

**MINUTES OF THE 464th MEETING OF THE
BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY (BTA) BOARD**
HELD ON TUESDAY 31st January at 1000
3 Grosvenor Gardens, London

Present:

Nick de Bois CBE	BTA Board Chair
Dame Judith Macgregor DCMG LVO	Board Member
Carol Hui	Board Member / Audit & Risk Committee Chair
Karin Sheppard	Board Member
Ian Edwards	Board Member / Wales Representative (ex-officio)
Rt Hon Viscount John Thurso	Board Member / VisitScotland Chairman (ex-officio)
Mark Taylor	London and Partners (Observer)
Patricia Corbett MBE	Northern Ireland Tourist Board, (Observer)
Peter Gowers	Board Member
Fiona Pollard	VEAB Interim Chair
Duncan Parish	DCMS (Observer)
Rodrigo Voss	Boardroom Apprentice

In Attendance:

Patricia Yates	CEO/ Accounting Officer
Andrew Stokes	Director VisitEngland and Commercial
Louise Bryce	Director Partnership (Interim)
Robin Johnson	Director Global Marketing
Debra Lang	Director HR and Professional Services
Henry Banks	General Counsel and Company Secretary
Serena Jacobs	Director of Finance
Gavin Landry	Director International
Saul Batzofin	Director Transformation (Interim)
Evelyn White	Company Secretarial Executive (minutes)

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Introductions

1.0: Welcome

1. The Chair warmly welcomed Rodrigo Voss to his first BTA Board meeting. Dame Judith Macgregor gave a brief overview of the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme, and thanked Rodrigo for opting to join the BTA Board. Rodrigo shared gratitude for this rare opportunity and looked forward to the experience and learning that this insight would enable.

1.1: Apologies for absence

2. Patricia Corbett – Tourism Northern Ireland, Observer

1.2: Declarations of Interest/Conflicts

3. Lord John Thurso declared he was appointed president of The Institute of Hospitality on the 1st January 2023 and asked for this was recorded on the register of interests.

1.3: Minutes of the Meeting on 6th December 2022 (For approval)

4. The minutes from the last meeting were approved.

1.4 Matters Arising / Action Tracker

5. Each action was reviewed and the tracker updated.

1.5 Chair's update

6. The Chair reported on his key activity since the last Board, as summarised below:
 - The second Interministerial Group (IMG) for Tourism chaired by Stuart Andrew, Tourism Minister took place on 17th January 2023 at which the Chair was invited to attend. The purpose of the meeting was to begin seeking cross government support focusing on six key topics to reduce the UK barriers to competitiveness. Each of these was based on the sprint policy process held in Newcastle in 2022, with each topic for discussion identified as a “lever”. The first two levers were the subject of this meeting; Connectivity, and; How to ensure the benefits of tourism were spread across the country. The Chair summarised specific tasks that would be worked on across government following the IMG, which were agreed to by ministers.
 - The IMG also received a presentation from the minister on the value of the visitor economy followed by a presentation from Sarah Green, Newcastle Gateshead Initiative (NGI) on plans for the roll out of the DMO Review Pilot. The next IMG will be leading discussions on Border controls and Marketing.
 - Engagements – the Chair reported on a formal introductory meeting with Stuart Andrew, and a meeting with Jeff Smith, Shadow Tourism Minister.
 - The Chair and Fiona Pollard had met with Emir Feisal upon his appointment as ALB Lead Reviewer.
 - Britain and Ireland Marketplace – this took place on the 27th January and welcomed 120 buyers hosted the at Tottenham football stadium. This proved to be a great networking opportunity with international buyers from 16 markets, and was also attend by the VisitBritain China Team for the first time post pandemic. Ian Edwards had received feedback from the Welsh government that this was a very positive event for the industry.
 - The Chair announced that Carol Hui would step down from the BTA Board and as Chair of ARC in June 2023 and remarked on her outstanding contribution, particularly in reforming compliance to the high standards which it was now operating. Board Members concurred, noting their sincere thanks to Carol for her leadership, and also noting the importance of appointing an ARC Chair with commensurate skills. It was anticipated succession planning would take six months, noting there were currently two Board Member vacancies. The Chair advised Board Members that he would be seeking a swift process of recruitment was undertaken by DCMS public appointments team.

