

MINUTES OF THE 444TH MEETING OF THE BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY
HELD AT 11:30 ON TUESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT
VISITBRITAIN, 151 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD, LONDON SW1W 9SZ

Present: Stephen Ridgway, CBE, Chairman
Katy Best, Observer
Ian Edwards, Board Member (via teleconference)
John Lindquist, Board Member (via teleconference)
Dame Judith Macgregor, Board Member
Ian McCaig, Board Member
Giles Smith, DCMS, Observer
Lord John Thurso, Board Member
Denis Wormwell, Board Member / VEAB Chairman

In Attendance: Sally Balcombe, CEO
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Robin Johnson, Europe Director (for agenda item 9)
Lola Moses, General Counsel and Company Secretary
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (minutes)

Apologies: Mark Taylor, Observer

Agenda item 1. Chairman's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting.
2. The Chairman updated the Board on the following matters:
 - (i) The full members of the BTA Board held a private session from 10:00-11:30, with the full formal Board meeting convening afterwards.
 - (ii) Over 70 applications had been received for posts on both the BTA Board and VisitEngland Advisory Board. The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) held shortlisting sessions and interviews were due to take place in the beginning of October 2019.
 - (iii) The CEO had a meeting with Sarah Healey, Permanent Secretary for the DCMS.
 - (iv) The organisation would be hosting the Tourism Sector Deal Conference on 18th September 2019 in Birmingham. Between 150-200 key industry representatives were expected for the event.
 - (v) The Board was informed that John Lindquist's term of office had been formally extended to 29th November 2019 to ensure that the Board continued to be quorate and that the Audit Committee had a Chair in place.

Agenda item 2: Apologies

3. Apologies have been received from Mark Taylor.

Agenda item 3: Declarations of interest/Conflicts

4. A new declaration from Ian McCaig was noted. He was appointed the Chairman of Festicket, a music festival ticketing business.

Agenda item 4: Minutes of the Previous Meeting

5. The minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2019 were approved.

Agenda item 5: Matters Arising

6. There were no new matters arising from the minutes.

Agenda item 6. Strategy, Performance and Outlook

7. Review of the BTA Board Dashboard

The Board noted the BTA Board Dashboard paper. Sally Balcombe presented the paper and highlighted the following points:

- (i) All business events activities were on track, with an increase in focused activity in the North American market. Additional investment had been made into resources for the business events team.
- (ii) The organisation's financial system (CODA) would be undergoing a major upgrade, with a planned roll-out later in the calendar year.
- (iii) It was noted that there may be a change in the return on investment (ROI) figures for the GREAT campaign. This follows on from a change to the domestic campaign methodology.

ACTION: It was agreed that Ms Balcombe would share the evaluation report on ROIs and performance of the GREAT campaign with the Board.

- (iv) The organisation's lease for its current accommodation at 151 Buckingham Palace Road would be ending in April 2021. It was noted that part of the government's estate strategy was to move civil service posts out of London. Therefore, these plans may have an impact on the organisation in terms of its future accommodation. The Board was informed that this may be a significant risk to the organisation in terms of the impact on its current workforce.

Agenda item 7: CEO Report

8. It was noted that most of the updates had been covered under agenda item 6 in the minutes.

Agenda item 8: State of the Market Snapshot

9. The Board noted the State of the Market Snapshot paper, which was taken as read.

Agenda item 9: Political/Tourism Affairs

10. Brexit / No-Deal Brexit

The Board noted the paper, which was presented by Robin Johnson who highlighted the following points:

- (i) The organisation had undertaken scenario and contingency planning, particularly for the impact of a no-deal Brexit outcome. TIER meetings were held fortnightly and the BTA has been included in X-Whitehall meetings.
- (ii) Disruption would be one of the biggest risks for the UK as a destination, particularly in a crisis scenario and government support would be essential.
- (iii) Oxford Economics had undertaken a detailed analysis in November 2018 on the impact of a no-deal scenario. The results had shown a 1% decline in the overall forecast for inbound tourism by 2020 vs baseline. However, this included a 4% positive impact on inbound tourism from economic effects.
- (iv) A decline in the value of the pound sterling may potentially have a positive impact on inbound bookings and long haul travel.
- (v) Messaging campaigns were being delivered across the European markets with a focus on providing reassurance on the political situation. The VisitEngland team had also been working on delivering a video campaign.

