

**THE MAIN 'goal' was a very familiar one when Showsec kicked off the next leg of their partnership with the Football Safety Officers' Association.**

One of the big discussion points throughout the FSOA's Spring Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon was the development of a skilled labour force to meet the required levels of crowd safety and security at football stadiums nationwide.

The Conference marked the start of a new five-year agreement between Showsec and the FSOA as the organisation's Main Sponsor, a partnership notable for initiatives aimed at enhancing public safety at stadiums in the United Kingdom.

Most recently, that has involved the FSOA working closely with the United Kingdom Crowd Management Association on a project to benchmark the current state of the security industry and provide information to help shape its future.

Showsec played a prominent part in that work, as a member of the UKCMA whose Chairperson, Mark Harding, is the company's Managing Director.

"The big challenge for all of us over the next five years is building up a skilled labour force because there are clearly shortfalls right across the board," commented Alan Wallace, Showsec's Regional Manager who addressed the FSOA Conference.

"This has been high on our agenda for some time now and it was a common theme running through the Conference when we had a number of discussions on how we provide the resources necessary to maintain high levels of safety and security.

"The important thing is that this Conference demonstrated that there are major concerns, but there is also a firm commitment to tackling the problem."

There was a ceremonial signing of the new partnership agreement before Wallace addressed the annual Spring Conference, welcoming Sharon Cicco (Arsenal) as Chairperson and Mark Miles (West Brom) as Vice Chairperson in the process.

The programme of speakers included representatives from Manchester City recounting their experiences of dealing with the consequences of having a Champions League group game against Borussia Monchengladbach postponed a short time before the kick-off due to torrential downpours and then rearranged 24 hours later.

Well-respected football journalist David Conn talked about his involvement in the fight for justice for the victims of the Hillsborough disaster and how it shifted opinion which led to a second inquest being held into what happened in 1989.

The Sports Grounds Safety Authority then made a presentation on the operating environment in which they referred to the key issue of staffing in terms of resourcing and training, while there was also a group exercise session from ID Resilience on emergency planning.

"It was another very productive Conference for Showsec to be a part of as it provides an ideal opportunity to allow members across the country to come together, network and discuss best practice," commented Wallace.

The guest speaker at the Conference dinner was former Wales and Liverpool international Dean Saunders, while it was confirmed that Kevin Keegan will be the special guest for the Autumn Conference in Stratford in October.