

**MINUTES OF THE 457th MEETING OF THE BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY (BTA) BOARD HELD
ON TUESDAY 28TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 10:00AM AT THE BTA OFFICES,
3 GROSVENOR GARDENS, VICTORIA, LONDON SW1W 0BD**

Present:

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| Dame Judith Macgregor DCMG LVO | BTA Chair |
| Katy Best | Northern Ireland Tourist Board (observer) |
| Nick de Bois | Board Member / Chairman of the VisitEngland Advisory Board |
| 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 |
| Mark Taylor | London and Partners (observer) |
| Rt Hon Viscount Thurso | Board Member / VisitScotland Chairman (ex-officio) |

In Attendance:

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| Sally Balcombe | Chief Executive / Accounting Officer |
| Henry Bankes | General Counsel and Company Secretary |
| Debra Lang | Professional Services Director |
| David Martin | DCMS (attending on behalf of Duncan Parish) |
| Clare Mullin | Marketing Director |
| Peter Mills | Business Services & Finance Director |
| Hannah Osling | DCMS (observer) |
| Tim Pemberton | Deputy Director of Finance |
| Andrew Stokes | England Director |
| Patricia Yates | Director of Strategy & Communications |

Apologies:

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| Duncan Parish | Deputy Director of Tourism and Cultural Diplomacy, DCMS (observer) |
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Agenda Item 1. Chairman's Update and Introductions

1. The Chair welcomed the Board and attendees to its first proper in-person meeting since the COVID pandemic.
2. The Chair noted that following a recent meeting she had with DCMS, the sentiment was that the BTA had done some good work in strengthening its compliance framework.
3. The Chair noted that she had written a letter of congratulations to Nadine Dorries, the new Secretary of State of DCMS, on behalf of the BTA and Board. She had met with Nigel Huddleston, the past-immediate Secretary of State prior to his departure; the CSR bid was discussed and he saw the value of the overarching aims in the bid, such as the data hub initiative.
4. A Cabinet Office review of public bodies and ALBs would be rolled out and DCMS had recommend that the BTA be put forward for review as part of the pilot. There will be a discussion item on this later in the meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies

5. Apologies have been noted above.

Agenda Item 3: Declarations of Interest/Conflicts

6. There were no new declarations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June and 10 August 2021

7. The minutes were approved.

Agenda Item 5: Matters Arising

8. There were no matters arising.

STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE & OUTLOOK

Agenda Item 6: CEO Report & BTA Dashboard

9. The Board noted the paper and took this as read.
10. Sally Balcombe provided a verbal update in reference to the paper. There can now be more focus on the international agenda, following the emphasis on domestic campaigns during the previous quarters. There will also be greater focus on European and US markets, due to the closure of other markets. More work will be done on business events and this is reflected in the BTA's recent CSR bid submission.
11. There has been plenty of activity with the England campaigns, with a particular focus on the Camelot Lottery Voucher Scheme and BritRail Pass scheme. There has also been an increase in activity and work on the TXGB platform.

Agenda Item 7: CSR Update & BTA Review

12. The Board noted that the Cabinet Office will be rolling out a review of public bodies and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). The BTA has been put forward as part of the pilot review. The focus of the review will be; BTAs statutory role; role of VisitEngland within the BTA structure; the funding model; compliance; and, VisitBritain and VisitEngland's role in marketing to international and domestic markets, and its role within GREAT.
13. The Board discussed the areas on which it considered the proposed ALB Review might focus. It was felt it should consider the governance framework for the BTA and whether this was fit for purpose. It should review whether the current funding arrangements and support enabled it adequately to deliver on its statutory function, including its commitments to government and to the tourism industry across all parts of the United Kingdom.

Agenda Item 8: Strategy Day Preview

14. The Board had a discussion on what the Joint Strategy Day Meeting on 12 October 2021 should focus on and agreed the following key areas; BTAs role and expectations from government and DCMS; where it adds value and what this looks like; the business model; DMO landscape; and, VisitEngland's role in domestic tourism.

