

Starring roles

Although I don't remember my first ACT Annual Conference (ACTAC) exactly – please, no letters or photos! – I do remember that no more than 70 or 80 people would attend the event, usually on a Friday night for dinner and drinks (a lot of them) followed by a working Saturday morning. In the mid-1990s there was no exhibition and no sponsorship, just a sense of camaraderie between experienced and novice treasurers alike. I recall excellent economic presentations from the likes of Roger Bootle, then of Midland Bank, getting to grips with foreign exchange with Lord Cobbold, and words of wisdom from senior treasurers such as Richard Desmond and John Grout. Today, well, today is rather different.

In simple terms 2010 saw the ACT do more of everything it does: more students, more magazines, more events, more delegates and more

interaction with all manner of regulators, banks and other institutions, and all to a higher standard than ever before.

2011 has carried that on but ACTAC 2011 will be a new benchmark for the ACT. Over 60 exhibitors alone will mean it will be the largest treasury event ever held in the UK – a spectacular achievement compared with the 1990s.

Just about every area of treasury, corporate finance services or technology that a treasurer or finance manager needs or will come into contact with today is represented. In particular, there are a number of new exhibitors this year that have added range and depth in areas such as asset/fund management, payments

technology and international banking. If you want a new job, need to trade FX electronically, want to do trade finance business almost anywhere in the world or have piles of cash under the bed looking for a safe and sensible home, then heaven is just a step away from the tea and biscuits!

The ACT hub (see page 16) will be at the heart of the exhibition.

IN SIMPLE TERMS 2010 SAW THE ACT DO MORE OF EVERYTHING IT DOES: MORE STUDENTS, MORE MAGAZINES, MORE EVENTS, MORE DELEGATES AND MORE INTERACTION.

The meat and two veg of the conference lies in a redesigned programme crammed with tremendous speakers, case studies, regulatory detail and professional best practice. On top of all that there is a line-up of plenary speakers ideally placed to give delegates fabulous insight into contemporary treasury and financial management. I will be delighted to introduce Sir Terry Leahy, former CEO of Tesco, which he built into the world's third-largest retailer by revenue. More appositely, Sir Terry is an Everton FC supporter and is a special adviser to the club, having been born and bred in Liverpool.

Other notable plenary speakers include Andrew Shilston, FD of Rolls-Royce, and Mervyn Davies, former chairman of Standard Chartered and author of the recent report on gender issues in UK boardrooms (featured in the April issue of *The Treasurer*) – plenty of debate to be had there.

The good news for me is that as chair I don't have to spend time working on a conference report. I will be spending my time on stage directing speaker traffic, meeting and greeting old – and new –

friends in the exhibition hall, and being entertained and educated in the track sessions taking place across both days of the conference. I hope to try and meet everyone attending the conference at some point over the two days.

The programme offers delegates the chance to hear treasurers from some of the UK's major companies (National Grid, Marks & Spencer, SABMiller) as well as from some of the world's leading businesses (ABB, Akzo Nobel and Deals of the Year Award winner, Merck) sharing best practice in treasury management. Interactive workshops, clinics and live theatre presentations will allow treasurers to tap into these rich seams of treasurer knowledge. In addition there will be plenty of expert advice and information available from the diverse range of speakers from financial institutions and service providers. Please take every opportunity to network – you can't do it anywhere else. The ACT Annual Conference allows the cross-fermentation of ideas and practice between these organisations as well as from them to treasurers – the conference is neutral ground for bankers, lawyers, accountants and treasury IT people!

One session I would particularly highlight is track L, Treasury Policy and Ethics. The discussion will feature the members' confidential adviser for ethical issues, Justin Welby, dean of Liverpool Cathedral, co-incidentally our host for the gala dinner. As a former corporate treasurer, Welby is well aware of the pressures and difficulties of modern treasury management and, as regular readers of *The Treasurer* will know, is an insightful commentator on ethics in a contemporary business environment. Recent changes in legislation in the US, UK and elsewhere have driven this issue up the treasurer's agenda.

Peter Matza is head of publishing at the ACT.
pmatza@treasurers.org