2.0 ALB Review

7. Emir Feisal thanked Board Members for welcoming him to this meeting, together with his team, Amelia Behrens and Joey Rowlands, and gave an outline of his role as Lead Reviewer, saying he was looking to draw out the strengths of the organisation. Emir underlined the importance of collaboration throughout this process, saying he planned to meet with a broad range of stakeholders, including Board Members, before delivering the independent report in 4 months. It

was anticipated the review would challenge and scrutinised processes and that he was grateful for the open approach that had already been adopted by the organisation.

8. The Chair welcomed the collaborative approach and acknowledged the benefits of the review, and sought feedback from Board Members on the terms of references, particularly any notable gaps, which were summarised as the following:
 - Devolved Nations – it was recognised that the BTA is a cross border authority, with controls differing in each nation and that it would therefore benefit the review to consult with each nation. It was highlighted that the functions of the BTA are set out in primary legislation.
 - Board succession model – it was raised whether there was scope to review the term of appointments and the complex recruitment process it had to adhere to, and a comparison was made to the way appointments to public bodies are made in Scotland.
 - Commercial capability – the extent of the commercial ambition was raised, and whether this would enhance the BTAs position in the industry or distract from its purpose to drive the visitor economy and visitor value.
 - Cross-government structural position – It was highlighted that a lot of the policy levers which impact tourism sit outside of DCMS, and while the IMG helps link the BTA into other Government departments, other roots of communication and collaboration here would be helpful. It was raised whether other structural challenges would be looked at in more detail to enable more efficiency e.g. how best to balance the short-term nature of GREAT funding with long term marketing strategies, PASS approval processes, controls around commercialisation spend.
 - International network - the importance of consulting with the international network was also seen as essential to understanding our position and value, linking to our cause to deliver the tourism recovery plan. It was also noted the BTA received significantly less funding relative to other countries' tourist boards and that any international comparisons should also reflect this. The Chair suggested meeting with the network to gain first hand their contributions and proposed that the review team should attend ITB Berlin.
 - Transformation – Fiona Pollard reiterated this was the first year of a three-year funded programme that would deliver on efficiency and enable data sources to make informed decisions. An invited was extended to the ALB Review Team to meet with the programme team and attend the Programme Boards, to emphasise the areas of efficiency that were already being addressed.
 - Position in the industry – it was encouraged to understand the complex balance of the BTAs roles in order to fully recognise context, and therefore the measure of success. It was also recommended that consulting with industry was key to realising the competitive environment the BTA operated in, and suggested attending a trade show in business tourism to observe this. The visitor economy was recognised as an area that needed support in order to optimise both business and domestic opportunity, particularly through business events.

9. Emir Feisal thanked Board Members for their insightful observations and found it particularly helpful in identifying new areas that needed examination.

10. The Chair recognised this review was a significant opportunity to enhance the role of the BTA, and requested that the BTA respond in writing to the terms of reference, to capture all the points raised at this meeting, which were summarised as; building an understanding of the international network and industry; the devolved administrations; stakeholder engagement; the complex operation of the organisation; transformation; and, the return on investment and contribution to growth. Emir Feisal welcomed this proposed response, and kindly asked for this promptly as the review were faced with demanding deadlines.

3.0 Strategic matters for discussion/ sign off

3.1: Political update

11. The CEO gave an overview of political activity since the last Board, which was as followed:
 - The CEO had recently given evidence at the Scottish Affairs Select Committee and was also scheduled to be giving evidence at the Welsh Affairs Committee; both positive steps to enhancing relationships.
 - GREAT Programme Board – outstanding PASS forms for 2022/23 were approved and the budget was signed off. Plans were being developed to seek domestic funding to support projects in West Coast of USA and India to align with the Prime Minister’s priorities.
 - Levelling up fund – more than 100 projects were awarded a share from the second round of this fund, some examples were; making Eastbourne a year round destinations; investment in Liverpool’s museums and docks; Manchester cultural city project; and, the Eden project in Morecambe.
12. Duncan Parish highlighted that India held the Presidency of the G20 in 2023, which included Tourism on the agenda, and anticipated this would be a good opportunity to optimise on relationships.

