**MARK HARDING ADDRESSES CHALLENGES AT UK SECURITY EXPO 2016**

**MARK HARDING focused on primary evidence of a shortage of qualified security professionals when he presented to industry peers ahead of a fact-finding survey being conducted to provide a more accurate picture of the current situation.**

In his capacity as Chairman of the United Kingdom Crowd Management Association, the Managing Director of Showsec addressed delegates attending the prestigious UK Security Expo 2016 which was staged at Olympia London recently.

That presented the opportunity for him to highlight the challenges which the industry faces due to a shortfall of SIA-licenced staff, while also outlining the aims of the survey which will be made available early in the New Year.

The UKCMA are working with the Football Safety Officers Association, who are leading the project with support from the Security Industry Authority, on a plan to try and obtain clearer information about the state of the industry.

“There are growing concerns about numbers of SIA-licenced staff throughout the industry, so we want this survey to benchmark the current situation,” said Harding.

“We are canvassing both purchasers and suppliers for information and urge all to participate in the survey to provide us with a comprehensive result to help shape the way the industry moves forwards.

“SIA research shows there have been a diminishing number of licence renewals over the past two years, many of whom acquired their badge for London 2012, and forecasts suggest numbers will continue to fall.

“That will have implications in terms of the levels of security service that can be provided for venues and events, especially on peak days, weekends and for large scale one-off events.

“The Government needs to be aware of the reduction in renewals and its impact upon crucial operational aspects such as counter terrorism and crime reduction measures.”

He added: “We need therefore to gather as much evidence as possible from this survey so we can work together, as well as with the Government, on solutions which will attract and retain new resources for the industry.”

In drawing attention to one of the biggest challenges faced by the security industry, Harding also questioned the introduction of an apprenticeship levy in April 2017, believing instead that it should be focused on training.

“While I appreciate the apprenticeship scheme may work in some areas of the industry, it is clearly not a solution for meeting this shortfall,” he commented.

“The levy damages investment and may contribute to further shortfalls as companies are unable to develop and invest in pertinent training which would increase the numbers of licenced staff.

He added: “Members of the UKCMA have highlighted that the scheme is going to create a financial burden which will impact upon development.

“This is a vital project which may help to determine the pathway forwards. We are all grateful to the FSOA, one of the most solution driven organisations in the industry.”

The survey has been tailored for two specific sectors, one for Suppliers and one for Purchasers, and the UKCMA are urging everyone to complete it to ensure that they obtain as much information as possible.

More information will be available on the UKCMA, SIA and FSOA websites in due course.