

PRESS RELEASE

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LivCom founder addresses Tokyo summit

LivCom founder and CEO Alan Smith has underlined the importance of bringing global solutions to local issues in a speech to delegates in Tokyo.

Mr Smith told his audience that the development of the LivCom Awards had gone hand in hand with the increasing needs of local authorities around the world to work in partnership to solve challenges that were common to all.

He said: “In almost every part of the world, for one reason or another, Local Authorities are under increasing financial pressure, but at the same time having more responsibilities handed down from Central Government, usually described as local empowerment, but with little or no extra resources. The other, perhaps more significant, pressure was the ever growing expectation of local citizens, the growing demands of local citizens is a good thing, but is increasingly difficult to satisfy, and this is a challenge for both Civic Leaders and technical officers. The effect of local pressure has been for environmental issues to be elevated up the political programme, as local politicians need to reflect on the expectations of the electorate in their political manifesto.

“It is now not sufficient to be aware of Best Practice in neighbouring communities or in a Region of a country, or even nationally or in a Region of the globe. Civic Leaders and technical officers have a duty to be aware of International, global, Best Practice. There is only one way to become conversant with International Best Practice and that is through participation in the LivCom Awards. LivCom is unique in many ways. Civic Leaders and

technical officers attending the LivCom Final may observe the Presentations of other communities, both smaller or larger than their own, and also from different countries and cultures. It is surprising how many communities participating in LivCom originally believe that they have a unique challenge. This impression is dispelled on day one when, through observation of Presentations by other communities it is realised that there is no such thing as a unique challenge. All communities have similar challenges, differing only in magnitude and cultural priority.

“Yes, LivCom is a competition, at times a very tense competition, but beyond this it is a unique learning experience. There is no other initiative that brings together representatives of communities from different countries and cultures and creates the opportunity of sharing knowledge and experience. Communities with shared challenges often continue a dialogue long after a LivCom Finals, which often develops into exchange technical visits and a dialogue much wider than LivCom.

“LivCom is unique. There is no other global competitive initiative focussed on the local environment. There are several liveable or other indices published, but all of the more well known examples of this are managed by commercial organisations and are presented as promotional material aimed at seeking new commercial customers.

“Invariably, communities included in the listings have not been consulted or have even completed a questionnaire. They do not officially know that they are being assessed until the list is published. Such Listings have their place, but they are not a source of knowledge for the city and are not an alternative to LivCom. It may be good for a city to know that they are 10th, 5th or even 1st in the listing, but this does not give the community any knowledge to improve in any of the detailed areas of a liveable community.

“An important issue for LivCom is that it is totally non-political. This is very clearly emphasised, and therefore allows representatives from communities in different social and political cultures to meet and exchange information without having to be aware of any political background.

“Finally, one of the most compelling situations that led to the creation and evolution of LivCom to its unique and world leading position has been the rise in expectations but failure of global meetings of international leaders.

“The Finals of the 2011 LivCom Awards was held in Songpa, Seoul, South Korea, and was an historic event. At the Seminar, which is held in association with each Final, and at the gala Night, there were over 500 delegates. Never before, anywhere in the world, have so many individuals, all having practical concern for the local environment, been brought together.

“In conjunction with the Songpa Government, LivCom signed a Declaration, calling for united action at local level to improve the sharing of knowledge and improvement of the quality of life through the improvement of the local environment, in accordance with the LivCom Criteria.”

ENDS

Note to editors:

The city of Al Ain, United Arab Emirates, is set to play host the 2012 finals of the International Awards for Liveable Communities (22nd-26th November).

At the awards finals, which have been held every year since 1997, judges evaluate the approach to individual criteria for sustainable development – enhancement of the landscape, heritage management, environmentally-sensitive practices, community sustainability and planning for the future.

The finals, which see representatives of the various towns and cities make their case to an international jury, last for five days, culminating in an awards ceremony. The closing date for entries to the 2012 finals is 31st May.

The International Awards for Liveable Communities (The LivCom Awards) was launched in 1997 and is endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme, with which it partners an MoU.

LivCom is non-political, embracing all nations and cultures, and over 50 countries are represented within the Awards. The LivCom Awards are the only forum in which International Best Practice may be observed and developed, and participation in the Awards is an investment in the future of a community.

For further details see www.livcomawards.com or for media enquiries please contact livcommedia@gmail.com