

CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY (BTA) BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 10TH AUGUST 2021 AT 1:30PM AT THE BTA OFFICES, 3 GROSVENOR GARDENS, VICTORIA, LONDON SW1W 0BD

Present:

Dame Judith Macgregor DCMG LVO	Interim BTA Chairman
Katy Best	Northern Ireland Tourist Board (observer)
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
Duncan Parish	Deputy Director of Tourism and Cultural Diplomacy, DCMS (observer)
Karin Sheppard	Board Member
Mark Taylor	London and Partners (observer)
Rt Hon Viscount Thurso	Board Member / VisitScotland Chairman (ex-officio)

In Attendance:

Sally Balcombe	Chief Executive / Accounting Officer
Gavin Landry	Director America
Clare Mullin	Marketing Director
Robin Johnson	Europe Director
Peter Mills	Business Services & Finance Director
Andrew Stokes	England Director
Patricia Yates	Director of Strategy & Communications
Anna Adrien	Executive Assistant to Deputy Chief Executive and England Director (minutes)

Apologies:

Nick de Bois	Board Member / Chairman of the VisitEngland Advisory Board
Debra Lang	Director of People and Transformation
Henry Bankes	General Counsel and Company Secretary
Dale Rustige	Governance Executive

Agenda Item 1. Chairman's Update and Introductions

1. The Chair welcomed members and thanked them for attending. The purpose of the meeting was to acknowledge the challenges that the organisation is currently going through – post-Brexit, post-Covid, the ongoing CSR and the Tourism Recovery Plan. It was noted that a key area of focus will be looking at the strategy for the next six months and look at the broader areas of sustainability, productivity and innovation.
2. As Interim Chair, Dame Judith will look to ensure that the benefits of what the organisation can offer are distributed through all parts of the UK and to solidify and maintain strong achievements in the areas of compliance and the transformation agenda.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies

3. Apologies have been noted above.

Agenda Item 3: Declarations of Interest/Conflicts

4. The Board noted a declaration of interest from Carol Hui, who will be appointed as the new Board Trustee for Christian Aid (from November 2021). The declaration will be added to the Register of Interests.

Agenda Item 4: Matters Arising / Action Tracker

5. There were no matters arising or actions due.

Agenda Item 5: CSR Update

6. The Board received a verbal update from Patricia Yates on the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).
7. The BTA will be putting forward business cases for an additional review of the transformation programme and the data hub. There are also the asks on equalities and the workforce strategy commission. Work would also be done to highlight the accommodation narrative as part of the wider government plans to move ALBs out of London; the BTA has been asked for its strategy on accommodation and to present a case for this.
8. The DCMS will be submitting the bids to Treasury, including the BTA's, in September 2021 and announcements are expected by October 2021. The intention is that the BTA will get a flat core Grant in Aid (GIA) for both VisitBritain/VisitEngland. The GREAT budget goes through a different route via the Cabinet Office directly.
9. The data hub is a key area of interest for the Government. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) is building a government data hub and the BTA has been in discussions with them and DCMS on the partnership model for the development of the data hub.
10. It was noted that there were inherent risks in the flat VB core funding model, which would cause issues due to inflation over the next few years. DCMS have traditionally put £6.62m into the GREAT pot and that is not being done this year. This would have an impact on business events, domestic marketing and the proposed transformation programme. It was noted that the past-immediate Chair had written to Michael Gove on how this impacted on the BTA's statutory remit and fulfilment of its duty. The Board noted that DCMS is in agreement with this and will be putting in a strong case for the BTA in this CSR.
11. The Board expressed strong concerns and had a discussion regarding what the contingency plans are if the BTA does not receive the £6.62m funding. It was noted that the BTA Executive are starting to scenario plan. The structure of the organisation would need to be reviewed, including areas where money can be saved. Business events and marketing activity will also be heavily hit.
12. The Board also discussed the potential trade-offs if the £6.62m funding was not awarded. DCMS had noted that the narrative and business case will be clearly drawn out for the Cabinet Office and Treasury. DCMS will also be looking at possible funding avenues and maximizing the potential for getting money into these priorities in a creative way.