3.2 CEO update & Dashboard

13. The CEO took the corporate priorities dashboard as read and focused attention on the following activities:
 - *Re-build International Visitor Value* – a GREAT tourism campaign was being launched in February following the approval of PASS forms. The new B2B strategy was embedding at pace and proved successful at the VisitBritain Showcase Britain event.
 - *Building our Future* – the immediate focus was embedding the CRM programme to support the B2B delivery. The launch of a new cooperative marketing pilot in the USA had exceeded expectation.
 - *Build the English Visitor Economy* – five regional leads had been appointed in VisitEngland. The DDP (Destination Development Partnership) area application process started with its first Awards panel and looked at geographical overlap. The first expressions of interest received 20 applicants from LVEP (Local Visitor Economy Partnership). English Tourism Week (18-27 March) continued to partner with Tourism Superstars which recently launched its voting.
 - *Building our influence* – the Tourism Industry Council (TIC) leadership had been refreshed; the CEO continued to be Chair of the sustainability working group. The CEO was attending the Mobility Event in Paris for a discussion on border issues in Europe, and also linking the French programme funded by GREAT. T20 had aligned with G20 and was being hosted in India in June; the CEO has been invited to join the British delegation. Key meetings were taking place to develop partnerships to gain access to commercial data.
 - *Build our Team* – the Director changes had been implemented, the remaining two vacancies for Partnership and Transformation were currently going through an external recruitment campaign; interim Directors had been appointed until this concluded.
14. The Board recognised the high volume of activity, and sought more context on the measure of success and how this was indicative to achieving the targets. Dame Judith Macgregor observed that a new Senior Sustainability Manager was being recruited, and looked forward to there being an increase in reported activity linked to sustainability. *ACTION: linked to para 22.*
15. The Board recognised that now controls had been lifted in China, making it easier to travel, there needed to be a plan in place to capture the demand and market. It was noted, however, that the flight capacity was still low, and that there were likely to be a high demand for visas which would

cause delays; the VisitBritain China Team had been asked to develop a plan to address the infrastructure work for the next 6-9 months, so opportunities could be realised at the earliest point to enable alignment with investment.

16. Duncan Parish sought clarity on the commercial funding structure. Serena Jacobs advised that although commercial contribution was captured, a significant portion was partnerships which was not cash contributions accounted for by BTA. Any net cash contributions e.g. income from the Retail operation, could not be transferred between financial years.

ACTION: Duncan Parish and Serena Jacobs to discuss the structure of commercial income spend.

3.3: Finance

3.3a: Annual Reporting Accounts - Themes

17. Following a request from the last BTA Board, Serena Jacobs shared a paper outlining the proposed Annual Report Accounts themes together with a draft revision of the Chair Foreward. The Board were extremely appreciative of early sight of this for the first time, and shared the following comments:
- Chair Foreward - to reference that the recovery plan remained intrinsic throughout this reporting period, and that within the external environment, there was also an intensity of competitor spend. This was also thought to be a good space to reference the strong collaboration with devolved nations.
 - To develop and improve the sustainability theme and narrative.
 - To include the DMO Review implementation and appointment of regional leads in VisitEngland.
 - Commonwealth Games and cooperation with West Midlands.
 - To note the impact and perception of industrial action, in particular rail strikes; businesses had cancelled key events due to unreliable connectivity.

3.3b: Budget 2022-23

18. Serena Jacobs reported on the key financial information as at the end of December 2022 activity and took the paper as read. Performance was on track to achieve the full year forecasted Retail contribution, noting that some areas were taking longer than expected. An overall overspend was forecast, however this was lower the figure last reported to Board. The actual outturn though would be an underspend, but were expecting to be within the DCMS 1% target.
19. Lord John Thurso sought clarity on definitions used in terms of commercialisation and cost recovery, and suggested a deep dive may benefit the Boards understanding. Fiona Pollard advised that a working group at VEAB level had been formed with the Partnership Director, and would report into the next Board. Karin Sheppard raised whether there were any concerns regarding the pace of transformation across the next two years; Serena Jacobs explained that the majority of the plan for this year would be delivered, the nature of the actual costs being incurred, particularly for data transformation, meant that the accounting rules required the costs to be spread over a longer period resulting in underspend in this financial year.

3.4: Business Planning 2023/24

3.4a: Corporate Priorities 2023/24

20. The VisitBritain/ VisitEngland 2023-24 Corporate Priorities presentation had been shared with Board Members to seek their comment and approval. The CEO talked through the underpinning principles and the detail behind each refreshed priority, focusing on how each priority would be measured:

- International Visitor Value – this was being measured through campaign awareness, the annual B2B survey and the growth of business events.
- Build our Future – these measurements were being worked through with Finance and HR to gain data through enhanced systems. It was recognised that embedding changes and transforming capabilities were the biggest shift on last year.
- The English Visitor Economy – there was a strong regional team in position to transform and embed the new DMO landscape and the development of the sustainability tourism strategy.
- Our Influence – this was being driven by the stakeholder engagement plan which was a fully consultative approach where feedback from stakeholders was being acted upon.
- Our Team – consultation with staff on the values and purpose had energised the organisation. The Staff Survey results would continue to be an informative source.

