



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

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TIA-B: THE FIA AND ECA-ITEC JOIN FORCES - AND WHO'S NEXT?

by

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In the September issue of Networking+, I outlined the FIA proposal to host an organisation called the "Telecommunications Infrastructure Advisory Board" (TIA-B). That initial proposal has now developed from a concept to a fully formed cross-technology industry association co-hosted by both the FIA and the ITEC (Information technology, electronics and controls) group of the ECA (Electrical Contractors Association) - we hope that other hosts will be announced imminently.

To refresh your memories, the TIA-B has been formed to fill the gap left by the demise of CITA that had primarily concentrated on the "copper" side of the telecommunications infrastructure business. The two other technical bodies in the infrastructure area were the FIA, obviously covering fibre optics, and the ECA-ITEC.

The FIA has had a historic commitment to international, European and UK standardisation and has provided substantial sponsorship of those activities via its Technical Directorate. These activities have inevitably spread far beyond its own cabling media and cover balanced cabling, wireless technologies and Power over Ethernet. Moreover, in a number of areas, such as segregation of telecommunications and mains power cabling, the wider interests of the FIA overlap with the electrotechnical aspects addressed by the ECA-ITEC. This provides an excellent foundation upon which to build the TIA-B as a technical body that benefits directly from this existing expertise thereby providing substantial benefits, at no extra cost, to the members of its co-hosts.

The inaugural TIA-B meeting was held at the IET on September 10th. Following a 90-minute presentation of the objectives and operation of the TIA-B, the meeting moved on to agree the initial projects to be handled by the TIA-B. Six projects were identified as being of either high and medium priority. High priority items were the development of a Infrastructure Advisory Note (IAN) entitled "Standards Usage Guide" and the development of Standard Interpretation Documents (SIDs) on "Segregation between mains power and telecommunications cabling" and "Earthing of cabinets/frames/racks". These are of significant value due to the expected changes to the requirements the European, and therefore UK, standards in 2008.

The production of the IAN on "Standards Usage" re-focussed attention on the perennial problem faced by telecommunications infrastructure installers everywhere - the lack of understanding in the consultant community of the standards that exist to help them correctly specify their needs. This caused us to consider who/what the TIA-B should consider as future co-hosts. The answer is obvious - trade/industry associations that represent users and their consultants. Work is now progressing in this area and we will bring you news of this as soon as possible.



Technical Director of the FIA, Mike Gilmore, presenting the activity of the TIA-B at the IET, London, 10th September 2007

In the medium priority area were three further IANs covering “Glossary of terms”, “Wireless network installation practice and safety” and “Cabling infrastructures and carbon footprints”. The latter created significant interest during the meeting so we look forward to seeing the scope of this most topical work.

Project leaders for most work packages were identified at the meeting and the work on all six projects will begin almost immediately. In addition, three other issues of considerable value were deferred pending decisions by co-hosts and the outcome of other standards activity. The complete information regarding the meeting is downloadable at www.fia-online.org/TIA-B/pdf/L5142.pdf.

The FIA is offering free membership for ex-CITA members until January 2008 at which point they will be offered membership of the FIA at the same fee structure as existing FIA members. We feel that this offer is appropriate since CITA members may have already paid their annual fees and a short waiver of trade association fees is fair and reasonable.

Further information is available via the FIA web-site at www.fia-online.co.uk or directly via the TIA-B section at www.fia-online.co.uk/TIA-B. Enquiries can be e-mailed to jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk, or, alternatively, you can contact the FIA Secretariat in 01763 273039.