

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**MINUTES OF THE 444<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VEAB)  
HELD ON TUESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 10.30AM VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**Present:** Nick De Bois, Chairman  
Sarah Fowler, Board Member  
Nigel Halkes, Board Member  
Allan Lambert, Board Member  
Fiona Pollard, Board Member  
Nadine Thomson, Board Member  
Dr Andy Wood OBE DL, Board Member

**In Attendance:** Sally Balcombe, Chief Executive / BTA Accounting Officer  
Andrew Stokes, England Director  
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications  
Stephen Darke, Head of Tourism Affairs, DCMS  
Henry Bankes, General Counsel and Company Secretary  
Lyndsey Turner-Swift, Head of England Planning and Delivery (agenda item 7.)  
Emma Wilkinson, Senior Brand and Customer Marketing Manager (agenda item 9.)  
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (minutes)

**Apologies:** Peter Mills, Business Services Director

**Agenda item 1: Chair's Update and Introduction**

1. The Chairman welcomed the members and attendees of the VisitEngland Advisory Board to the meeting.

**Agenda Item 2: Apologies**

2. Apologies were received from Peter Mills.

**Agenda Item 3: Declarations of Interest**

3. There were no new declarations of interest to note.

**Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Last Meeting**

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 were approved.

**Agenda item 5: Matters Arising / Action Tracker**

5. There were no matters arising or actions due.

**Agenda Item 6: Political Update / Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) Update**

6. The Board received a verbal report from Patricia Yates. The follow key points were noted by the Board:

6.1. There has been continued and broad engagement with MPs and government on the tourism industry, with particular engagement regarding tourism zones and DMOs for local areas.

- 6.2. TIER meetings have been running regularly, which enables engagement between key representatives across the tourism industry, with meetings also attended by the Minister and government representatives.
  - 6.3. There are proposals in government to discontinue VAT-free shopping. This would make the UK the only country in Europe not offering this. Retailers have expressed strong concerns.
  - 6.4. The expectation is to hear back in October regarding the final comprehensive spending review (CSR) budget. Proposals have been submitted by the BTA for both VisitBritain and VisitEngland and have been through internal review within DCMS. The feedback has been positive overall. However, there may be some challenges in getting the DEF element of the bid completely through.
7. The Board had a discussion regarding the impact on DEF activities if this is not sufficiently supported. It was noted that this would be a key area that requires support. The agreed budget when the CSR is announced in October would be reviewed to review whether there are any gaps and how these can be filled.
  8. There was also a discussion regarding the budget for England marketing. It was noted that marketing for VisitEngland is already much smaller in comparison to other bodies, which have a bigger pot. Investment into this area will be key, particularly to effectively support industry recovery.

#### **Agenda item 7: Discover England Fund (DEF) – 2020/21 Activity & DMO Emergency Fund**

9. The Board noted the paper. Lyndsey Turner-Swift provided a verbal update with reference to the paper.
10. England's Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) have been funded heavily by commercial income and are currently experiencing extreme financial pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some have been facing the threat of closure and are a critical point for recovery. DCMS have asked the BTA to repurpose a further £1m from the Discover England Fund's (DEF) Year 5 budget to create an emergency funding pot to enable DMOs to access support over the next six months.
11. Various options had been looked at by the VisitEngland team for the criteria on how to prioritise the DMOs that would be eligible to receive funding. Unfortunately, the total pot would not be able to cover all DMOs. One of the approaches under review was to provide priority to DMOs that have been directly involved and working at a strategic level in the tourism sector within their local area. Also, to identify whether they have been involved or leading in the recovery of tourism in their local areas.
12. The Board was informed that VisitEngland would be very specific on what the funding can be spent on and fraud checks were also in place.

#### **Agenda item 8: Destination Management Organisations (DMO) Strategy – Discussion**

13. The Board noted the paper and a verbal update was provided by Sally Balcombe with reference to the paper. The paper aims to provide an overview of the current English DMO landscape and to formulate a considered view on what intermediary structures can best support the industry's future growth.
14. The mode of operation of VisitEngland has been to engage with DMOs as the main point of contact for SMEs and partners across local areas. This role has been an important part of how the landscape operates, as VisitEngland does not have the resources to engage one-to-one with SMEs.
15. The continued funding of DMOs would need to be looked at in the long term, as this cannot continue to be funded from the DEF. In the 2021 budget, ways can be explored on how support can be given to DMOs through the tourism zones. The paper outlined the challenges on DMOs receiving funding from government and there has been little funding received from central government on local tourism since the abolition of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs).
16. The operating models of DMOs also differ greatly from one another. Their accountability and structure have also been driven by funding from different areas, leading to each having a different focus on priorities.

17. The Board noted that there would be an opportunity for defining the future shape and structure of the DMO landscape, as they provide a key role in local tourism, which will need significant support towards economic recovery following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **Agenda item 9: England Domestic Campaign**

18. The Board noted the paper and Emma Wilkinson provided a verbal update with reference to the paper.
19. The following key points were noted by the Board:
  - 19.1. The “We’re Good To Go” (WGTG) campaign has received a very positive response during the summer months. A business finder tool for WGTG is also under development.
  - 19.2. Funding has been received for a pan-UK video to be released, which business will be able to embed on their websites.
  - 19.3. A domestic campaign targeted specifically for autumn and winter would be rolled out. The aim of the campaign is to drive £200k+ worth of domestic breaks this autumn/winter. This would be underpinned and shaped by consumer data, including the reassurance messaging behind it.
  - 19.4. The campaign’s headline will be “Escape the Everyday”, with the target audience being families and pre-nesters group aged 18-34. The consumer messaging is underpinned by freedom to explore, discovery, treating yourself, quality time with loved ones, the spontaneity offered by UK breaks, affordability, supporting local business and domestic breaks being a safe choice. The Board noted various concept ideas of the promotional material for this campaign.
  - 19.5. The campaign will be distributed via various TV partners and also social media influencer ambassadors, who will be recruited to showcase trips targeting both the pre-nesting group and families. Proactive pitching will be done by the influencers.
  - 19.6. The Board was also shown contingency plans for situations such as the UK being under another national lockdown with businesses being shut.

#### **Agenda item 10: Joint Strategy Day: BTA Board & VEAB**

20. The Chairman noted that the Joint Strategy Day, usually held jointly by the BTA Board and VEAB would be held in the next few months. The Chairman noted that the session would be an opportunity for to have a joined up discussion regarding the future strategic role for England.
21. The Strategy Session is currently scheduled to take place in October.

#### **Agenda item 11: Any Other Business**

22. The Board had a discussion regarding the oversight of selected DEF projects. The ask was from the Board was for some members to provide light-touch support and provide their expertise on some of the projects. It was noted that some members were already involved in some of the projects. It was agreed that interested members should contact Andrew Stokes or Lyndsey Turner-Swift for details.
23. The Chairman noted the roundtable group being formed around sustainability which he will be engaged in; there will also be engagement from the business events sector.
24. Nadine Thomson noted her thanks for the VisitBritain/VisitEngland team on behalf of the VEAB for their excellent work on delivering the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence. The awards event was very professional, entertaining and extremely well run.

**Agenda item 12: Date of Next Meeting**

25. The next meeting has been scheduled to take place in October 2020.
26. **Post-meeting note: It was agreed offline by the Board that the next VEAB meeting will be rescheduled to take place on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The meeting will be joined up with the VEAB Strategy Session, so that it will be held on the same day.**

**Agenda item 13: Close**

27. The meeting was closed at 1.00pm.