

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 424th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD HELD AT 2.00PM ON MONDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2016 AT VISITENGLAND, SANCTUARY BUILDINGS, GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT

Present: Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE (Chairman)
Sally Balcombe
Suzanne Bond
Lise-Anne Boissiere
Nigel Halkes
John Hoy
Sarah Stewart, OBE

Apologies: Denis Wormwell

In Attendance: Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Andrew Stokes, Interim England Director
Suneet Joseph, Secretary to the Board
Jenny McGee, Enterprise Director
Louise Searle, Head of People & Performance

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2016 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

2. The Chairman noted that a final version of the Funding Letter was still outstanding. Lise-Anne Boissiere agreed to circulate the latest version of the Funding Letter (with most recent changes and amendments highlighted) to the VE Advisory Board to enable the VE Advisory Board to respond to any outstanding items by the stipulated deadlines. Lise-Anne Boissiere advised that a final version of the Funding Letter was imminent and due to be signed by the Minister.
3. The Chairman noted that as the Funding Letter was addressed to the respective Chairman of BTA Board and VE Advisory Board, as soon as the

Letter is finalised, it must be immediately provided to the respective Chairmen of the Boards without any delay.

4. The Chairman clarified that there was a conference call and not a VE Board meeting that took place on 21st January 2016.
5. The Chairman requested confirmation of Simon Gidman's ongoing participation as regards the UK Business Visits and Events Board. Sally Balcombe advised that this responsibility may change in the future and handed over to Andrew Stokes, Interim England Director.
6. Nigel Halkes confirmed that he had met with Sally Balcombe and Hazel Cunningham to advise on Quality Inspection Scheme matters.
7. The Chairman requested an update on the date for the Cross Ministerial Group as regards the Prime Minister's 5 Point Plan. Lise-Anne Boissiere agreed to provide the delivery plan to the VE Advisory Board.
8. As regards the preparation of the England Action Plan, Sally Balcombe confirmed that there were ongoing discussions between Lyndsey Swift and Andrew Stokes to explore building out of an online tool as a source of information to users.
9. The Chairman noted the interim appointment of Andrew Stokes as England Director and requested an update on plans to recruit a permanent appointment. Sally Balcombe advised that, as the analysis of the requirements of the role is still underway, no decision had been made as yet on time frames to recruit for the permanent role of England Director. John Hoy and Nigel Halkes noted that the recruitment process to find a permanent candidate could take as long as 6 months so consideration had to be given to this. Sally Balcombe advised that the intention was that Andrew Stokes would remain in his position as Interim England Director to coincide with the 1 year anniversary of the Prime Minister's 5 Point Plan, namely July 2016. Sally Balcombe agreed to provide an update to the VE Advisory Board on progress to recruit a permanent candidate at the next VE Advisory Board meeting to be held in April.
10. Sarah Stewart joined the meeting.
11. Sarah Stewart provided the VE Advisory Board with an overview of the Parliamentary Reception for the Northern Tourism Growth Fund (NTGF) that took place on 9th February 2016. Sarah Stewart noted that it was a successful event in terms of speeches and the panel session. The Chairman noted that

such events were an important tool to facilitate greater transparency and understanding to MPs.

12. Hazel Cunningham advised that more information of NTGF projects was available via existing reports which covered such matters.
13. Sally Balcombe provided an update to the VE Advisory Board on the status of committed funds in the remainder of FY 2015/16 which needed to be spent prior to 31st March 2016.
14. The VE Advisory Board noted the importance of taking away the learnings from working with DMOs for the ongoing benefit of the Discover England Fund. The Board noted that DMOs had demonstrated a willingness to work together more collaboratively and that an equally collaborative way of working should be taken for the Discover England Fund.
15. The VE Advisory Board noted the importance of having robust project management of the individual projects which form part of the Discover England Fund. Sally Balcombe advised that within the new Programme Management Office, there would be 2 dedicated project managers assigned to the Discover England Fund.
16. The VE Advisory Board discussed the stages behind making a bid and the potential outcomes for unsuccessful bids. Lise-Anne Boissiere confirmed that adopting a collaborative way of working was a key expectation in the bids process. The VE Advisory Board noted that it would be helpful to have an Update for its April meeting on the Pilot projects.
17. The Board discussed the high volume of work that needed to be undertaken between now and June to be ready for a mid July, launch event for the Discover England Fund.

