

PlayFair 2010 - A real eye opener!

...and with international visitors



This year's PlayFair was a 'real eye opener' said one visitor. In its third year, with over forty companies exhibiting. PlayFair moved to a much larger spot within Stoneleigh Park. That proved to be an excellent decision for exhibition co-ordinators Brintex and the Association of Play Industries. Visitors came from UK local authorities, schools and communities, from Europe and the USA. They had nothing but praise for the show - and its good fortune with glorious weather.

From Dorset and Germany, Dumfries and Hertfordshire, visitors got to work on play

Project Development Officer, Chris Roebuck from Sheffield County Council is working on a Playbuilder project and said, "This is my first visit to Playfair. I knew half the manufacturers and have seen new companies and new play equipment. It is good to see the kit in a setting that might be how we use it."

Lesley Cook from Westfield Arts College, a special school in Dorset said that Playfair was "Really enjoyable with lots of choice, lots of new companies and lots of help and information". Replying, landscape architects, Kay Lillington and Annice Fuller said "For us it is about seeing the scale of the equipment, children playing on it and having a go. That is much easier than seeing it in a brochure and trying to understand the scale - and we can see different surfacing. We can check the visual signals to help children and can see on some equipment that has been really well thought out." That was echoed by Stuart Biggar and Sally Graham from Dumfries and Galloway Council who said, "We manage a play area park and have come to see new ideas and products on the market. The show looks good and it is good to see, touch, feel and try the actual products - much better than a catalogue."

Josie Lloyd, Deputy Headteacher at North Leamington School brought Year 7 & 8, 12-13 year-olds, 90 on Tuesday and 100 on Wednesday and said "We nominate and bring the children who have earned it as a reward for contributing to the school, good attendance, working hard and behaving well. We came last year. This show is an eye opener. There is so much more play equipment to see which is truly exciting and challenging and lets children measure risk especially as children can be stopped from climbing trees or going near water and get smothered by society. On this piece of (SMP) equipment, they played

and worked together to get the best out of it and its challenges and excitement - and exercising without knowing it. They would have stayed all day if I let them. They were so engrossed they forgot the England match in the World Cup - but I got them back in time for it!"

German visitor Claus Spiegelbauer's company makes rubber mats used by play equipment manufacturers and said, "The UK market is very important to us and PlayFair is very good as I can meet all of the exhibitors in one place. This is my first time at PlayFair and I will come again."

Hive of industry

The words from a manager at an API member company, Monster Play, visiting for the first time were very telling when he said, "My first reaction was 'why aren't we here exhibiting?'" He might have been even more questioning if he had heard Sophie Holt, Marketing Manager at Kompan say of PlayFair, "It's fantastic! We have had lots of interest in our new products and we have taken far more orders for our Explorer Dome than we expected."

Seminar interest

The seminars had excellent speakers and visitors Julia Witting and Corinna Hartwig from Support 4 Community Projects a social enterprise company from Hertfordshire which advises community groups and helps in finding funds, said, "The seminars were very interesting with inside information. We are here to meet people, build network, catch trends and get a broad idea of what is available so we can advise the groups we work with."

The only constant will be change

Perhaps the words of Stuart Wetherell, Managing Director at Wicksteed and API Outdoor Play Executive Officer, best summed up the positive mood of the show's exhibitors to an outlook where the only constant will be change - as it has been for several years, "We need a clear view of the outlook. We need to know where we are. This industry has adjusted to natural play and landscaping and, adjusting is something this industry is good at."

PlayFair is itself proof of that capability. Four years ago there was demand for but no dedicated play industry show and exhibition, now there is, and space is already being booked for 2011.