

The new normal

The theme of this year's ACT annual conference (ACTAC) is "dealing with the new normal". The continuing uncertainty in political and economic life means that although we do not know what "normal" will mean, we do know it will be different from the past. Treasurers and other finance professionals have never had such a key role to play in their organisations, ensuring that their companies can access the financial resources and financial markets that are needed to execute strategic plans.

At the conference this year we are very pleased to have so many knowledgeable speakers to share their experience and cast some light on what changes are transforming the financial markets and how this will affect business and enterprise throughout the world. The conference will also be an ideal opportunity for us to test and update the ACT's recent survey, Credit Crisis and the Corporate, which has been widely featured in the press and financial circles.

This year's plenary sessions will focus on highly topical risk management and funding issues, with board-level presentations from major corporates such as BP and the Co-operative. Delegates will be able to debate these issues during the networking sessions when they will also be given an unrivalled opportunity to view the latest treasury and related systems and services in the exhibition hall. The conference

will incorporate our largest ever exhibition with over 50 exhibitors.

The working heart of the conference offers 12 tracked sessions presented on Thursday 23 April. The intention is to stimulate debate and discussion across a wide range of critical issues. The real value to delegates is the concentration on corporate case studies – from the likes of SABMiller, Ericsson and National Grid – and the participation of other corporate treasurers and finance professionals in the structured discussions. Contributors from a range of banks and other professional firms will also be adding their considerable experience and expertise.

The conference will also feature one of last year's most successful elements: a Question Time panel discussion, this year chaired by broadcaster and presenter John Humphrys, with a panel including representatives from across the spectrum of treasury and the financial markets.

We look forward to welcoming you to Manchester and are confident that ACTAC will reinforce its status as the treasury conference of the year.

Stuart Siddall
Chief executive of the ACT

Gala dinner

Those readers who attended last year's ACT annual conference in Edinburgh will remember the thrill of the big top where it took place. This year, on Thursday 23 April, the ACT gala dinner will be taking place at an even more jaw-dropping venue: Gorton Monastery in Manchester (pictured here).

The former Franciscan monastery has been nominated to appear on the World Monuments Fund watch list of the 100 most endangered cultural heritage sites in the world – alongside such well-known landmarks as Pompeii, Macchu Picchu, the Valley of the Kings and the Taj Mahal. As a result, the monastery has been given the nickname of Manchester's Taj Mahal.

We look forward to welcoming you to this beautiful and historical setting where you can relax and network with colleagues after a day of presentations.

AFTER-DINNER SPEAKER

This year our after-dinner speaker is David Bryon, former managing director of Bmibaby and part of the senior management team that set up the low-cost carrier in 2002. Since leaving Bmibaby in 2006, Bryon has returned to the media and is rapidly building an excellent reputation as both a professional business speaker and a highly amusing after-dinner speaker. His knowledge and experience provides a wealth of stories and tales from the aviation industry that are sure to entertain us.