Declarations of Interest

18. Sarah Stewart declared an interest in any discussions relating to the Northern Tourism Growth Fund, the Newcastle-Scandinavia Fund and the Hadrian's Wall Fund as her organisation would benefit from these.
19. Sarah Stewart and John Hoy declared an interest in any discussions relating to the new Discover England Fund.

20. Sarah Stewart declared an interest in any discussion relating to the Regional Growth Fund project from which her organisation had benefited.
21. John Hoy declared a potential interest in the UK Challenge Fund.
22. Sally Balcombe declared an interest in any discussion relating to VisitEngland's activity with Historic England of which she was a Commissioner.
23. Nigel Halkes declared that he had joined the Board of Management Consulting Group Plc.

Appointment of Secretary

24. The Board resolved to appoint Suneet Joseph as Secretary to the Board to succeed Ros Carey with effect from 6th February 2016.

Summary of New Governance Framework for VE Advisory Board

25. The Chairman and Suzanne Bond sought clarification around the protocol for managing communications. Sally Balcombe confirmed that the intention behind the communications protocol referenced in the Roles & Responsibilities document and the Operational Guidance document was to apply to formal communications. Sally Balcombe noted that retaining a well managed process around approval of formal communications was important given the ongoing organisational changes where individual roles and/or reporting lines may be changing and therefore it was critical to respect reporting lines. Sally Balcombe further noted that there should be no briefings or requests for work outside of the agreed process set out in the governance documents.
26. The VE Advisory Board requested that as soon as organisational changes were communicated and published internally within the organisation, the VE Advisory Board should be provided with an update in terms of new organisational structure and any vacancies that exist. Hazel Cunningham confirmed that as the organisation's intranet is updated with information, the VE Advisory Board would be notified at the same time in the interests of transparency. John Hoy noted that this level of transparency would be vital to enable the VE Advisory Board to respond to queries it may receive.
27. Nigel Halkes, Suzanne Bond and John Hoy noted that the revised timing of VE Advisory Board meetings for 2016 (as referenced in the governance documents issued by DCMS) meant that there was a significant gap between

the June and November VE Advisory Board meetings. The VE Advisory Board were mindful of public perceptions around the timings of VE Advisory Board meetings and the Board's duty to fully discharge its advisory functions and duties.

28. Sally Balcombe advised the VE Advisory Board that the pattern of VE Advisory Board meetings had already been discussed at length between the BTA Chairman, VisitEngland Chairman and herself. Adding further VE Advisory Board meetings to the current timetable would require further discussion. Sally Balcombe agreed to have a follow up discussion with the BTA Chair on this issue.
29. Sally Balcombe distributed 2 documents to the Board, a High Level Marketing Plan for 2016/17 and another high level document, "VisitBritain- Delivery for England". The VE Advisory Board discussed the documents and noted the ongoing need for transparency on the contents of both documents as they are updated. In relation to Business Visits and Events, Sally Balcombe agreed to provide the VE Advisory Boards with quarterly updates.
30. The VE Advisory Board requested an update on the timeframes around publication of the England Action Plan. Lise-Anne Boissiere provided an overview of the timeframes and agreed to check timelines for publication of the England Action Plan. It was agreed that as soon as the England Action Plan was published a copy would be sent to the VE Advisory Board.
31. Andrew Stokes, Interim England Director joined the meeting.

England Action Plan – Update

32. Andrew Stokes presented the England Action Plan (EAP) and confirmed that it was necessarily high level at this stage but that further levels of detail would be added. At this point, the focus was to identify the key workstreams. John Hoy recommended that reference to the Prime Minister's 5 Point Plan should be added to the introduction to the EAP for additional background and context. Andrew Stokes confirmed that feedback received from the VE Advisory Board would be reviewed and considered when preparing future iterations of the EAP. Sally Balcombe confirmed that this high level version of the EAP was prepared with the intended audience in mind (Ministerial) to provide the level of overview required for obtaining necessary approvals at given points in time. Lise-Anne Boissiere confirmed that further levels of detail (eg around inserting specific financial amounts and metrics) would need to be added prior to final sign off at Ministerial level.

