

**MINUTES OF THE 413th MEETING OF VISITBRITAIN  
HELD AT 9.00AM ON TUESDAY 17 JUNE 2014 AT  
VISITBRITAIN, 20 GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT**

**Present:** Christopher Rodrigues, CBE  
Sally Balcombe  
Dr. Michael Cantlay  
Penelope, Viscountess Cobham  
Dan Clayton Jones, OBE  
Ian McCaig  
Sandra Rogers

**Apologies:** John Lindquist  
Steve Ridgway, CBE

**In Attendance:** Sandie Dawe, MBE Chief Executive  
Keith Beecham, Director, Overseas Network  
Joss Croft, Director, Marketing  
Philip Mabe, Director, Business Services  
Patricia Yates, Director, Strategy and Communications  
David Edwards, Head of Research and Forecasting for part  
Emily Moore, Manager, Nurture Markets Project for part  
Ros Carey, Secretary to the Board  
Lucy Jones, Assistant Secretary to the Board

1. The Chairman welcomed Sandra Rogers to her first meeting as an observer to the Board.
2. The Chairman advised the Board that this was Sandie Dawe's last Board meeting before stepping down as Chief Executive in July. The Board approved the appointment of Keith Beecham as interim Chief Executive pending the appointment of a new Chief Executive.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting**

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April were approved and signed.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes**

4. There were no matters arising.

**Declarations of Interest**

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

## **Review of Market Conditions**

6. Sandie Dawe introduced David Edwards's presentation on Inbound Tourism Results for 2013.
7. Lady Cobham joined the meeting.
8. David Edwards gave an informative presentation covering the leading global tourism destinations in 2013, Britain's share of international tourism and its historical trends in terms of length of stay and value, and Britain's origin markets. The presentation also covered where inbound visitors go in Britain, the regional spread of spend, what visitors do when in Britain and mode of travel. The presentation concluded with a section on International Passenger Survey (IPS) confidence intervals.
9. There was a discussion on the margin of error in the IPS and it was noted that as the margins of error remained fairly consistent in the survey, the trends highlighted by the survey were statistically reliable.
10. There was also a discussion on regional spread the willingness of visitors to travel to their destination from their port of entry and what levers needed to be pulled to accelerate regional dispersion. It was agreed that there should be a presentation on recent research on regional spread carried out by VisitBritain at a future Board meeting.
11. David Edwards left the meeting.

## **Chief Executive's Report**

12. Sandie Dawe introduced her report, highlighting in particular:
  - That VisitBritain was working with the central GREAT team, the 'Visits', DEFRA, the Association of National Parks, the National Trust, the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Beauty and Jaguar Land Rover on a countryside campaign. The campaign aimed to address regional spread and support economic development in more rural areas. Year one would focus on Germany, US, France and the Gulf Cooperation Council and in year two India and China would be added;
  - That the Minister for Sport and Tourism, Helen Grant had announced the establishment of a UK Tourism Council which would be an industry-led board composed of employers and small businesses from the tourism industry. The Council's focus would be on improving skills, boosting enterprise and increasing the quality and quantity of jobs available within the industry; and

- That the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was seeking to increase its charges to Government departments using its services overseas in order to fully recover its costs. Following negotiation with its partners including VisitBritain, the FCO had agreed to rollover the current agreements for 2015/16 but an increase in costs was still proposed for 2016/17.

### **Balanced Scorecard**

13. Philip Mabe introduced his paper which provided a briefing on progress against internal targets and those target set by Government for the 2013/14 financial year.

14. The Board noted the report.

### **VisitBritain's Nurture Markets Project**

15. Keith Beecham introduced the nurture market strategy which the Board had approved the development of in April 2013 and which sought to make strategic but low cost interventions in partnership with private and public sector partners to improve Britain's competitive position and nurture inbound tourism from non-core markets. Keith Beecham then introduced Nurture Markets Manager Emily Moore to the Board.

16. Emily Moore gave a comprehensive presentation on progress towards delivering the nurture markets strategy.

17. The Board held a lengthy discussion about the strategy and gave guidance for its future development. During a discussion on the proximity of some of the nurture markets to each other, Sandra Rogers explained how UKTI grouped its South East Asia markets and suggested it would be useful to meet separately with the Executive to address this.

18. Sandra Rogers also explained that UKTI had engaged marketing agencies to carry out work in several of VisitBritain's nurture markets and that there was potential for collaboration.

19. The Board counselled the Executive to test different levels of investment in the nurture markets to establish the critical mass needed to make a difference. The Chairman reinforced that the strategy was about testing a different way of engagement and which could prove to be a relevant approach to take in core market cities as well as in the nurture markets.

20. Mike Cantlay suggested that VisitScotland and VisitBritain work together on a campaign in one or two of the nurture markets and the Executive welcomed the suggestion.

21. The Chairman thanked Emily Moore for the presentation and for the quality of her paper.

22. Emily Moore left the meeting.

### **Digital Platform: Progress Report Presentation**

23. The Chairman explained that the Digital Platform development progress report had been provided in a paper which had been tabled.

24. Joss Croft introduced his paper which explained that in order to secure sufficient time to procure, build and test a new platform within an achievable timetable, existing contracts with current suppliers would be extended as had been agreed by the Board at its previous meeting.

