



2014 NATO WALES SUMMIT

CASE STUDY: THE CELTIC MANOR RESORT

Host Venue for the 2014 NATO Summit



CELTIC MANOR
RESORT

Project Managers:

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PRE-EVENT PLANNING

From the very first site visit, it was our job to inform the clients what we could achieve in the time available. They had a lot of unusual requests and needed to do things in spaces that we had never done before. Our job was to enable this and help make it possible, all of which helped us to secure the event. We then had to follow through on everything and ensure that we had the resources in place. The communication had to be very effective for it to be a success, the demand on our team was massive, but we always looked at the bigger picture whilst making sure that we paid attention to detail.

Understandably for an event of this scale, there were a large number of external contractors on site in the lead-up to and during the event, however, we didn't need to bring in any additional temporary staff of our own. Celtic Manor had its full permanent staff of around 800 working throughout the event, not necessarily in their normal day jobs, but everybody was engaged in some way.

HOW DID THIS COMPARE ON AN EVENT SCALE TO THE RYDER CUP?

It was very different. The Ryder Cup was a big event but in a different situation — we had 45,000 people coming through the gates every day to watch the golf but it was all quite remote away from the hotel. The difference with NATO was the fact that it involved everybody, every area of the resort was in use, every meeting room, every function room, every space that we could possibly give them was taken up. We had people moved out of offices, we had chair stores turned into meeting rooms, we converted 100 bedrooms into offices, and also provided and serviced another 300 bedrooms as guest accommodation. Every space was required, and every space was used!

CHALLENGES

One of the greatest challenges was the time it took to get the answers we really needed. We had to wait for the escalation of authorisation all the way up to Number 10 and all the way back down again. The speed at which decisions were being turned around was the most challenging, but understandable given the importance of the event and the guests.

We also had to enable the building of a structure on our Rooftop Garden that was the equivalent of our main conference room, so as you can imagine that gave rise to various challenges, particularly managing the weight load. There were also the logistics of how to deliver refreshments to the delegates whilst highly confidential meetings were in progress. We needed to ensure that we had the right teams and the right equipment to make sure that things ran smoothly.

DID YOU HAVE ANY TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES DURING THE EVENT?

No, none, which is a huge credit to our staff and their level of ability. Our escalators were certainly put under a lot of pressure though! They were working to speed throughout the summit.

DID YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH ANY SPECIAL REQUESTS?

There was a slight expectation that we would have individuals who would ask for very specific requirements, but that wasn't the case. We had separate areas for different groups, but every group was offered the same menu and there was not one complaint. There was a request for steak and chips at 1am — but that was about it really. A few bits of gym equipment delivered to the bedrooms, not too bad, they were a sensible bunch. They really didn't have much time to enjoy themselves!

ANY INTERESTING KEY STATS?

Over the two day event we served 34,260 meals, across media catering, bedrooms, delegate catering, all over. The team worked insanely hard to get that out. We also got through 28,000 bottles of water, 20,000 cups of coffee, and it took 50 people to serve tea to 70 world leaders in under two minutes! There were around 600 production teams involved and the build took a total of five weeks.

DO YOU THINK THE 'WARM WELSH WELCOME' CAME ACROSS DURING THE EVENT?

Yes! Welsh hospitality is very personal, friendly, informal and relaxed, yet it's still professional and efficient and those were the things that guests noticed when they were here and the kind of messages that we have received from people who attended the event. Everyone has been very positive not just about the resort, but everywhere in Newport and Cardiff.





CELTIC MANOR
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POST-EVENT VERDICT

HOW DID THE EVENT GO FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

It was amazing and we couldn't have hoped for it to have gone any better. It was a bit like how people describe a wedding - so much time, energy and thought had gone into it that it was almost over before you got chance to enjoy it. It was a very rapid 48 hours and so much went on during that time that we never had the opportunity to stand back and take it all in. There was so much that we needed to achieve, it was such a massive team effort. All the staff at the resort were buzzing; we had people coming in on their days off just because they wanted to be part of it. The event was fantastic and we couldn't have done it any better.

ANY LESSONS LEARNED?

We were put under tremendous pressure with last minute deadlines. Even on the day of the event we were still snagging last minute details. The key thing is to maintain the standard of the resort, it makes things so much easier. If you see something that needs doing, do it right away. If something's out of place, get rid of it. This event showed us that it doesn't matter how difficult a challenge something might seem, if you work together as a team, you can achieve anything.

HOW LONG WAS THE BREAKDOWN?

Amazingly, they had cleared the majority of the resort by 7am on Monday morning. The resort was back to normal operation that day, you'd never know that NATO had been here!

WERE YOU SAD IT WAS OVER?

It was more a feeling of relief. We all felt incredibly proud to be a part of it and many members of staff have said to us that they wished it had lasted longer, they all just loved it. It was so exciting and even though it was hard work, we all felt incredibly proud. We would all welcome that kind of event back if we ever had the chance.

WHAT'S THE NEXT BIG EVENT FOR CELTIC MANOR?

The resort was straight into a large conference with a full hotel for a regular client on Monday after the NATO Summit. In fact, it's a very busy couple of months ahead. It ought to be a walk in the park in comparison, but we treat every event as important and we're always looking to exceed the expectations of our clients. We're also working on plans for a new International Convention Centre here at the resort which we're hoping to start building next year. So the work never stops...

TESTIMONIAL

"I wanted to say a monumental thank you to you all for your help and support during the NATO Summit. You simply couldn't have been more professional, helpful and understanding. I know that, for all the excellent planning and prep, two things got us over the line: the extraordinary performances and personal determination of individuals across the whole team, and incredible teamwork across people and organisations. You and your colleagues exemplified both of these."

Anna Clunes, Director of Protocol and Vice-Marshall of the Diplomatic Corps, Foreign and Commonwealth Office



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