

CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTES OF THE 44^{2ND} MEETING OF THE VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VEAB) HELD VIA TELECONFERENCE AT 10.30AM ON 10TH JUNE 2020

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
Peter Mills, Business Services Director
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications
David Martin, DCMS (attending on behalf of Stephen Darke)
Henry Bankes, General Counsel and Company Secretary
Humphrey Walwyn, Head of Research & Evaluation (agenda item 7.)
Lyndsey Turner-Swift, Head of England Planning and Delivery (agenda items 6. and 8.)
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (Minutes)

Apologies: Stephen Darke, Head of Tourism Affairs, DCMS

Agenda item 1: Chair's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the members and attendees of the VisitEngland Advisory Board to the meeting. The Board noted that this was the Chairman's first meeting and welcomed him.
2. The Chairman indicated that he recognised the Board would be focusing considerable attention on the priority VE workstreams during the present crises, although he would be consulting with Board colleagues on how best to address matters of strategic interest at future board meetings.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies

3. The Board noted apologies from Stephen Darke.

Agenda Item 3: Declarations of interest

4. The Board noted a declaration from the Chairman, who is a shareholder at Rapier Group. The declaration would be logged on the central Register of Interests.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Last Meeting

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2020 were approved.

Agenda item 5: Matters Arising / Action Tracker

6. There were no matters arising or actions due.

7. The Board had a query on a point in the minutes of regarding the delivery of that Year 4 Final Evaluation Report and whether this will still be on track for publishing in November 2020. The Board was informed that there may be some delays due to revised timetables, such as the three-month delay in DEF applications, due to the covid-19 situation. Therefore, the evaluation report may potentially be available a little later than planned.
8. The Board noted that the action relating to Business Events will be carried over to a future meeting, with the Head of Business Events invited to present to the Board.

Agenda Item 6: Political Update / Industry Engagement

9. Political Update

- 9.1. The Board noted the paper, which highlights the political updates and engagement carried out by the BTA to date. Patricia Yates provided a verbal update with reference to the paper.
- 9.2. The Board was informed that the BTA (the “organisation”) has been working closely with government and the industry in the development of policy aimed at helping the recovery of the tourism industry. The organisation has also been providing key advice and guidance on changes to regulation that would help the industry. Engagement has been continuous and very positive. One of the key focuses of the current messaging is to get domestic tourism up and running first.
- 9.3. Weekly TIER group (Tourism Industry Emergency Response) meetings have been hosted by the organisation. This forum brings together key representatives of tourism industry bodies and is attended by the Tourism Minister, DCMS and other government departments. There is also continued engagement with Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Roundtables.
- 9.4. There has been lots of media and press engagement. There has been plenty of press activity on the organisation's recommendation to government to introduce an extra bank holiday in October 2020 to boost the economy.
- 9.5. The Board had a discussion regarding the 14-day quarantine on inbound international travelers. The message from the industry on this is that it would have a huge negative impact on business.
- 9.6. The Board had a discussion regarding the Tourism Sector Deal and progress made. It was noted that this has been signed off and approved. The government is still keen on this piece of work to be taken forward. However, the current priority during the next few months will be recovery. Furthermore, the government spending review, which would usually take place earlier in the year, has been pushed back to the end of the calendar year.
- 9.7. The Board had a discussion regarding the potential easing of the 2-metre social distancing rule. It was noted government's position is leaning towards caution and will be in response to the covid-19 R number (rate of infection) when businesses start opening up. According to surveys, the British public also appear supportive of lockdown measures.

10. Industry Standard Consultation

- 10.1. The Board noted the paper, which outlined the background and aims of the Industry Standard. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update.
- 10.2. The Board was informed that the standard offered a model aimed to reflect official guidance from main bodies (such as the World Health Organisation and Public Health England) and give confidence to businesses regarding clear processes to follow, and also provide reassurance to visitors. The messaging also includes reassurance for local residents that tourism is not the enemy.
- 10.3. The desire from the industry is to make this UK-wide and to have it as one source of guidance. The approach would be to take this forward as an online digital platform that would offer accreditation; the aim is that upon successful receipt of accreditation, businesses would be provided with a toolkit and certification.

11. DMO Resilience Fund

- 11.1. The Board noted the paper, which outlined details of the resilience fund provided to Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). A budget totaling £1.3m had been repurposed from the DEF fund, in order to support DMOs. This provided DMOs with help to carry on operating with resources and capacity during the covid-19 lockdown. It was noted that the resilience fund was able to support 35% of DMOs.
- 11.2. The Board was informed that evaluation and analytics would be undertaken in due course to assess the impact the fund has had in supporting the industry in measureable terms.
- 11.3. The Board had a discussion regarding the criteria required to be eligible for the resilience fund. It was noted that one of the key requirements was that DMOs needed at least 50% of their income to come from commercial. Not all DMOs were able to meet this criteria, due to the differences in operating models.

12. English Tourism Week (ETW)

- 12.1. The Board noted the paper, which provided an update on this year's English Tourism Week, and this was taken as read.

