

FAMILY HOLIDAY ASSOCIATION

HOLIDAYS MATTER CONFERENCE PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION

PETER LONG SPEECH

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

In this country there are 2.2 million families with dependent children who cannot afford to take a holiday. That is 7 million people.

It is for this reason that I am deeply privileged and honoured to have been asked to take on the role of President of the Family Holiday Association.

This is my first engagement as President of the FHA.

I've only held this position for 24 days having taken over from Lady Mary Mumford.

I don't know how many of you are aware of this, but Lady Mary has been the Charity's President for nearly 20 years...

She has made an extraordinary contribution over that time and hers are big shoes to fill.

So I am delighted that she has agreed to assume Life Presidency.

It's very nice for me to know that I've got someone to look after me.

Speaking to you this evening is the perfect opportunity for me to briefly share my thoughts about the Family Holiday Association,

what it means to me personally and what I believe it can achieve given the solid foundation that it has to build upon.

Before I do that, however, I would like to pay my respects to Ian Reynolds who sadly died two weeks ago after a comparatively short illness.

Ian played a major role in the travel industry when he was Chief Executive of ABTA for 11 years and even after leaving ABTA retained close ties with the sector.

For us here this evening, however, it is the role that he played as the Chair of the Trustees of the FHA that I would like us to remember.

Ian was a Trustee for 15 years and his commercial knowledge, gained during his 26 years with IBM, then augmented by his experience of the world of leisure travel at ABTA were invaluable to the Charity as it has developed over the years.

His wisdom, advice and understanding will be sorely missed by all the Trustees and John McDonald and his team.

I would like to extend my condolences to his wife Gill and the rest of his family.

What I'd also like to say, however, is that there will be many happy memories of Ian for a large numbers of us here this evening and I firmly believe his legacy to the FHA will live on.

Part of Ian's legacy is that the Charity has a first rate council of Trustees and having spent some time with Alison Rice the new Chair of the Trustees and John McDonald I am very excited by what we should be able to achieve.

Ladies and Gentlemen, TUI Travel and First Choice have supported this charity for 25 years.

In 1996, when I joined First Choice, Ian Clubb said to me that, as a charity, the FHA sat at the heart of everything that we as a company stood for.

It took me less than a second to realise that what he was saying was right.

As a husband, Father of 3 and Grandfather of 4, my family sits at the heart of my life and I know what wonderful memories and positive effects holidays have brought to my family and to me.

And of course the FHA agrees: Holidays help to make stronger, healthier, happier families and perhaps most crucial of all, they contribute to a healthy, happier society that benefits everyone.

So you are absolutely right to talk about the fact that Holidays Matter... they do.

Since the FHA was formed nearly 40 years ago it has taken some 155,000 parents, children and young people on a short-break.

This could not have been done without our other key supporters including Bourne Leisure and First Great Western who have helped make this happen.

But to be in any way complacent about these figures would be to totally lose perspective.

2.2 million families with dependent children - 7 million people - in the UK are excluded from holidays through lack of money.

That is over 10% of the population

And within that number there are 2 million children where even a day trip is unaffordable.

I remember being astounded when a number of years ago I visited Burbage Primary School in Hackney and was told that never mind a day out some of the children hadn't even seen the Thames which was less than a mile away from their homes.

Given that we are the world's 7th largest economy, this is an appalling indictment on our society and is why the work that the FHA does is so important.

Since 2012 the charity has focused all its efforts on three areas – direct holidays, research and influence. And it has made a good start.

As a small charity we well and truly punch above our weight,

And as the new president of this charity I will make it my overriding priority to ensure those at the highest levels of government are completely clear as to what we are trying to do.

Now I could start talking to you about our programmes with Local Destination Management organisations,

Or the outcomes from the two year knowledge transfer partnership,

Or the formative work we are doing in conjunction with other national charities to help and support beneficiaries with breaks as part of their objectives.....

Just three of a number of schemes and initiatives that the charity is actively driving.

But I'm well aware I have only been in my new position for 24 days.

I still have a lot to learn, a lot more of you to talk to, and a lot more to understand.

Suffice to say to you this evening that, for me, there could not be a more exciting challenge in terms of becoming President of this charity at this pivotal point in its development.

Believe me, we will raise our voice and we will be heard by those who matter.

And in doing this we will help more and more families around this country have the holiday that they deserve.

And one of my first call to arms will be to the FHA ambassadors.

Some of whom are here this evening who have pledged to help us on our journey.

I am very grateful to you all in advance.

Ladies and gentlemen, affording people a basic holiday is not a political issue it is a moral issue.

Let me say again, there are 2.2 million families with dependent children in this country who still cannot afford a holiday....

That is unacceptable for a country that has the 7th largest economy in the world.

To have the opportunity to build on the extraordinary work the FHA has done over of the last 40 years, is not just a privilege, for me it is a necessity.

We are still a small charity.

And as I said earlier, we punch above our weight,

but we should be proud about that, as we should be proud about what we have achieved to date.

From the strength of this platform, we now have an opportunity to move ahead and make a further significant impact.

And this is an opportunity, that with all of you I relish.

Thank you.