

**MINUTES OF THE 423rd MEETING OF VISITBRITAIN  
HELD AT 9.00AM ON TUESDAY 26 JANUARY 2016 AT  
VISITBRITAIN, 20 GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT**

**Present:** Christopher Rodrigues, CBE  
Katy Best  
Angela Bray  
Lise-Anne Boissiere  
Kevin Murphy, OBE  
Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE  
John Lindquist  
Margaret Llewellyn OBE  
Ian McCaig

**Apologies:** Dr. Michael Cantlay, OBE  
Steve Ridgway, CBE

**In Attendance:** Sally Balcombe, Chief Executive

Joss Croft, Director of Marketing (“Moments Campaign” report)  
Hazel Cunningham, Director of Business Services  
Louise Searle, Head of People & Performance (for Organisational Change progress reports)  
Chris Foy, Head of Nations and Regions (for 2015/16 Funds progress report)  
Suzanne Bond, VisitEngland Advisory Board Member (for England Matters)  
Tim Holt, Acting Marketing Director, VisitEngland (for England Matters)  
Jenny McGee, Enterprise Director, Visit England (for England Matters)  
Ros Carey, Secretary to the Board  
Suneet Joseph, General Counsel & Secretary to the Board Designate

## **ENGLAND MATTERS**

### **Organisational Change Progress Report**

1. Louise Searle provided a verbal update on the timelines for managing the ongoing process of consultation with staff, communications with PCS and provision of updates to staff on the process of “pooling” for those identified later on in the consultation process as being “at risk” of redundancy. Organisational changes would also result in a number of vacancies being created which could potentially be filled from internal staff deemed at risk.

2. Support for staff would be made available via an employee assistance programme including 24/7 telephone support line, CV writing support and outplacement support.
3. The Board then discussed the importance to continue to track all risks associated with the organisational change and Sally Balcombe confirmed the establishment of a Programme Office to undertake this activity. During the ongoing consultation period, the Chairman, Lady Cobham and Sally Balcombe noted the need to retain focus to deliver on the preparation of and subsequent deployment of the England Action Plan.
4. Sally Balcombe provided an overview of the planned regional engagement programme which would be supported by the VE Advisory Board and via a dedicated communications plan to ensure ongoing and planned activities are being clearly communicated to domestic tourism stakeholders and partners so that there is a clear understanding of what the Discover England Fund is to be used for. Feedback from regional engagement events would be captured and follow up communications issued where required.
5. Tim Holt, Jenny McGee and Suzanne Bond left the meeting on completion of Board discussions on England only matters.
6. Margaret Llewellyn, Kevin Murphy and Katy Best joined the meeting for Britain and BTA Corporate Matters.

## **BRITAIN AND BTA CORPORATE MATTERS**

### **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

7. The minutes of the Board meetings held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were approved and signed.

### **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

8. Margaret Llewellyn raised an issue in relation to US pension scheme and Sally Balcombe and Hazel Cunningham provided an update to the Board.

### **Declarations of Interest**

9. Lady Cobham declared an interest regarding her position as a Trustee for Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE REPORT**

### **Review of Market Conditions**

10. Sally Balcombe introduced a state of the market snapshot report highlighting:

- The launch of a #callbrussels campaign in the aftermath of the terrorist activity in Brussels;
  - Tourism Australia in collaboration with key distribution partners in India has launched a new campaign to entice Indian travellers;
  - Qatar Airways plans to introduce two additional frequencies between Doha and Manchester from 2<sup>nd</sup> May; Cathay Pacific's plans to resume the Hong Kong-London Gatwick route 4x/ week from September 2016 and Turkish Airlines Dubai – Istanbul frequency and capacity to increase to 10 x /week offering connectivity to Birmingham, Edinburgh, London Heathrow, London Gatwick and Manchester;
  - Release of IPA data for Q3 on 21<sup>st</sup> January but that figures were subject to re-checking and sign off by the ONS.
11. Ian McCaig initiated a discussion for greater collaboration between national tourist boards to capitalise on the success of an ongoing “Star Wars” campaign initiated by Tourism Ireland. Sally Balcombe agreed to investigate opportunities for greater collaboration on this campaign.
  12. Sally Balcombe tabled Currency Exchange paper and noted that the £GPB had fallen against the US \$ and € and that the US remained a key market. The Board discussed the additional impact that perceived security concerns in the US over standards of safety in general was having in terms of reduction in US visitor numbers to perceived high risk cities such as Paris and/or Brussels.

### **Chief Executive's Report**

13. Sally Balcombe introduced her report highlighting in particular that:
  - This was the busiest quarter for the organisation and referred the Board to high level timelines for each activity currently being undertaken;
  - Good progress was being made on the Procurement action plan
  - Tendering activity has significantly increased as year end approaches
14. Hazel Cunningham reported that agreement had still not been reached on a new VAT recovery methodology and a meeting had been arranged between all the all parties, HMRC, British Tourist Authority and DCMS, in February 2016 in an effort to progress negotiations.
15. Sally Balcombe said that, as reported at the previous meeting, the effect of the new procurement procedures was continuing to have a negative impact on recoverable VAT and the possibility of being granted greater freedoms, such as those enjoyed by Historic England, was still being explored.

