

**MINUTES OF THE 416th MEETING OF VISITBRITAIN
HELD AT 9.00AM ON TUESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2014 AT
VISITBRITAIN, 20 GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT**

- Present:** Christopher Rodrigues, CBE
Dr. Michael Cantlay, OBE
Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE
Dan Clayton Jones, OBE
John Lindquist
Ian McCaig
Steve Ridgway
- Apologies:** Katy Best
Kevin Murphy
- In Attendance:** Sally Balcombe, Chief Executive
Keith Beecham, Director, Overseas Network
Joss Croft, Director of Marketing
Philip Mabe, Business Services Director
Patricia Yates, Director, Strategy and Communications
Ros Carey, Secretary to the Board
David Edwards for Exploring GB Research and IPS Expenditure
Estimates items
Russell Knight, International Travel Trade Manager for Demonstration
of Travel Trade Website

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2014 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

2. There were no matters arising.

Declarations of Interest

3. There were no interests to declare in connection with any of the items on the agenda.

Review of Market Conditions

5. Sally Balcombe presented her Market Snapshot noting that Brand USA would be significantly increasing its activities in 2015: inter-alia it would be focussing on fourteen markets, four more than currently, and increasing its international sales representation

from twenty to twenty-five markets as well doubling the number of sales missions, road shows and other events.

Chief Executive's Report

8. Sally Balcombe introduced her report, highlighting in particular:
 - That the Landscape Photographer of the Year winners had been announced. The awards had been held in association with VisitBritain and the Countryside is GREAT campaign and the winning images were being exhibited at London Waterloo Station;
 - That places for suppliers at ExploreGB, which was due to take place in February 2015, were now sold out. The Two hundred and fifty two suppliers who had been signed up represented a wide product mix and all parts of Britain 40% were new to the event;
 - That the Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, had visited India in October and Japan in November. VisitBritain had participated fully in both programmes and she had accompanied the Secretary of State in Tokyo;
 - That the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee report into tourism had been published earlier in the month. VisitBritain had been praised by the Chair of the Committee for the way it had engaged in this process and three of the twenty-eight recommendations mentioned VisitBritain;
 - The Triennial Review was nearing conclusion. The final report had been discussed with DCMS Ministers and the Cabinet Office-led 'Challenge Team' and was expected to be cleared by Cabinet Office Ministers before Christmas and to be published in the New Year; and
 - HMRC had now confirmed that a new VAT methodology must be put in place by 1 April 2015 but would not be back-dated to September 2014 as previously proposed. The Executive was now developing a new recovery method for HMRC's consideration and the Board and the Audit Committee would be kept fully informed.

China Campaign

9. Joss Croft gave a short presentation to brief the Board on the Great Names for GREAT Britain China campaign which had been created especially for the Chinese market and showed the campaign video.
10. The campaign had been launched in Beijing at the British Ambassador's residence on 3 December and invited the people of China to extend their love of naming by challenging them to come up with memorable Chinese names for one-hundred and one places, events and items of food and drink scattered across Britain.

11. The aim was to build the aspiration to travel to Britain amongst VisitBritain's target audience in China and to increase the absolute number of Chinese visitors coming to the UK and the additional economic contribution which they made.

Paddington Campaign

12. Joss Croft then gave a short presentation on the Paddington campaign which had resulted from a partnership with the film's producers and distributors. The global campaign aimed to change perceptions of Britain and to increase visitor numbers and generate an additional £1.7 million in incremental spend.
13. The "GREAT" branding had been featured in the film and the campaign had been built around PR, digital and social media activity, with additional Facebook and Yahoo activity in France, Germany and the USA.

