



Press Release
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English UK celebrates 50th anniversary

Free legal advice, information about new regulations and a glittering 50th anniversary dinner were among the highlights of this year's English UK AGM and conference.

And a new MP made a special visit to promise members he would be supporting the industry in Parliament and had already started to arrange an adjournment debate.

English UK chief executive Tony Millns told members that despite the difficulties of the last year, early figures showed English UK members had performed up around 2.5 percent on 2008, which had been a very good year.

"It shows the resilience of the UK and the sector: that we're still an aspirational destination seen as a place for serious study, with a reputation for quality teaching," he said, adding that he expected 2010 to be no less challenging than 2009.

He promised members that the association would continue with its judicial review of the way new regulations were introduced after the Tier 4 review, and that he would be asking for early meetings with the new immigration ministers and their shadow counterparts, and urged them to write to their own new Members of Parliament.

One new MP, Conor Burns, attended the second morning of the conference. Representing Bournemouth West, he is fully aware of the problems being caused to members by the Tier 4 review, and told delegates: "I will do anything I can to take your cause direct to ministers. I have also raised this with the Speaker, John Bercow."

Mr Millns said the UK's language sector was being helped by several factors, including the weak pound and concerns about racist attacks in Australia. And English UK itself played a significant role, he said: "I think we see the value we thought we would have from creating English UK in 2004, a single well-resourced association with over 440 members now."

Almost a hundred members celebrated the history of the association with a special dinner celebrating the 50th anniversary of the formation of Arels (the Association of Recognised English Language Services), one of the two language centre associations that merged to form English UK.

Guest of honour at the dinner at Le Meridien in Piccadilly was John Eckersley, now 82, who was one of the founder members of Arels. He said: "We didn't envisage Arels becoming anything more than an association of private language schools, and wouldn't have foreseen this. It is good now the whole industry has been brought together in one association."

Also present at the dinner was Nicole de Lalouviere, the former chair of state sector language association Baselt, who had the original idea for English UK during a trip in China with then Arels chief executive Tony Millns. She recalled: "We were cognisant

there would be almost insurmountable hurdles and it could have gone either way... but it didn't make sense to operate independently.

“There were all these problems, and people saying it wasn't going to happen – and I've come here tonight and found this jolly organisation with people asking each other if they are state or private and where they work.”

Sessions at the AGM, held at Le Meridien in London's Piccadilly, included a presentation by Penningtons' solicitors on progress of the judicial review and a practical explanation of how language centres can work to avoid Tier 4-related problems.

Delegates also heard sessions about the new vetting and barring and VAT rules, learned about English UK's new partner agent scheme from deputy chief executive Annie Wright, and found out more about how the new language tests may work.

Members also heard about progress on an English UK-led project to investigate establishing a web-based professional development “one stop shop” for English language teaching, which would include a quality framework and a new professional association. Mark Rendell, deputy chief executive of English UK, said a steering committee of industry stakeholders had now been chosen and news on a funding application was expected shortly.

There were also presentations from David Graddol about the future of education in India, and from Aidan Manktelow of the Economist Intelligence Unit of the global economic outlook.

For delegate John Corcoran, chairman of St Andrew's College Summer Schools, it was his first time at the AGM and conference. He said: “It was particularly important for new organisations to be aware of what's going to be happening. It's my first time here and I am really pleased with it. It was worth it for the Penningtons' presentation alone.”

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with more than 440 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity.
2. More than 500,000 students every year choose to learn English in Britain, an estimated 43% of all students who travel abroad to study English. They contribute about £1.5 billion to the UK economy in course fees, accommodation and general spending. Many students go on from English language courses to UK degrees or professional qualifications. There are long-term affinity benefits to Britain as well, since many students go on to be opinion-leaders and senior figures in their own countries.
3. For more information, please contact Tony Millns (Chief Executive of English UK) on 020 7608 7960 or tony@englishuk.com.