Agenda Item 6: Tourism Recovery Plan

13. The Board received a verbal update from Duncan Parish. The Tourism Recovery Plan had been published in June 2021. There has been plenty of activity within DCMS and across Government on linking the priorities within the Recovery Plan with the asks and business cases being put forward for the upcoming CSR. There have also been close discussions with Ministers.
14. The current programmes that the BTA have been supporting include the Britrail Pass and Camelot Scheme voucher scheme for increasing business to domestic attractions.
15. There has been plenty of work on the return of international travel and the Covid vaccination status agreements between the UK with both the EU and US will be a good pilot to explore how travel can open across other markets. Further work is required on the Discover Britain Fund, which is included within the Recovery Plan. The work on sustainability and accessibility will be pushed back slightly, as initial foundations are required on recovery first.
16. Robin Johnson provided a verbal update on the National Lottery voucher scheme. The BTA will be delivering £10m of consumer promotion of the National Lottery to support the domestic tourism industry. There will be £8m of vouchers made available to National Lottery players to be redeemable to attractions across the UK. This will be supported by a

marketing campaign of nearly £2m. The scheme will be launching on 9th October 2021 with a focus on families and pre-nesters.

17. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update on the BritRail Pass project. The BTA has been working with the Rail Delivery Group and DFT on the development of the pass. The product launch may need to be pushed back from the end of this year, to either quarter four of FY 2021/22 or the beginning of quarter one of FY 2022/23. A piece of research may still be required before a full scale product is launched and the Rail Delivery Group are aware that the less research is done on product modelling, there would be a higher risk of having a product lacking clear definition.
18. The Board noted that the Minister had been insistent on something being launched on quarter 3 of this FY. There are concerns within the BTA with the lack of proper research. The Rail Delivery Group have also said that if they have to deliver something in this financial year, it would have to be a rollout of the International BritRail Pass with very little change because they will not have the time to push through any changes.

Agenda Item 7: Framework Agreement

19. The Board noted the BTA Framework Agreement for 2021/22 and took this as read.
20. The agreement had been signed by the Minister. However, it had been awaiting the signature of The Rt Hon Lord McLoughlin, the previous Chair, prior to his departure from the BTA. He was unable to sign this, therefore it was noted the Dame Judith had signed the Agreement in her capacity as the new Interim BTA Chair. The Board were invited for comments on the Agreement.
21. The Board noted a comment from Lord Thurso that the framework agreement bears no mention of the devolution settlement – Section 88 of the Scotland Act and the consequent nomination as a cross-border authority. His recommendation was that this must be included in the Agreement to reflect the requirement of the legislation on the BTA as a cross-border authority in relation to consultation and delivery. Ian Edwards mirrored the same sentiments on behalf of Wales. Duncan Parish noted that there is scope for the Ministers of all devolved authorities to raise concerns in meetings convened with the Tourism Minister. This would be the appropriate channel for the concerns raised.
22. The Chair noted the concerns raised and asked that these should be considered in the preparations for the next Framework Agreement, after the upcoming Spending Review was concluded.

Agenda Item 8: Any Other Business

23. The Board noted a verbal update from Sally Balcombe regarding an amendment to the estates strategy from September 2021. The BTA has taken up 20 desks on a firm basis at the offices of Historic England based in Cannon Street.
24. The new Director of Finance has been appointed, Serena Jacobs, who is set to join the BTA on 8th November 2021. Serena is known to DCMS through her work with other ALBs and brings with her a good track record. She will be replacing Peter Mills, whose secondment ends at the end of September 2021.

Agenda Item 9: Date of Next Meeting

25. The Board noted the next meeting will be on Tuesday 28th September 2021 (10.00am).

Agenda Item 10: Close

26. The meeting was closed at 3.00pm