33. Lise-Anne Boissiere agreed to provide a DCMS 5 Point Delivery Plan dashboard to VE Advisory Board. Sarah Stewart requested Lise-Anne to also provide the sources of the information used by DCMS to compile the DCMS dashboards.
34. The VE Advisory Board recommended that the EAP be renamed “VisitEngland Action Plan” as its purpose was to be a business plan specific to VisitEngland. It was further noted that as regards the SME engagement section in the EAP, it was important that the Plan highlighted SME engagement and addressed domestic marketing matters.
35. The VE Advisory Board noted that in the “Delivering sustainable, long term impact” section of the EAP, satisfaction levels of partner should only be measured as against specific VisitEngland deliverables and that further consideration must be given to what the deliverables should be. Sally Balcombe confirmed that from a new organisational set up perspective, there would be dedicated individuals within teams who would have specific responsibilities for England activity. The VE Advisory Board further discussed the bid process and the outcomes for unsuccessful bids and the importance to take away key learnings from the bid process to promulgate best practice standards.
36. The VE Advisory Board noted the importance of giving further consideration to the key areas of SME engagement, use of research data and content creation strategy going forward. Sally Balcombe confirmed that in relation to use of research data, the intention was for data to be forward looking rather than use of historic data.

a. Outline Plan for Discover England Fund

37. The VE Advisory Board discussed the Outline Plan for the Discover England Fund. There was a discussion on the meaning of “bookable” tourism products and the VE Advisory Board agreed that the term “bookable” should be qualified so as to demonstrate VE/VB commitment to industry and compliance with applicable competition law. There was also a discussion on Year 1 Activity – “Quick Wins and Pilots”. Sally Balcombe noted that a quick win could be a result that could enable future bids. Lise-Anne Boissiere confirmed that there would need to be some specific criteria around bidding process.

38. The Chairman noted that this issue of “Quick Wins & Pilots” needed to be a key discussion topic at the next VE Advisory Board meeting. Sally Balcombe confirmed that a version of the Discover England Fund paper would be sent to Ministers.

b. Outline Plan for review of Quality Schemes

39. Sally Balcombe updated the VE Advisory Board that she had asked Hazel Cunningham to lead the review of the Quality Schemes along with Andrew Stokes with the support of Nigel Halkes to produce a set of recommendations.
40. Hazel Cunningham advised the VE Advisory Board that she had already had some useful strategic discussions with Nigel Halkes to consider the broader value of the schemes, including the accommodation scheme and assess their overall value. It was noted that the current accommodation scheme had been extended to expire 31st March 2017.
41. The Chairman noted the importance of having the review of the schemes completed in time for the VE Advisory Board meeting to be held in June. In addition, in the interim period between now and June, a robust Communications Plan relating to the schemes should be put in place.

c. Update on Business Visits & Events (BVE)

42. Sally Balcombe advised the VE Advisory Board that the written paper due to be presented to the Board on this matter was still in draft form and further work was needed before it would be ready to be submitted to the Board for review. Sally Balcombe did note that this was a complex area that needed careful review especially due to BVE being a whole new area for VisitBritain. A careful assessment would need to be made as to how much monies could be set aside for BE activity from available funding. Sally Balcombe noted that a BVE Governance Board had been set up. Lise-Anne Boissiere confirmed that there was no separate funding for this BVE Governance Board.
43. The VE Advisory Board then summarised the conclusions of the discussions on the draft England Action Plan, Discover England Fund and the Update on Business Visits & Events. The VE Advisory Board suggested that further levels of detail would be incorporated into a future draft of the England Action Plan, prior to circulation to the BTA Board. Sally Balcombe advised that nonetheless, the England Action Plan would still remain high level in its nature. Sally

Balcombe agreed to circulate to the VE Advisory Board the timelines around this activity.