CORPORATE MATTERS

Agenda Item 9: Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) Update

15. The Board received a verbal update from Carol Hui, Chair of the ARC. The Annual Reports & Accounts (ARA) 2020/21 had been signed-off and submitted to Parliament ahead of schedule. A plan is already in place for the preparation of the ARA 2021/22.
16. The progress of the compliance work across the organisation remains positive, with no areas of concern reported. The corporate risk register is regularly monitored and management continue to tighten up on risks and ensure that

appropriate mitigations are in place. Key areas of risk included funding from GREAT and a recent intellectual property litigation case, which has now been resolved.

17. A deep dive has been undertaken on corporate policies, with certain areas identified for further review and management.
18. **ACTION: The Board had a discussion regarding the corporate risk register and noted that it would be helpful for it to receive a high-level report on 2-3 key risks selected by the ARC. It was agreed that a brief report would be brought to the next Board meeting in December 2021 (Owner: Carol Hui).**

Agenda Item 10: Remuneration & People Performance Committee (RPC) Update

19. The Board received a verbal update from Debra Lang. The RPC had appointed Fiona Pollard as its current interim chair, following Dame Judith Macgregor's recent appointment as the Interim Chair of the BTA. Robin Frewer was also appointed as its newest member, bringing the committee's membership to full capacity.
20. The People Strategy was a key area of discussion at the recent RPC meeting, with a focus on the implementation programme. Other areas that were also on the agenda included the BTA pay strategy. There has been a government freeze on consolidated pay, but the BTA may have some opportunity to review unconsolidated pay for this financial year.
21. The Estates Strategy was also on the agenda to consider the future approach in conjunction with the wider government estates policy.

Agenda Item 11: Director of Finance Update

22. The Board noted the paper and took this as read. Peter Mills provided a verbal update in reference to the paper.
23. The 2021/22 BTA Framework Agreement has been formally signed off and published. The budgetary position looks positive, with some opportunity to flip across funding from resource to capital. There has been positive progress in the work to upgrade the financial systems. Management reporting is in a good place.
24. Work has been progressing in relation to the review of the compliance arrangements for VisitBritain Services India Private Limited (VBSIPL), particularly in relation to taxation arrangements, and is being overseen by the ARC.
25. **APPROVAL: The Board noted the plans for the production of the ARA 2021/22 within the paper and approved this.**
26. The Board noted that this will be Peter Mills' last meeting on the Board as he leaves the BTA in November 2021. The Board thanked him for all his successes and achievements and wished him well in his future endeavours.

Agenda Item 12: People Survey

27. The Board noted the paper and took this as read. Debra Lang provided a verbal update in reference to the paper.
28. There have been significant improvements in the results of the 2021 People Survey, particularly in comparison to the previous year and the Civil Service benchmarking scores. The survey results were very positive in the areas of wellbeing, diversity & inclusion, and engagement.
29. The Board had a discussion regarding the turnover data within the survey results and noted that there has been an upward trend as lockdown restrictions have eased. Where there is an unusually high turnover in certain areas across the business, a review will be done to identify any hotspots. The Board had a brief discussion regarding some sentiment data that is captured in the survey, which may not provide a true reflection of the actual picture.

BRITAIN MATTERS

Agenda Item 13: GREAT Board

30. The Board noted the paper and took this as read. It received a verbal update from Clare Mullin.
31. The BTAs international marketing funding comes primarily from GREAT. GREAT is currently undergoing a major rebrand and change, with plenty of cross-government involvement. The BTA has a strong track record in its delivery of objectives through ROIs, due to the established relationship between the BTA and the GREAT team. The current aim of GREAT will be to work on Britain's brand for the international market and to show a different face of Britain to the world.
32. There is hope that there would be an uplift in funding in the upcoming CSR. The PASS approvals for individual campaign work have been managed and working sufficiently. However, there is some hope from the GREAT team that approval of funding would return to an annual process.
33. The Board noted that one of its biggest risks was not securing the funds needed by the BTA to deliver on its international objectives. There is a need to clarify what the focus is for the BTA; it was agreed the Joint Strategy meeting will be a good forum to examine this further.