16. The Board discussed a proposal from the GREAT team for BTA to lead a on a cross departmental procurement project concerning development of a Central Asset Library and the impact on use of limited resources within BTA to undertake such activity. The Board identified potential risks around the organisation utilising resources on non core activities and associated execution/delivery risks.
17. The Board discussed a Cabinet Office initiative to centralise all marketing related activities across Government departments and ALBs. The Board discussed the potential impact on BTA as most of BTA staff are marketing focussed and that such centralisation would impact BTA's ability to control its marketing activities. It was noted by Lise-Anne Boissiere that DCMS had yet to formally respond as to the appropriateness of this Cabinet Office initiative.
18. The Board discussed ongoing options for BTA office relocation. Lise-Anne Boissiere agreed to provide a further update on latest proposals and to raise BTA's feedback/concerns on any proposed relocation from current premises.

### **Organisational Change Progress Report**

19. Louise Searle provided a verbal update on the timelines for managing the ongoing process of consultation with staff in London and overseas, communications with PCS and provision of updates to all staff on the process of "pooling" for those identified later on in the consultation process as being "at risk" of redundancy. Organisational changes would also result in a number of vacancies being created which could potentially be filled from internal staff deemed at risk.
20. Support for staff would be made available via an employee assistance programme including 24/7 telephone support line, CV writing support and outplacement support.
21. The Board then discussed the importance to continue to track all risks associated with the organisational change.
22. Lise-Anne Boissiere left the meeting.

### **Appointment of Secretary to the BTA Board**

23. The Board duly appointed Suneet Joseph as Secretary to the Board to succeed Ros Carey with effect from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

### **Moments Campaign Progress Report**

24. Joss Croft gave a presentation to the Board about the Moments Campaign, the purpose of which was to inspire visitors to come to Great Britain, positioning Great Britain as a fun destination with a focus on providing magical experiences. In addition, the Moments Campaign tied in with campaigns for Wales and Scotland. The Campaign site would be refreshed on a monthly basis and adopted the hashtag #OMGB to enable people to feel

more emotionally engaged. Users would also be encouraged to upload their own “moments”. The Campaign would run for the rest of the year.

### **2015/16 Funds: Progress Report**

25. Chris Foy gave the Board a verbal update on progress to date. The size of funds allowed for a broad range of activity across many disciplines with a target of £290M incremental visitor spend. From a governance perspective, a Project Management board was being introduced together with new ways of working to maximise efficiency. It was noted that a great deal of activity would be delivered in Q4. Lady Cobham emphasised the importance of stakeholder management during this period to ensure and maximise buy-in.
26. The Board discussed the likelihood of other sources of new “surprise” funding becoming available in the future. Sally Balcombe noted that such sources of new funding could arise in response to particular events or crises and that accordingly the organisation should ensure it has the ability to set up and run best practice programmes where such new funds do become available. Lady Cobham noted that some work had already been carried out by VisitEngland to identify potential funding opportunities whether at EU, national, regional or partner level including use of lottery funds to fund projects. Margaret Llewellyn noted that further work should be carried out in this area of identifying other sources of funding for areas such as tourism including potential use of regeneration funds.
27. Ian McCaig left the meeting. Chris Foy & Joss Croft also left the meeting.

### **Systems Resilience and Data Security**

28. Hazel Cunningham noted that the Audit Committee had requested this paper to be presented to the Board. The recommendations from the Audit Committee were being actioned and would form part of Business Planning activities going forward. John Lindquist noted that tremendous progress had been made in this area during the last three years.

### **Corporate Risk Registers Review**

29. John Lindquist noted that although the Corporate Risk Register did capture current risks pre- CSR, it would need to be carefully reviewed to ensure that it continues to capture any new risks associated with the ongoing organisational change such as people risks, culture risks and programme delivery risks as well as risks associated with any office re-location and other IS/IT risks. The Chairman noted that going forward the Corporate Risk Register should also capture any risk movement in relation to any given risk identified.

### **Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015**

30. Hazel Cunningham gave the Board an overview of current status and the available options to the organisation in the event of any underspend. The Board discussed the learnings from the Visa Refund Scheme (VRS) and the Chairman requested that a post implementation review be carried out after end of the VRS on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. John Lindquist noted that

VRS demonstrated the importance of the Board expressing its views on the merits of the organisation's participation in any given third party sponsored project so that the advice and recommendations of the Board are clearly recorded and understood.

### **Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 10 December 2015**

31. John Lindquist noted the downwards trend in partnership income and the necessity to stem this trend and increase funding from this activity. The Chairman noted that the new Interim Head of Commercial would need to be fully embedded into the organisation to address such issues with partner activities.

### **Tourism Trends**

32. The Board discussed the Tourism papers and duly noted the contents of each paper. John Lindquist requested that Business Events & Visits be separately recorded for future iterations.

### **Secretariat Items**

33. The Chairman noted that the exceptional BTA Board Meeting scheduled on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016 will need to be used to take decisions on specific issues. The Board also discussed the possibility of holding a meeting in Belfast in light of the opening of its new Convention Centre and its experience in developing maritime product. Lady Cobham suggested the Board hosting an event with VisitEngland Advisory Board in the near future.

### **Any Other Business**

34. Katy Best expressed her thanks to Sally Balcombe for all her hard work to date and invited the Board to recognise Sally's significant contributions from a Board perspective.
35. The Chairman expressed thanks to Ros Carey as outgoing Secretary to the Board for all her hard work over the years and on behalf of the Board wished her a happy retirement.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

36. To be held on 28 April 2016