

MINUTES OF THE 431ST MEETING OF BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY

HELD AT 2.30PM ON WEDNESDAY 8TH MARCH 2017 AT

VISITBRITAIN, 20 GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT

Present: Christopher Rodrigues, CBE
Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE
John Lindquist
Katy Best (BTA Corporate Matters)
Angela Bray
Margaret Llewellyn OBE (BTA Corporate Matters)
Ian McCaig
Kevin Murphy, OBE (BTA Corporate Matters)
Steve Ridgway, CBE
Giles Smith
Lord Thurso (BTA Corporate Matters)

In Attendance: Sally Balcombe
Hazel Cunningham
Lola Moses, Secretary to the Board
Denis Wormwell (via Conference Call)
Andrew Stokes, England Director (for England Matters only)

ENGLAND MATTERS

Agenda Item 1: Discover England Fund (DEF) Update

1. Andrew Stokes provided the Board with an update on the progress of the Discover England Fund. The paper was tabled for the Board to discuss alongside the spreadsheet setting out Year 1 projects (including those applying for continuation) and the activities for Year 2. The Board noted that of the 21 Year 1 projects that 7 were applying for continuation. In relation to Large-scale Collaborative 2 year Projects (Years 2-3), it was noted that Years 2-3 will be led by collaborations of Destination Organisations in England and that 14 Expressions of Interest are being taken to full application. Decisions on successful projects will be made in June with set-up and projects commencing in July.

Agenda Item 2: England Plan 2017/18

2. A draft of the VisitEngland Action Plan 2017/18 and a paper to accompany it was tabled for the Board. It was noted that the Action Plan 2017/18 had been reviewed by the VEAB who had provided feedback and recommendations, a number of which had been incorporated into the draft.
3. VEAB's recommendations included KPIs included in the Action Plan 2017/18. The Board noted that a full set of KPIs and an associated evaluation framework would be developed across the BTA in due course. VisitEngland specific KPIs could then be reported to and monitored by the VEAB.
4. The Board noted the importance of building flexibility into the Action Plan 2017/18 due to changes coming from the Government concerning matters such as Brexit and the Industrial Strategy. The Board acknowledged that they were signing off on the Action Plan 2017/18 in principle.

Agenda Item 3 -Quality Schemes –Verbal Update

5. Hazel Cunningham provided the Board with a verbal update on the progress of the Quality Schemes. The Board noted the following points:-
 - i. VE are working with M Assessments Limited (formerly G4S Assessments Limited) on the exit plan and transition of the services to the AA.
 - ii. There has been very good collaboration with the AA on matters such as strategy, communication and consultation with the affected staff concerning the transition to the AA.
 - iii. VE and the AA are in the process of finalising the remaining provisions of the contract.
6. The Board noted the progress made by VE in implementing the transition from the incumbent service provider to the AA.

Andrew Stokes left the meeting on completion of Board discussions on England only matters.

Margaret Llewellyn, Lord Thurso, Kevin Murphy and Patricia Yates joined the meeting for Britain and BTA Corporate Matters.

BRITAIN AND BTA CORPORATE MATTERS

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Last Meeting

7. The Minutes of the BTA Board meeting held on 25 January 2017 were approved.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

8. There were no matters arising.

Agenda Item 5: Declarations of Interest

9. There were no declarations of interest.

MARKET UPDATE

Agenda Item 6: CEO Overview & Observations

10. Sally Balcombe referred the Board to the CEO report in the Board pack, the following points were noted:
- Sally Balcombe provided evidence at the CMS Select Committee's oral evidence session on Brexit, this was alongside Deirdre Wells of UKInbound, and Ufi Ibrahim of the British Hospitality Association.
 - Sally attended the first of the regional engagements in Chester, she was accompanied by Patricia Yates and Andrew Stokes.
 - Sally Balcombe met with the new Ambassador to France, Lord Edward Llewellyn in Paris on the 23rd January to discuss how VisitBritain can support HMG priorities in France. This includes a FCO campaign called Les Voisins ("the neighbours") to promote bilateral links between France and the UK.

