

White rose hubs contend

Abigail Wills compares the conference and incentive offers of Sheffield and Doncaster



Sheffield

Modern and classic Sheffield's Winter Gardens and City Hall

Doncaster

HOTELS

The Mercure St Paul's Hotel & Spa is Sheffield's largest hotel-based conference and banqueting facility. The latest addition is the 158-room Copthorne Hotel Sheffield, while the 90-room Leopold is the city's first luxury boutique hotel.

The Crown Hotel is a transformed 18th-century coaching house 20 minutes from town with meeting space for 200. Mount Pleasant Hotel is a mile from Robin Hood Airport and has six dedicated conference rooms, catering for up to 250.

VENUES

Sheffield International Venues manages 13 venues, including the 2,000-capacity Sheffield City Hall. Magna, a converted steelworks, has hosted events for Asda, Argos and L'Oreal and The Millennium Gallery is an unusual city centre venue.

Doncaster Racecourse and Exhibition Centre has had a £34m redevelopment, Doncaster Dome can accommodate up to 1,850 delegates for a meeting or 3,000 for a reception, and the Keepmoat Stadium has banqueting facilities for 450.

RESTAURANTS

The Copthorne Hotel's 100-seat 1884 restaurant has won numerous awards, while the Old Vicarage is Sheffield's only Michelin-starred restaurant. The Milestone gastropub champions local produce and can organise group cooking demonstrations.

Nordest, Doncaster's leading restaurant, serves an Anglo-Italian menu and has an upstairs dining area and downstairs lounge that groups can use. At Zest Bar and Grill, diners can select their choice of meat or fish to be cooked to order.

INCENTIVES

Sheffield International Venues offers a night golf package at Beauchief Abbey with lit fairways. Delegates can go giant ice cube curling at Ice Sheffield or compete in gladiator-style competitions at the English Institute of Sport Sheffield.

Groups can take part in an environmental day at the 200-hectare Potteric Carr Nature Reserve, learn to climb at Doncaster Dome or take part in activities such as horse trekking, mountain biking or speed boating in the Peak District.



On track the redeveloped Doncaster Racecourse

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Overleaf, the latest developments from across the region

New developments

Several South Yorkshire venues are investing in their event space, making the area a C&I hotbed



Grand design Chatsworth House has new event space; (top, right) the Chimney House

The **Crucible Theatre** recently reopened after a £15.3m investment that opened up a range of corporate spaces including the Adelphi Suite, a glass-fronted reception space for 100 delegates with views across the city. The venue also offers a 900-capacity three-sided theatre. The **University of Sheffield** has invested over £160m in refurbishing its current facilities and creating two new conference and accommodation villages featuring flexible meeting space, dining facilities and more than

4,000 en-suite bedrooms. These include the Ranmoor Village, with about 1,100 new en-suite bedrooms. Just five minutes from Sheffield city centre, near the Peak District, the venue is the perfect option for nature-based incentives. The Ridge, Ranmoor Village's conferencing centre, offers three contemporary conference rooms with capacity for 150 delegates. The 327-acre, £300m **Yes! Project** will offer a 110,000m² covered leisure and entertainment-based resort, activity and conference destination, located within

regenerated parkland just off the M1. The **Chimney House** opened in March and has already won business from high-profile companies such as law firm Irwin Mitchell. The building has an unusual interior design featuring a 93ft chimney rising through the floor and out of the roof. It can cater for up to 60 delegates. Home to the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and just 20 minutes from Sheffield, the stately home **Chatsworth House** has opened new event space for 300 delegates and allows delegates to try activities such as duck herding.

Stage set for John Lewis

Department store chooses Sheffield's recently refurbished Crucible Theatre for AGM

Pre-event planning Each year a senior member of staff at John Lewis Sheffield is tasked with organising the annual general meeting and the responsibility fell to fashion floor department manager Sarah Stone this year. The event is an opportunity for the store's 400 partners to review results and learn about future strategies and projects.

Having assessed a number of Sheffield venues, Stone decided to host the event at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, which recently re-opened after a £15.3m development.

Challenges The AGM had to take place outside of the store's opening hours to allow the 400 partners to attend, meaning Stone needed a venue that could host a drinks reception and meeting after 6pm. Sheffield Theatres is the largest producing theatre outside of London and groups looking to use the main auditoria must work around a busy theatre season.

Richard Beeby, events manager at The Crucible Theatre, says: "Our productions run through the year with the



Work and play Sheffield's Crucible Theatre

exception of the summer. Usually the main auditoria can only be used up to 4.30pm."

Solution In May, the Crucible was hosting a production called *True West*. Mondays are usually 'off days' so the main auditorium, which can seat up to 980 people, was available for use all day.

As the production was being put on in-house, the events team negotiated for the group to use the stage and existing set – a kitchen and garden – which was an ideal fit with John Lewis.

Post-event analysis Stone says: "The Crucible is a refurbished venue in the heart of Sheffield, and the hope was that its 'wow' factor would add to the overall experience. The staff were all extremely helpful and keen for our event to succeed. We would recommend the venue and hope to use it again in future."

FACTFILE

CLIENT	John Lewis Sheffield
EVENT	Annual General Meeting
GROUP SIZE	400
AGENCY	In-house
DATE	24 May 2010
VENUE	The Crucible Theatre, Sheffield
BUDGET	Undisclosed