Agenda item 10: Industrial Strategy Update

11. The Board noted the Tourism Sector Deal paper. It was noted that the launch of the Sector Deal was a big achievement. The BTA's role would be in the delivery of the national coordination, Tourism Zone, Tourism Data Hub, accessibility commitment, and marketing stage-posts. The Board thanked the Chairman for championing the project.
12. It was noted that the Tourism Sector Deal currently had no funding allocated to it under the spending review for 2020-2021.

Agenda item 11: Spending Review Update

13. The Board was informed that the spending round for 2020-2021 had just been announced. Funding had been approved for the Discover England Fund (DEF) totaling £5.45m. Of the 50 arm's length bodies (ALBs), only two had the funding approved and one of them was the DEF. It was noted that a multi-year spending review should follow in 2020.

Agenda item 12: Tourism Trends – Britain Inbound and England Domestic

14. The Board noted the Tourism Trends paper, which was taken as read.

Agenda item 13: England Matters – Report from VisitEngland Advisory Board

15. Denis Wormwell presented a verbal update to the Board on the last VEAB meeting on 12th September 2019. The following key points from the meeting were noted:
 - (i) An update was received on the England marketing activities. There has been positive progress with the microgapping campaign. A campaign aimed at the family audience was also due to be launched in early 2020.
 - (ii) The approval of the DEF funding at the recent spending review was discussed.
 - (iii) A comprehensive review was undertaken on the framework and effectiveness of England Tourism Week (ETW), which was led by Fiona Pollard. Positive recommendations came out of the review particularly with the governance structure and engagement approach for future ETW campaigns.
 - (iv) The proposal to extend the current contract for the Quality Assurance Schemes was discussed and noted.
 - (v) There has been positive progress with the Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB) programme. The plans for the new governance oversight structure for the TXGB programme was outlined.

Agenda item 14: Britain Matters – Marketing Strategy Update

16. The Board noted the Marketing Strategy Update paper. Clare Mullin presented the following key points:
 - (i) The marketing strategy model would be transitioning into a consumer and market focused model. The initial development of the strategy had been focused on understanding the audiences and how to target them.
 - (ii) All marketing had been done under the GREAT Britain campaign banner. Building brand value has been critical to the GREAT campaign and it ranks in the UK's top 50 brands. All marketing activity funded by GREAT must deliver an ROI of 25:1.
 - (iii) Key performance indicators for marketing has been measured monthly and guide decision making. There were also individual strategies for communications, processes and channels with mapping processes for each area.
 - (iv) Learning and development has been a priority for the marketing team, with a focus on upskilling to keep up with the current market.
 - (v) One of the next key areas of focus would be to provide further support to the industry in converting interest into direct bookings.

Corporate Matters

Agenda item 15: Pensions Update

17. Hazel Cunningham provided the Board with a verbal update regarding the organisation's pension scheme. Matters relating to the actuarial valuations for pensions has been in progress and was nearing completion. Consultation with staff should be underway by the end of the calendar year, with an implementation target of 1st April 2020 following DCMS approval.

Agenda item 16: Accounts/Audit Update

18. John Lindquist provided the Board with a verbal update. It was noted that the Audit Committee had last met on 12th September 2019. The following points were noted:
 - (i) Work was still progressing with the National Audit Office's (NAO) report on the BTA's 2018/19 Annual Report and Accounts. The timescales for completion were still under discussion.
 - (ii) The 2018/19 Financial Statement was effectively complete.
19. The Board discussed the matters relating to the contractual arrangement for the technical support for the Tourism Exchange VisitEngland Platform. Sally Balcombe, as Accounting Officer, would be having formal conversations with the NAO to clarify the matter for the 2018/19 Annual Accounts.

Agenda item 17: Compliance Update

20. The Board noted the revised Compliance Report paper. The original report was presented to the Audit Committee meeting on 12th September 2019. The Board was informed that following feedback from the Audit Committee, the report was updated and revised in readiness for review by the BTA Board.

Agenda item 18: Any other business

21. Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) Audit Report
The Board had noted that the Chairman would be engaging with DCMS on the matters relating to the recent GIAA audit report.

Agenda item 19: Date of Next Meeting

22. The dates of the next meetings were noted as follows:
 - (i) Joint BTA Board and VEAB Strategy Day on Tuesday 15th October 2019
 - (ii) BTA Board meeting on Tuesday 3rd December 2019 (10:00-14:30)

Agenda item 20: Close

23. There being no further matters, the Chairman closed the meeting at 14:30.