44. Louise Searle joined the meeting

Organisational Change: Progress Report

45. Louise Searle provided the VE Advisory Board with a high level overview of the status of the organisational change process. Louise Searle confirmed that the consultation period had ended and that staff would be receiving written confirmation of the outcome of the consultation exercise (including confirmation of being at risk of redundancy/ transfer to a different team or division/ change in reporting lines). Louise Searle would keep the Chairman informed of those VistEngland persons leaving the organisation.
46. Louise Searle advised that line managers would now need to agree end dates regarding staff who would be leaving the organisation and this process would take into account contractual notice periods and need for transition periods where appropriate. Louise Searle noted there were a small number of staff who had expressed a desire to leave earlier than provided for under their contractual notice period.
47. Louise Searle advised that vacancies both in London and internationally would be advertised internally on the intranet from 23rd February for a week and that this process may enable staff whose role is confirmed as being at risk to be redeployed elsewhere in the new organisational set up and hence minimise redundancy costs for the organisation.
48. Louise Searle advised that updated organisational structure charts would be prepared and published on the intranet. The People & Performance team would be undertaking analysis of the funding costs of the new organisational set up to identify VisitBritain and VisitEngland cost allocations (and also cost allocations at a GREAT level). Work was ongoing to finalise redundancy and associated exit costs so that data was available for DCMS.
49. Louise Searle noted the continued challenge to integrate the two teams to develop a united mindset, a shared set of values and new ways of more collaborative and integrated working within the new organisational set up. Workshops are planned to support this integration process.

50. Louise Searle left the meeting.

Update on status of Annual Report for VisitEngland

51. Hazel Cunningham provided the VE Advisory Board with an overview of the process and key milestones around preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts. A first working draft would be taken to the Audit Committee in early March for review with final Audit Committee approval taking place in early June. Hazel Cunningham noted that the support of the VE Advisory Board would be required to support this ongoing activity in accordance with the statutory timeframes.
52. Hazel Cunningham agreed to circulate to the VE Advisory Board the timeline for completing the preparation of the Annual Report & Accounts and to circulate a draft to enable the Board to provide comments and feedback. The Chairman noted that it was important to ensure the right tone in the report from the VE Advisory Board.
53. Jenny McGee joined the meeting.

VE Awards and English Tourism Week

54. Jenny McGee provided an overview of the VE Awards to the VE Advisory Board. The Chairman thanked John Hoy for judging the Awards. Jenny McGee noted that for the VE Awards for Excellence, entries were up 21%.
55. The VE Advisory Board resolved to give the Outstanding Contribution to Tourism Award to Countryfile.
56. In relation to the planning of 2016/17 VE Awards, there was a discussion about the need to make a decision about next year's Awards. Sally Balcombe advised the VE Advisory Board that no decision had yet been made as to whether to run the event or if run, the available options for staging the event. There followed a discussion about the options for staging Awards ceremonies in the most engaging way for its audience.

57. Jenny McGee left the meeting.

Update on 2016 Meeting Dates for VE Advisory Board

58. The Chairman referred to the VE Advisory Board's earlier discussion on frequency and timing of VE Advisory Board dates and in particular scheduling a VE Advisory Board meeting in September. Sally Balcombe noted that inclusion of an extra VE Advisory Board meeting in September is not something that had been previously discussed or agreed at the last meeting of the BTA and VE Advisory Board Chairman and herself. Sally Balcombe agreed to have a follow up discussion with the BTA Chairman on this matter.

Any Other Business

59. The Chairman noted that it was important to ensure that the VE Advisory Board remained informed of key issues in between VE Advisory Board meetings. The VE Advisory Board acknowledges that updates to the VE Advisory Board could take the form of short email briefings. Lise-Anne Boissiere agreed to ensure that the VE Advisory Board received the DCMS Stakeholder Newsletter.

Date of Next Meeting

Monday, 11th April – Blenheim Palace. 1-4pm meeting