

MINUTES OF THE 448TH MEETING OF THE BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY
HELD AT 10:00 ON TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2020 VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present:

Stephen Ridgway CBE	Chairman
Ian Edwards	Board Member / Wales Representative (ex-officio)
Robin Frewer	Board Member
Peter Gowers	Board Member
Carol Hui	Board Member / Audit & Risk Committee Chair
Dame Judith Macgregor	Board Member / Remuneration & People Performance Committee Chair
Karin Sheppard	Board Member
Lord John Thurso	Board Member / VisitScotland Chairman (ex-officio)
Fiona Pollard	Interim Board Member / Interim VisitEngland Advisory Board Chairman (ex-officio)
Giles Smith	DCMS, Observer
Katy Best	Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Observer
Mark Taylor	London and Partners, Observer

In Attendance:

Sally Balcombe	Chief Executive / Accounting Officer
Patricia Yates	Director of Strategy & Communications
Peter Mills	Business Services Director
Clare Mullin	Marketing Director
Henry Bankes	General Counsel and Company Secretary
Dale Rustige	Governance Executive (Minutes)

Agenda item 1. Chairman's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Apologies and Declarations of Interest

2. There were no apologies received.
3. There were no new declarations of interest.

Agenda item 3: Covid-19: Industry Status (not good) and Government Support Measures

4. The Board had noted the following papers:
 - (i) Tourism Industry Covid-19 Recovery Plan Memo
 - (ii) VB/VE role in the politics of Covid-19
5. Patricia Yates provided a verbal update. The feedback from the industry was that there has been a lack of clarity on the messaging from government in relation to the lockdown measures. The Board was informed that the BTA has been playing a key role in relation to this. There has been plenty of engagement between the BTA, industry, and government. There has been great engagement from the Tourism Minister. The Board was informed that guidelines were being developed for the industry in collaboration with the tourism, hospitality, and accommodation sectors, including various government bodies.
6. The Board noted that there doesn't appear to be any detailed guidance yet on business events or mass gatherings. It was noted that the impact on the business events sector is a big cause for concern. There has been zero income during the lockdown. The impact of future social distancing measures would also have to be considered when

conference events can start running again. It was noted that the current government target to start phasing in the opening of businesses will be 4th July 2020.

7. The Board had a discussion and noted its concerns regarding the economic impact of the 14-day quarantine period imposed on inbound international travel. The airline industry has been working on ways to make travel as contactless as possible.

Agenda item 4: Recovery and Emerging from Lockdown

8. The Board noted the following papers:
 - (i) BTA Covid-19 Recovery Planning
 - (ii) Impact of Coronavirus on Domestic Tourism and looking towards recovery
9. The Board received an update from Patricia Yates regarding the current public sentiment during the lockdown. The current consumer sentiment is of caution. It was noted that only 19% of the British public surveyed would book a holiday within the next six months. Up to 74% of consumers say that their summer holidays would not be going ahead. There were strong indicators that this could be a year of domestic holidays as the country exits the lockdown measures.
10. Clare Mullin presented the Board with the Marketing Update. The Board was informed that all planning would be constantly changing shape in response to the restrictions across the markets. At this current stage, there has been a move towards reassurance messaging domestically. There would be some challenges with the international market as different countries have varied approaches to travel restrictions. Work has been underway with strategic partners and suppliers to develop messaging on a UK wide level to ensure standardised approach in the communications.
11. The Board had a discussion regarding options that could be undertaken to identify varied levels of risk in terms of infection ratings for different countries. This may be something that can assist in easing restrictions for inbound travel from particular countries. It was also noted that there may be countries that could present an earlier opportunity for inbound travel and tourism, as their economies are opening up much more rapidly.

Agenda item 5: Strategic Discussion with Government on Role, Structure and Funding of the BTA

12. The Chairman discussed the potential opportunities for VisitBritain/VisitEngland's future role, following the covid-19 outbreak. Currently, the organisation's role has been reshaped to adapt the needs of the industry and government, and to provide key guidance and support towards recovery. It was noted that although the industry has it challenges, there may be an opportunity to reflect on the future of the organisation as the UK reaches recovery.
13. Furthermore, the Chairman noted that the key role of the organisation in supporting both the government and tourism industry, following covid-19, would need to be considered and would help underpin future funding. Future funding and budget would be a key consideration for the BTA, as it defines how it delivers value through marketing agendas, including its ability to provide guidance and support to government.

Agenda item 6: Budget Issues

14. The Board noted the Budget paper for the 2020/21 financial year, which provided a snapshot of the impact of covid-19 to the budget.
15. Sally Balcombe provided a verbal update. There were some challenges following the reduction of income from retail, which will be monitored carefully. Additional restrictions have been put in place by government on approvals for spending on activities; public bodies have to go through an extra process in getting business cases and budgets signed off. Funding from GREAT may also be at risk. The Board noted that there will be a lot of uncertainty and the situation is constantly changing.

16. The Board was informed that the Annual Report & Accounts 2018/19 have now been signed off and should be laid before Parliament in May 2020. The National Audit Office (NAO) would be issuing a press release, due to the qualification of the accounts; the BTA has been liaising with the NAO regarding the tone of the messaging.
17. The Board was informed that the Audit & Risk Committee had approved the valuation of the pension scheme.

Agenda item 7: Any Other Business

18. The Chairman announced to the Board that DCMS has confirmed that appointment of the new Chairs for the BTA Board and the VisitEngland Advisory Board. Formal announcements will be made by government on 1st June 2020, which is also when the terms of office of the new Chairs will formally commence.
19. It was noted that Rt Hon Sir Patrick McLoughlin has been appointed as the new Chairman of the BTA Board. The current Chairman, Steve Ridgway, will be stepping down on 31st May 2020.
20. It was noted that Nick de Bois has been appointed as the new Chairman of the VisitEngland Advisory Board.
21. The Chairman offered his thanks to the individual Board members and attendees for their help and work during his time in office.
22. The BTA Board and Sally Balcombe offered their thanks to Steve Ridgway for all his hard work and help on the BTA Board and organisation on the whole.

Agenda item 8: Date of Next Meeting

23. The next meeting will be held on 24th June 2020.

Agenda item 9: Close

24. The meeting was closed at 11:30am.