be managing the partners while Ian will focus on communication and developing national governing body and alumni membership.

The conference, hosted at the London 2012 offices in Canary Wharf, also covered the development of the BAC since its inception in 2004, the new anti-doping rules being implemented in 2009, athlete taxation, the success of AthletesDirect, a school-based athlete speaking programme (www.athletesdirect.org) and an update on the work being done to deliver the Olympics in London in 2012.

At the close of the conference on 22nd November Karen Pickering, BAC Chairperson, former World Champion swimmer and 4 times Olympian, said, "This has been the most successful conference we have held and the BAC are now not only delivering a top class service to our members but establishing what we hope will be long lasting partnerships in the corporate community." Leon Taylor, Olympic Silver medallist (diving) and BAC Director added, "This year 4 new members were voted on to our Executive Committee, Goldie Sayers, Jason Gardener, Georgina Haarland and Graham Gristwood, making a strong team even stronger."

This year's conference was supported by UK Sport and ISG.