

CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTES OF THE 443RD MEETING OF THE VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VEAB) HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE AT 10.00AM ON TUESDAY 11TH AUGUST 2020

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

In Attendance: Sally Balcombe, Chief Executive / BTA Accounting Officer
Stephen Darke, Head of Tourism Affairs, DCMS
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications
Henry Bankes, General Counsel and Company Secretary
Lyndsey Turner-Swift, Head of England Planning and Delivery
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (minutes)

Apologies: Fiona Pollard, Board Member

Agenda item 1: Chair's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the members and attendees of the VisitEngland Advisory Board to the meeting.
2. The Board noted that this extraordinary meeting has been convened to discuss the government's comprehensive spending review (CSR) and the British Tourist Authority's (BTA) bid proposals. The Board would provide particular input and comments from a VisitEngland standpoint.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies and Declarations of interest

3. The Board noted apologies from Fiona Pollard.
4. There were no new declarations of interest.

Agenda Item 3: Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)

5. The Board noted the paper outlining the details of the BTA's draft bid proposal, which would eventually be submitted to HM Treasury. Patricia Yates provided the Board with a verbal update with reference to the slides.
6. The bid being submitted would cover the BTA's financial years 2021-14. It was noted that all bids should demonstrate alignment with government priorities and must be ambitious. Ministers wanted to see a good level of ambition in bids and also take into account the impact of Covid-19.
7. The Board noted the CSR timeline. Expressions of interest for Business Events and the Discover England Fund (DEF) had already been submitted at the end of July 2020, as these are existing areas of activity and given greater scrutiny. The GREAT bid had been submitted to the Department for International Trade (DIT). By the end of August, the final bid would be agreed with DCMS and ministers. The bid would then be submitted to HM Treasury at the end of September and the CSR should be announced by the end of October 2020.
8. The Board was presented with the BTA's bid and an outline of how the tourism sector contributes significantly to the current government's spending review priorities. These include:

- 8.1. strengthening the UK's economic recovery from Covid-19 by prioritizing jobs and skills;
 - 8.2. levelling up economic opportunity across all nations and regions of the country;
 - 8.3. making the UK a scientific superpower, including leading in the development of technologies in reaching net zero carbon by 2050; and
 - 8.4. strengthening the UK's place in the world.
9. The Board noted that there has been a shift in government attitude towards supporting domestic travel and tourism marketing; this follows on from the impact of covid-19 on the industry and businesses and the importance of actively encouraging domestic tourism has been identified. Funding has been provided to the BTA for domestic marketing. The estimate is that VisitEngland should be able to deliver an additional £614m to the visitor economy.
 10. The Board was provided with a breakdown of the funding bid for VisitBritain and VisitEngland respectively. The core grant-in-aid for VisitEngland will be £22.5m per year, with an uplift of £5m in year 2 (comparatively, funding is currently at £7.2m). £100m has been allocated to the Tourism Challenge Fund. The bid that would be submitted for the Discover England Fund (DEF) will be £36m over three years (comparatively, funding has been £45m over five years).
 11. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update on the bid for the DEF, with reference to the paper. The Board was informed that since the DEF programme was launched in 2015, it has provided over 700 products across 66 projects. This includes the TXGB Platform, which has enabled SMEs to access online international distribution, and the Taking England to the World Training Scheme. The impact of the pandemic has adversely affected the development and delivery of some of the large scale projects. However, the additional funding towards marketing would help ensure the delivery of the full potential of these projects.
 12. Patricia Yates provided an update on the details of the Capital and Transformation bid for £11.2m, to cover the three-year CSR period. Furthermore, the reformed business events team would be better at delivering winning events to the UK. The total bid will be for £10m over three years. The aim would be to refocus the business events programme delivered by VisitBritain/VisitEngland. The increased resource would enable the organisation to actively engage the business events market, make pitches and secure events; international business would be actively targeted and attracted to choose the UK as a venue for international events.
 13. The Board had a discussion regarding potential disruption to the business on delivering the transformation programme. It was acknowledged that there would be some disruption, however it was noted that measures would be put in place to ensure minimal disruption. Also, the system and process upgrades would be things that the organisation would carry out anyways. Furthermore, the Board noted that it would be a challenge for the organisation to continue to deliver the required priorities using the current systems, some of which are already outdated. There would also be a huge amount of investment into people skills as part of the wider transformation piece.
 14. There was a suggestion from the Board that the sustainability piece could be brought out more and highlighted in the funding bid, which was noted. There was further discussion on how the BTA can illustrate return on investment (ROI) and metrics from sustainability, which could be used in future to demonstrate the impact of the government's investment.
 15. The Board had a discussion regarding the narrative and story of the organisation's long term journey and how this ties in to its current priorities and projects. It was noted that there was a separate piece of work being done on the narrative and vision. However, the recovery campaign following the impact of Covid-19 has taken priority in the interim. Furthermore, it was noted that while narrative is important, it is equally significant that the ROIs and metrics are clearly demonstrated, as these would be the primary areas scrutinised by Treasury.
 16. The Board discussed the current outlook for the recovery of domestic tourism and international tourism following the impact of Covid-19. It was noted that domestic tourism has bounced back quickly, while international inbound visits have been stalled. Tourism in bigger cities in the UK (such as London) has suffered the most, while coastal and rural areas has seen a positive recovery from domestic visits. During the earlier phases of recovery campaign, the BTA has prioritised the delivery of campaign activities for domestic tourism. However, it was noted that international tourism would still be a key priority for the organisation. Inbound visitors from the European market present a big opportunity for the recovery, as the long haul market recovers.

Agenda item 4: Any Other Business

17. The Board had no other business to report.

Agenda item 5: Date of Next Meeting

18. It was noted that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 15th September 2020 (10.30am).

Agenda item 6: Close

19. The meeting was closed at 11.30am.