ENGLAND MATTERS

Agenda Item 14: England Update

34. The Board noted the papers and took these as read. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update in reference to the papers.
35. The England team are currently busy working on the roll-out of the Camelot National Lottery Voucher Scheme. The team has been working with partners and attractions to enable good coverage across Britain. Work is also progressing on rolling out the BritRail Pass scheme, with a slight extension on the timetable granted by DCMS to accommodate further work required on market research.
36. **ACTION: The Board had a discussion regarding the Discover England Fund (DEF) programme and it agreed that it would like a brief report on lessons learned from the DEF programme at a future meeting (Owner: Andrew Stokes).**

Agenda Item 15: Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) Review Update

37. The Board received and noted a copy of the published DMO Review Report. Nick de Bois provided a verbal update.
38. It was noted that Nick had chaired the DMO review, which had started in March 2021. Feedback from stakeholders and DMOs during the consultation process was very positive. The consultation process brought to light the clear value delivered by DMOs to domestic tourism. The final report provides an outline in terms of an effective DMO structure.
39. The recommendations within the report set out a structured model for how DMOs would effectively operate. It identified that effective transformation and sustainability of the DMO structure would require funding from the government. DMOs would go through an accreditation process and would be placed into tiered categories.
40. The recommendations also set out the role that VisitEngland would play in the governance and accreditation of DMOs.

DEVOLVED NATIONS

Agenda Item 16: VisitScotland Update

41. The Board received a verbal update from Lord Thurso. A Tourism Minister had been appointed and VisitScotland has been engaging and briefing the new officials. Currently, market activity has picked up in both domestic and rural areas.

Cities are still seeing a slow return in the recovery. Scotland are running a themed years tourism campaign. The Scottish Government is also working on 'fair work' initiative, which is similar to England's levelling-up agenda.

Agenda Item 17: Wales Update

42. The Board received a verbal update from Ian Edwards. The Welsh Government have a new minister, who was previously a health minister, so has taken a cautious approach to reopening. Wales is fully into the roll out of its tourism recovery plan. It is also delivering a 'back to basics' scheme to support businesses in getting back up to full operation. Big venues and event spaces with large gatherings require a COVID-vaccination pass from attendees.

Agenda Item 18: Northern Ireland Update

43. The Board received a verbal update from Katy Best. Northern Ireland has seen a very good domestic market over the summer period. Some fundamental work is being done on looking at exploring greater market opportunities with the Republic of Ireland. There is a government budget for a focused campaign on attracting visitors to regional cities. The government's incentive scheme for domestic airlines provided a positive boost to domestic flights.
44. Katy noted that this would be her last Board meeting and that the Northern Ireland Tourism Board are currently looking into her replacement. The Board thanked Katy for her valued input and efforts and wished her well for the future.

FOR APPROVAL

Agenda Item 19: Government Functional Standard – GovS 013: Counter Fraud

45. **APPROVED:** The Board noted the paper and approve the recommendation to appoint Tim Pemberton as the senior officer for counter fraud.

PAPERS FOR NOTING/INFORMATION

The Board noted the following papers:

46. **Agenda Item 20: Domestic Tourism Trends and Market Sentiment**
47. **Agenda Item 21: International & Inbound Tourism Trends and Forecast Update**
48. **Agenda Item 22: State of the Market Snapshot**
49. **Agenda Item 23: BTA Corporate Risk Register**
50. **Agenda Item 24: BTA Modern Slavery Statement**
- 50.1. **ACTION:** The Chair proposed to offer some text to strengthen the wording of the Statement and the BTAs activity to address the issues more robustly. (Owner: Chair)

Agenda Item 25: Any Other Business

51. The Board noted that it would be undertaking a Board Effectiveness Review led by an external specialist in this area.

Agenda Item 26: Date of Next Meeting

52. The Board noted that the next meeting will be the Joint BTA Board/VEAB Strategy Day, Tuesday 12th October 2021 (9.00am).

Agenda Item 27: Close

53. The meeting was closed at 2:30pm.