Agenda item 7: Research

13. The Board noted the papers, which provided a report on consumer sentiment and regional attitudes towards taking both domestic and international breaks. Humphrey Walwyn provided a verbal update with reference to the papers.
14. It appeared that the younger audience (16-24 year olds) were more optimistic in terms of recovery happening sooner and this group had a greater appetite for risk. Older demographics have understandably a lower risk appetite. Sentiments show that only 22% anticipate actually going on their next UK break by this September. The most preferred mode of transport preferred by people appears to be using their own car to travel.
15. Preference for the type of accommodation appeared to be hotels/motels/inns as the top choice, with private homes coming in second, then caravans/camping. The level of cleanliness and hygiene of accommodations appears to be a key factor in the sentiment data.

Agenda item 8: Activity

16. The Board noted the paper, which outlined the key VisitEngland activities to date.

17. Recovery Campaign

- 17.1. Lyndsey Turner-Swift provided a verbal update to the Board with reference to the paper. There are four phases of recovery established: (1) Crisis, (2) Early Recovery, (3) Recovery – Demand Management, (4) Recovery – Build & Maintain Demand. Early July will see “Phase 3: Build and Demand” being rolled out, by which time most of the tourism industry would have been allowed to open back up. The messaging to the public would have a focus on promoting advice on travelling safely and signposting, using a warm, friendly and motivational message. The current working title of the campaign is “Know Before You Go”.
- 17.2. “Know Before You Go” is a clear and simple message that compels those intending to travel both to the UK, and within the UK, to check before setting off. The campaign would include the use of flexible stickers, sashes and notifications that will drive people to a central information hub or database.
- 17.3. There were also plans in the pipeline to develop a demand campaign for UK and Ireland residents, who are healthy and able to travel, encouraging domestic breaks for late in the summer and into autumn 2020; the campaign would also include Easter and summer 2021. Funding bids have already been put forward for the travel safely campaign, including a bid for the build demand recovery campaign.
- 17.4. There would be intercrossed working between the international and domestic recovery campaigns to ensure alignment in the messaging and guidance.
- 17.5. The Board noted diversity and inclusion has been made a key priority by the BTA and is a key consideration in both its internal and external messaging.

18. Discover England Fund (DEF) Reprofile

- 18.1. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update with reference to the paper. It was noted that there have been some changes to the DEF budget and priorities, as a result of the downturn from covid-19. Funding had been repurposed to provide support to Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) during the lockdown. There will also be potential changes to the DEF projects. The revised approach would be presented to DCMS this week.
- 18.2. DEF project teams have been impacted by the current climate, however, most were still in place to deliver the projects to completion. This is monitored on an ongoing basis through the DMO taskforce.
- 18.3. The Board noted from the paper the timeline for the review and approval of DEF project applications. It was noted that risk assessments have been undertaken on relevant projects as per Cabinet Office requirements.
- 18.4. The Board had a discussion regarding its concerns with the inherent risk of spreading the current budget too thinly across a spread of projects, as opposed to focusing on a fewer big projects with a bigger pot available.

Agenda item 9: VisitEngland Funding Update and Future Landscape Delivery

19. The Board received a verbal update from Patricia Yates. It was noted that VisitBritain/VisitEngland receives its core funding from DCMS, and it also gets its funding from DEF and the GREAT campaign. All government funding has to be signed off centrally and in the current climate, most funding has been frozen, with the exception of activities relating to the covid-19 pandemic.
20. Currently, the organisation's budget for activities has been signed off until October. A bid has been put forward to go towards the reassurance campaign. However, Treasury has also asked the BTA for a more ambitious bid to be put forward. The Board was informed that this is all currently a live and changeable situation, with DCMS is fully aware of the circumstances.

Agenda item 10: Governance and Compliance

21. The Board received a verbal update from Henry Bankes on the area of governance and compliance across the organisation.
22. The Board was informed that the Annual Report and Accounts 2018/19 have been published. The accounts have been qualified by the external auditors, the National Audit Office (NAO). The qualification relates to internal processes not being followed completely, particularly on following the appropriate processes to receiving approval from DCMS on certain spending for activities. Investigations had been undertaken and the Board was reassured that there was no malice or fraudulent intentions behind the non-compliance with processes.
23. It was noted that in terms of its accountability, the VisitEngland Advisory Board (VEAB) has an advisory capacity. The Chairman noted that although the VEAB's role is advisory and functions to support the BTA Board, members should not hesitate to flag any concerns they may come across. Furthermore, attention was drawn to some VEAB members holding seats on the Audit & Risk Committee.

Agenda item 11: Any Other Business

24. Outstanding Contribution to Tourism Award

- 24.1. The Board noted the paper, which outlined the proposals for this year's and future awards. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update and highlighted that the paper had been produced before the covid-19 pandemic, therefore circumstances have since changed.
- 24.2. Proposals and ideas on nominees/candidates were invited from the Board. Among the ideas put forward were: to seek nominations from BAME organisations that meet the criteria, also consider hotels/accommodations that have stepped up during the pandemic to house key workers.

24.3. The Board was informed that the awards ceremony will be held virtually this year and it was in the gift of the Board to make the award and select the successful nominee.

The Board had AGREED that the review and selection of the successful candidate/nominee would be undertaken via email. The options would be provided as a paper by the VisitEngland team.

Agenda item 12: Date of Next Meeting

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

26. The Chairman noted that the endeavour would be to hold the next meeting in person if this is permissible and in line with government and scientific advice.

Agenda item 13: Close

27. The meeting was closed at 1.00pm.