Agenda Item 7: State of the Market Snapshot

11. Sally Balcombe tabled the state of the Market Snapshot – March 2017 Paper and provided the Board with an overview of the recent competitive activity. The following points were highlighted: -
- Brand USA - it was noted that Forward Keys had reported a drop in flight bookings to the USA, especially from the Middle East following the proposals for the intermittent travel ban to the USA from specific regions.
 - Australia - the Seamless Traveller project was noted which once implemented will lead to 90% of travellers being processed via biometrics without human involvement.
 - Visit Sweden – the launch of a programme for international marketing and the export of food experiences was noted.
 - Spain – airport taxes are due to reduce from 2017-2021 at the rate of 2.2% per year.
 - Dubai – there are plans to introduce self-flying drone taxis in July 2017.

- Visitor numbers to the UK were up by 3% overall for 2016.
- The pound has been volatile this year so far recently to € 1.16 and \$1.22, the lowest since January.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Agenda Item 11: BTA (VB and VE) Business Plan 17/18 Paper for Decision

12. Sally Balcombe led discussion on the BTA (VB and VE) Business Plan 17/18 which followed on from the last Board meeting in January, where members reviewed the outline of the Business Plan 17/18.
13. Sally Balcombe tabled the updated BTA (VB and VE) Business Plan 17/18 for review and approval by the Board. The Board discussed the paper at length. Sally Balcombe advised that the Business Plan 17/18 was tabled before the Board to seek the Board's endorsement on the overall direction.
14. The Board recognised that certain aspects of the Business Plan 17/18 were incomplete since areas such as Brexit and the Industrial Strategy may need to be further articulated following further clarification from the Government. The Targets and Outcomes provisions will need to be approved by DCMS.
15. The Board noted the importance of BTA receiving sufficient funds in order to fulfil its targets. It was noted that without such funding the BTA would not be able to achieve its targets.
16. The Board resolved to approve the overall direction of the Business Plan 17/18 and noted that it accurately sets out BTA's plan for activity and may be adjusted, with any significant adjustments coming back to the Board.

Agenda Item 12 Industrial Strategy Presentation

17. Patricia Yates gave a presentation to the Board on the Industrial Strategy. The following points were highlighted:-
 - i. The Industrial Strategy is the UK Government's plan to support the UK's most competitive and growing industries.
 - ii. Some sectors have been given early deals with agreed industry leaders already formulating plans, these include the Creative Industries, the Automotive Sector and the Nuclear Sector.
 - iii. VisitBritain has been working with DCMS to formulate a potential structure for a Tourism Sector Deal.
 - iv. The Tourism Industry Council met on 28th February to discuss the new BTA Chairman, Steve Ridgway as being a potential figurehead for the industry, and VisitBritain playing a role in coordinating the industry and helping to organise the sector into four principle framework themes.

- v. The Tourism Industry Council agreed in principle to the broad structure and agreed that industry needed to lead the ideas for a Tourism Sector Deal.
- vi. VisitBritain is now working to secure industry backing and a next stages approach both internally and externally.
- vii. The deadline for confirming a sector deal proposal is September 2017.

VERBAL UPDATES

Agenda Item 15: Property

- 18. Hazel Cunningham updated the Board on the proposals for new premises for BTA. The Board noted that DCMS capital resources were yet to be confirmed but that the preferred locations were based in Westminster.

Agenda Item 16: Pensions Update

- 19. Hazel Cunningham updated the Board on the latest developments with the pensions. The Board noted that discussions with DCMS and the Treasury were on going concerning existing staff. Hazel Cunningham confirmed that a new Scheme is being set up for new employees with effect from 1st April 2017 and that informal consultation with the trade union had commenced and formal consultation would be implemented prior to 1st April 2017.

Agenda Item 17 Brand positioning update

- 20. The Board noted that Clare Mullin had met with the Chair and had agreed that further work was needed to ensure that all devolved region were actively involved. The Board will receive a comprehensive report for the next Board.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

- 21. The Board approved the papers provided for information to be taken as read.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of Next Meeting

- 22. To be held on Wednesday 3rd May 2017