Exploring Great Britain Research

14. David Edwards joined the meeting and gave a detailed and informative presentation which began by briefing the Board on the most popular destinations among inbound visitors, both in overall terms and by purpose; i.e holiday, business, VFR and study / other.
15. John Lindquist noted that Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibition business (MICE) only represented around 20% of business visits, which was relatively low, and that there was scope for Government intervention.
16. David Edwards then presented the findings from two recent research studies, one in France, Germany, Norway and the USA, and the other in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, India and Brazil, which had aimed to understand the barriers which deterred visitors from staying longer and exploring more of Britain and to identify opportunities to address the issues raised, whether real or perceived.
17. Regardless of whether or not participants in the studies had visited London previously, London remained a key motivator in taking the decision to visit. Although exploring other parts of Britain appealed to the majority, traditional destinations were losing market share and there was often a low level of knowledge about what Britain had to offer. Additionally, the perception that there was no direct access to other parts of Britain presented an opportunity to provide information about journey times and public transport options, particular as the need to drive 'on the wrong side of the road' represented the highest barrier to visit among visitors from mature markets.
18. The Board debated the barriers to increasing regional spread, particularly the transport issues.

International Passenger Survey Expenditure Estimates

19. David Edwards presented his paper which briefed the Board on the findings of a study designed to test the reliability of the IPS expenditure estimates.
20. In response to long standing complaints by suppliers that the IPS results did not correspond to their own experience of the market, VisitBritain had commissioned ONS to undertake a bespoke study among departing visitors in China and The Gulf States to probe their expenditure in more detail than it was feasible to do in the main survey.
21. Although the study had found no evidence of systematic under or over-reporting of expenditure data, VisitBritain would work with ONS on the potential development of show cards to enhance the prospects that those being interviewed consider 'all' expenditure in Britain. Consideration would also be given to how the robustness of expenditure data from a wider range of markets could be tested.
22. David Edwards also advised the Board that, generally, Chinese visitors were reluctant to respond fully to the IPS survey questions and that VisitBritain was working with ONS to address this.
23. The Board debated the issues raised and David Edwards responded to questions before leaving the meeting.

Visas: Competitive Data

24. The Board noted the papers on the UK's international competitiveness and a brief on outbound tourism from China and Britain's performance vis-à-vis its competitors.
25. Ian McCaig and Russell Knight joined the meeting.

Demonstration of Travel Trade Website

26. Sally Balcombe introduced this item noting that she had been impressed with the site's functionality and potential when it had been demonstrated to her.
27. Russell Knight then demonstrated the website which had been designed at a relatively low cost as an interim solution pending the development of the new digital platform and had been designed to ensure that it could be migrated across to the new platform in 2015/16.
28. To date, the site had attracted 30,000 users from one hundred and forty seven countries. Unexpectedly, 30% of visitors to the site were UK based and had a genuine desire to engage with VisitBritain and to be listed on its platforms. The solution, tailored to resource constraints, had been to provide the UK trade with the ability to upload their own listing which was free of charge except for translations costs if they wished their details to be featured in other languages. It was now intended to make this

feature available to suppliers based overseas, an opportunity which VisitBritain would be the first NTO to offer.

29. The site also featured an itinerary creator which enabled the trade and DMOs to create bookable and suggested itineraries. Although still in development, this feature, together with the supplier listings, would eventually be featured on VisitBritain's consumer channels.

30. Sally Balcombe noted that she was particularly pleased that the site provided a platform for SMEs to engage with VisitBritain.

VisitBritain and VisitEngland Management Accounts

31. The Board noted VisitBritain and VisitEngland's Management Accounts to 31 October and 30 September respectively and the report on the movements on foreign exchange contracts reaching maturity in the year to 31 October.

VisitEngland Performance Report to 30 September 2014

32. The Board noted the VisitEngland Performance Report to 30 September 2014.

Tourism Trends

33. The Board noted David Edwards' report, which provided a briefing on inbound tourism surveys and market conditions.

Secretariat Items

34. The Board noted the programmes of meetings for 2015, the Tourism Events Diary and the Forward Agenda.

Any Other Business

35. In response to a question from Steve Ridgway, Lady Cobham suggested that VisitEngland give a presentation on its activity to harness the tourism potential of the Rugby World Cup at a future meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

36. To be held on Monday 10 February 2015.