

# How to use an ambassador

As Glasgow City Marketing Bureau celebrates the 25th anniversary of its Conference Ambassador Programme, *CN* examines how one of the programme's professors helped land the British Society for Gene and Cell Therapy Meeting and Annual Conference

**W**ho are the academic ambassadors that bring in the valuable conferences full of international colleagues? One of the most active convention bureaus in the UK, including working with ambassadors, is the Glasgow City Marketing Bureau.

For the past five years Professor Andrew Baker has held the title of British Heart Foundation Professor of Translational Cardiovascular Sciences (BSGCT) at the University of Glasgow. He leads a team of scientists aiming to translate discoveries made in the laboratory into new treatments for heart patients, including angina sufferers.

The professor lived all over the UK before settling in Glasgow for the last 16 years. "Glasgow is a vibrant city and the natural place for me to conduct my research with its world leading universities and research hubs," he says, adding: "In my capacity as the president of the society between the years of 2013 and 2017, it was important to me to bring such an impactful meeting to my adopted home."

The Gene and Cell Therapy conference, held at Strathclyde's new Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC), 9-11 June 2015, aimed to highlight novel developments within the field of gene and cell therapy; and also future scientific talent. The delegates made good use of the new TIC

building, including its 450-seat auditorium.

The programme format included a review of abstracts, various sessions and oral and poster research presentations.

Professor Baker enlisted the skills and experience of PCO and ABPCO board member Clare Beach of Azura Events to aid him in his delivery of the conference.

Said Beach: "This year's meeting was an important example of how the academic community is strengthening the meetings industry. Ambassadors are using their expertise to attract major conferences throughout a wealth of subject areas, and they work with their PCO to deliver their vision for the conference. The PCO is a perfect partner for an academic, they bring the logistical, budgetary and planning experience to work in tandem with the scientific community to deliver a relevant, successful and impactful meeting both for the ambassador and for the host destination."

Across the public engagement day, BSGCT annual conference and satellite meetings there were more than 900 delegates. The public engagement day was designed to educate school children about modern medicine.

In terms of scientific input, the professor says: "My research has already shown developments in gene therapy can stop vein graft failure. If the new trial is

successful, the therapy could offer hope to thousands of patients. Not only will this be a ground breaking discovery for Glasgow but will impact next generation medicine throughout the world."

However, in terms of his efforts to bring a major global conference to Glasgow, the ambassadorial input is just as valued.

Professor Baker is part of a team of 1,600 influencers in GCMB's Conference Ambassador Programme each playing a role in helping the city drive success across a multitude of sectors.

In the calendar year to December 2014, Glasgow conference ambassadors secured 178 conferences worth £85m to the city's economy. Ambassadors now help secure approximately a third of the conferences in the city, according to the GCMB.

Aileen Crawford, the bureau's head of conventions adds: "We were delighted to welcome such an esteemed conference to Glasgow."

"At the heart of the BSGCT Meeting and annual conference is innovation and expertise; qualities that perfectly mirror Glasgow's ethos. With the largest academic community outside of London, it was natural that Glasgow established the first Conference Ambassador Programme in the UK. We provide them with a level of support that is unavailable in other cities in Europe." 



"Glasgow (pictured) is a vibrant city and the natural place for me to conduct my research" - Professor Andrew Baker (inset)