

## **BUDAPEST report 2006**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual International DRBF Conference was held on 6-7 May 2006 in the historic and beautiful city of Budapest. True to its international title, the conference was attended by 107 delegates from 21 countries covering 5 continents. Approximately half were non-DRBF members reflecting robust interest and regard for the DRB model.

Conference speakers and panellists also reflected this international mix. Presentations were made representing a wide range of experiences with DBs, from the novice to seasoned practitioners. Discussions took place regarding the finer points of DB best practice and what to aim for or avoid. Delegates made suggestions for the future direction of dispute boards and for the necessary training of DRB members and those who will increasingly use dispute boards. In particular, representatives from the parties (and the engineer) responsible for a number of road development and reconstruction projects in Romania spoke about their positive experiences of using the FIDIC DAB process. The credibility of dispute boards was greatly endorsed by these presentations and interjections. The fact that European community project funding will utilise the FIDIC form of contract which in turn require the establishment of dispute boards will clearly create an upsurge in future usage.

For those not experienced in the operation of dispute boards, some theatre was created by demonstrations of dispute boards in action both in ‘dispute avoidance mode’ and ‘dispute adjudication mode.’ These demonstrations proved to be popular, amusing and gave many delegates their first taste of dispute board operations.

At the end of the first day, a majority of the delegates plus some guests took a boat trip on the Danube. For those familiar with Johann Strass’s famous *Blue Danube Waltz*, the colour of the river must have come as a sad surprise. No, it wasn’t blue. It was muddy brown! However, setting such disappointment aside, the evening then went with a swing.

Once on board, guests were treated to a delicious, typically Hungarian meal serenaded by a 3-piece combo playing traditional Hungarian music. As the wine (local) flowed, so did the conversation which threatened to drown the sounds of the valiant musicians. As twilight gave way to darkness, the historic buildings on the river banks appeared bathed in shimmering light, acquiring a breathtakingly magical quality.

By reaching out and making contact with 21 countries worldwide, the DRBF has undoubtedly enhanced its standing in the global arena.

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