21. Board Members welcomed the high-level overview of the new corporate priorities and shared their observations, which were as followed:

- a) Reporting against the corporate priorities:
 - The use of measurable KPIs with regular reports to the Board on progress against targets – focus on outcomes rather than activity
 - Show the change from previous years to budget and headcount, also drawing out the constraints.
 - To clearly define activity between ‘reporting on progress’ and ‘measuring against a metric’ – not every objective would have a numeric target.
- b) There should be a clearer call out of the risks impacting on delivery of activity.
- c) To consider streamlining staff messaging by adopting pillars e.g. digitalise, collaborative, growth.

22. The CEO concluded that the dashboard would be refreshed to strengthen and monitor against target. Lord John Thurso offered to share a reporting template used by VisitScotland that could be modified to suit this type of reporting.

ACTION: To develop the BTA dashboard to expand on measuring outcomes against targets/KPIs.

3.4b: High level budget 2023-24

23. Serena Jacobs shared a paper setting out the budget structure for 2023/24 and took it as read. The Board were reminded that the core funding was in line with the settlement letter, caveating that non-core funding e.g. business events, tourism recovery plan, transformation, DMO review, were not yet confirmed in a delegation letter. Staff costs were budgeted flat including a 8% vacancy rate, which was supporting a pay award and organisational design costs; this rate was being closely monitored to avoid any pressure to other areas of expenditure. Infrastructure also saw a flat budget but was subject to the impact of irrecoverable VAT; plans were in place to explore any options to improve the VAT position. However, it was noted that we would not be able to significantly improve this. The activity envelope is lower with there being no Commonwealth Games funding. The budget for business events remained the same as last year.

24. Andrew Stokes provided an update on commercial, outlining there wa a target and high-level budget set to what was currently achievable. The Board were reminded that if the target was achieved, this income would need to be spent in the same financial year.

4.0: Corporate updates

4.1: VEAB update

25. Fiona Pollard, Interim Chair of VEAB, gave a readout from the meeting in November; the highlights were as followed:

- DMO Review – this was awaiting final funding agreement. It was reported that VEAB, due to the scale of implementation, had commissioned a Programme Board to work closely with the Executives.
- Accessibility – a deep dive had been scheduled for the next VEAB in March, which will be reported on at the next BTA Board.
- Brit rail project – this funding allocation was being repurposed following agreement from DCMS; options were currently being considered.
- England Academy – this new initiative was an expansion to the success of previous training programmes, which identified the need for a learning platform tailored to differing levels of understanding and commercial ability within the industry.
- England consumer brand development – VEAB had agreed to support the team on developing the commercial position.

26. The Chair took this opportunity to extend thanks to Sarah Fowler, Nadine Thomson and Andy Wood at VEAB for their contribution to the DMO Review. Duncan Parish agreed to follow up on the status of the business case.

4.2: ARC update

27. Carol Hui advised that ARC had not convened since the last Board update. The amended ARC terms of references, that had been consulted on prior to this meeting, was shared with Board papers; Board Members approved this version.

4.3: RPC update

28. Dame Judith Macgregor reported on the activity raised at RPC in January:

- Purpose and values workshops – this was a consultative process with all staff to seek input on the refreshed purpose and values; the outcome of these workshops would be brought for decision by Directors in March.
- Remuneration changes – there had been minimal changes to the organisational design structure which were approved offline. A specialist was being appointed to support this going forward.
- Estates strategy – site visits were being conducted at the shortlisted cities before making final recommendations. Careful consideration was being given to the transition and was currently being stress tested by Directors.
- Terms of reference – the RPC terms of reference had been refreshed to encompass all keys areas effecting staff; this was shared with papers and received Board approval. A formal suggestion was made to have a 'people' theme at the Joint Strategy Day in October.
- Forward Look – the next meeting in May was hoping to review the 2023-24 pay remit (subject to the guidance from central government) and to also review in more detail the broader remuneration package.

5.0 Papers to note

29. The Chair noted these papers and no comment was brought for discussion at the meeting.

6.0 AOB

30. The Chair raised the following items to be noted:

- Lord John Thurso had kindly offered to host the Joint Strategy Day in Scotland, and thanked Board Members for accommodating this in diaries.
- The Annual Board Appraisals – the Chair sought agreement from Board Members to accommodate a discussion in due course.

The meeting closed at 1300. Board Members resumed for a closed session at 1315.