25. Sally Balcombe, Chairman of the Digital Board sub-group which had been established at the request of the Board at its previous meeting, commented that the timeline for the project was still aggressive and that it would be inevitable that some changes to the timeline would occur. The Board noted that by the end of June a consumer platform strategy would be produced and a utilization strategy would follow.

26. It was agreed that the Board's 'Digital Deep Dive' session in October would consider what VisitBritain's competitors were doing digitally and what best practice was.

27. It was also noted that there had been a high level of engagement during the consultation with the National Tourist Boards, as well as key government stakeholders and commercial partners.

### **Triennial Review**

28. Patricia Yates introduced her paper which provided an update on the process and timeline for the triennial review.

29. Patricia Yates reported that DCMS had provisionally confirmed that the triennial review of VisitBritain and VisitEngland had been scheduled to start at the end of June or beginning of July, concluding by Christmas.

30. Patricia Yates advised the Board that triennial reviews had two aims: to provide a robust challenge of the continuing need for individual NDPBs – both their function and their form (Stage 1) and, where it was agreed that a body should remain as an NDPB, to review its governance and control arrangements and its capacity for delivering more effectively and efficiently (Stage 2). The review would also encompass the current structure of VisitBritain and VisitEngland and examine whether there should be one or two separate organisations to deliver their functions.

31. Before the review could commence, the terms of reference would need to be agreed with VisitBritain and VisitEngland and laid before Parliament.

32. Patricia Yates reported that she and Louise Stewart, who was leading the work for VisitEngland, would be meeting with DCMS on a fortnightly basis and that there would

be one review team, headed by Mark Fisher of the Department of Work and Pensions. A challenge team would also be established to challenge evidence, assumptions and recommendations which would work across both organisations and both VisitBritain and VisitEngland had made suggestions to DCMS as to its membership.

33. It was agreed that the triennial review would be discussed in detail at the next Board meeting.
34. At the end of the item, the Chairman gave a brief update on discussions with DCMS regarding a possible extension of the his term.

### **British Tourist Authority Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014**

35. Philip Mabe presented the Annual Report and Accounts which had been reviewed by the Audit Committee on 12 June 2014 and which, subject to a review of some final amendments by the Committee's Chairman, were recommended for the Accounting Officer's signature.
36. Philip Mabe also presented a paper which provided an update to the Board on the management of foreign currency. The Board noted the report and agreed that an explanatory note to be approved by the Audit Committee Chairman should be added into the Annual Report and Accounts on the matter.
37. The Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts for the Accounting Officer's signature subject to the above amendments.
38. The Board also noted the Audit Committee's draft Annual Report to the Board and that the final version would be circulated following review by the Committee's Chairman, John Lindquist. Members joined the Chairman in thanking John Lindquist and the Committee for their work during the year.

### **Appointments to Audit and Reumuneration Committees**

39. The Board approved the appointment of Nigel Halkes to the Audit Committee and Steve Ridgway to the Remuneration Committee.

### **Briefing Materials Provided to the Secretary of State**

40. Christopher Rodrigues talked through the material which had been provided to the new Secretary of State which included a summary of market spend in 2013 and growth since 2003 for markets worth more than £250 million in 2013.
41. The Board noted that there would be an agenda item on market segmentation at a future Board meeting.

## **BTA, VisitBritain and VisitEngland Management Accounts for the year to 31 March 2014**

42. Philip Mabe introduced the BTA, VisitBritain and VisitEngland Management Accounts for the year to 31 March 2014 highlighting the new format in which the accounts had been presented.

43. The Board noted the report.

## **Reconciliation of the 2013/14 Statutory and Management Accounts**

44. The Board noted Philip Mabe's paper which provided a reconciliation between the BTA's management and statutory accounts for 2013/14.

## **VisitEngland Performance Report for 2013/14**

45. The Board noted the VisitEngland Performance Report for 2013/14.

## **Tourism Trends**

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

## **Secretariat Items**

47. The Board noted the programmes of meetings for 2014 and 2015, the Tourism Events Diary and the Forward Agenda.

## **Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Board: Progress Report**

48. Ros Carey introduced her paper which provided an update on progress made in implementing proposals to increase the Board's effectiveness as identified at the last Board meeting.

49. The Board agreed that the 'deep dive sessions' should be arranged on the same days as Board meetings.

50. The Board also agreed that private meetings without the Chief Executive or other Members of the Executive team present should be held twice a year and reserved the right to hold private sessions after Board meetings as necessary.

51. The Board agreed that the suggestion that an annual meeting of all Visit Board Members should be deferred until after the outcome of the triennial review was known.

## **Any Other Business**

52. Christopher Rodrigues thanked and congratulated Sandie Dawe on her leadership of and contribution to the organisation and British tourism during her tenure as Chief Executive, highlighting the challenges and opportunities faced over the past five years. The Board joined the Chairman in recognition of the considerable contribution that Sandie Dawe had made and agreed that she would be greatly missed.
53. Sandie Dawe thanked the Chairman for giving her the opportunity to lead the organisation and thanked the Board for its support and recalled some of the highlights of her career at VisitBritain.
54. The Board then joined Christopher Rodrigues in congratulating Lady Cobham on being appointed CBE for services to tourism in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

**Date of Next Meeting**

55. To be held on 17 September 2014.