

**MINUTES OF THE 441<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY HELD**

**AT 09:00 ON WEDNESDAY 30 JANUARY 2019 AT**

**VISITSCOTLAND'S OFFICES AT OCEAN POINT ONE, 94 OCEAN DRIVE,  
EDINBURGH, EH6 6JH**

**Present:** Steve Ridgway, CBE (Chairman)  
Denis Wormwell  
John Lindquist  
Ian McCaig  
Dame Judith Macgregor  
Giles Smith (DCMS)  
Lord Thurso  
Katy Best  
Mark Taylor  
Jason Thomas  
Ian Edwards

**In Attendance:** Sally Balcombe  
Hazel Cunningham  
Patricia Yates  
Lola Moses, Secretary to the Board

**Agenda item 1: Chairman's Update and Introduction**

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting. Ian Edwards was welcomed as the newly appointed Welsh representative.
2. The Chairman updated the Board on recent developments impacting tourism. It was noted that: -
  - I. The Chairman was scheduled to have a call with the Tourism Minister, Michael Ellis MP on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 to update on the Industrial Strategy.
  - II. The Chairman will be meeting senior policy advisers at 10 Downing Street on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 to discuss the Industrial Strategy.
  - III. The Industrial Strategy update would be covered in more detail under agenda item 5.
  - IV. The Chairman attended a recent meeting of DCMS arm's-length bodies ("ALBs") to discuss BREXIT contingencies and no deal scenarios.
  - V. The BTA Europe team were in London recently where the Chairman gave a keynote speech on the importance of the European market.
  - VI. The BTA would be embarking upon a process for the recruitment of additional Board Members. It was noted that vacancies also existed on the

VisitEngland Advisory Board (“VEAB”). The core skills that the BTA and VEAB would be seeking included, Digital, Local Enterprise Partnerships (“LEPs”), Destination Marketing Organisations (“DMOs”), Product and Transport sector experience. The Board discussed the need for diversity for future appointments.

- VII. Lord Thurso commented on the recent process that VisitScotland undertook for its recruitment exercise for Board Members and the use of a Board Appraisal and Skills Matrix to determine where the skills gaps were, and which could be used to establish the criteria for the recruitment of new Board Members. The benefit of contacting professional bodies alongside the public appointments recruitment process was recognised as beneficial when it came to pursuing sector experience such as accountancy and audit.

**Action: the BTA shall circulate information to Board Members concerning the sector experience that it is seeking for future Board Members.**

### **Agenda Item 2: Apologies**

3. There were no apologies.

### **Agenda Item 3: Declarations of interest/Conflicts**

4. There were no new declarations of interest.

### **Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

5. The Board approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

**Action: the BTA to circulate a two-page narrative for use by Board Members to discuss the tourism activity of the BTA.**

### **Agenda Item 5: Industrial Strategy**

6. The Chairman highlighted the timetable for the Tourism Sector Deal, noting that the Deal was expected to be agreed by Ministers at the end of March 2019.
7. It was noted that the roundtable events and engagement had been successful. Visit Wales discussed the need to formalise its position on the Industrial Strategy and to produce a paper setting out its position.

8. Members discussed the additional commitments needed from the industry prior to the Tourism Sector Deal being signed off, namely; the accessibility commitments, data sharing and investment.
9. Giles Smith commented that the bar set for a sector to get a deal was very high. The importance of demonstrating a link between the Tourism Sector Deal and an increase in productivity was noted. On the Tourism Zones it was noted that this was a live issue and that the current thinking included a blended model; namely rather than having pure Tourism Zones, having something wider, such as a tourism growth fund to address market failures and supporting the current Discover England Fund or other strategic investments in this area. It was noted that the Tourism Minister, Michael Ellis MP remains supportive of the Tourism Sector Deal and Tourism Zones.
10. The Industrial Strategy paper was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

### **Agenda Item 6 and Item 7: Review of Dashboard and CEO Report**

11. Sally Balcombe took the Board through the review of the dashboard (which was circulated prior to the meeting) and the CEO's Report. It was noted that:
  - I. The dashboard had been enhanced by the addition of a trend line demonstrating the movement in the status of a corporate priority.
  - II. That the DCMS Investment Sub-Committee has approved the Procurement for the DEF Digital Platform.
  - III. That there was a high level of engagement at the roundtable events and that the concept of Tourism Zones is being embraced by the sector.
  - IV. On the IT Strategy, a new HR system, Compass, had been implemented. The configuration and testing was in progress to ensure that the system was ready to go live imminently.
  - V. The BTA had been voted the best Tourist Board in India. The Board recognised that this was a great achievement given that the team in India were relatively new.
  - VI. The BTA's Director of the Americas, Gavin Landry, had introduced Tourism Advisory Council ("TAC") which would hold a meeting at ExploreGB scheduled for 8-10 May 2019.
  - VII. The BTA and VisitEngland would be celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. It was also noted that VisitEngland would be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence and successes in English tourism on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019.
  - VIII. There were two corporate matters that were reported on:
    - 1) *Annual Report and Accounts* – A retrospective approval for a staff exit payment made in the financial year 2017/18 was denied by HM Treasury.

Consequently, the NAO would be presenting a qualified opinion on the 2017/18 Annual Report and Accounts. It was noted that this matter was initially brought to the attention of the Board in June 2018. An Extraordinary Audit Committee Meeting was scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 to discuss this matter further and the Audit Committee would report back to the March BTA Board with its recommendations.

- 2) *Whistleblowing Matter* - DCMS received a whistleblowing complaint from a BTA employee last Autumn. DCMS investigated the complaint, it contained issues that DCMS were already aware of. Giles Smith confirmed that DCMS had closed the whistleblowing complaint since it concerned matters that were being actively addressed with the BTA.
- IX. Sally Balcombe confirmed that the BTA has an action plan to deal with the two concerns that had previously been reported to the Board.

### **Agenda Item 8: State of Market Snapshot**

12. The Market Snapshot was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

### **Agenda Item 9: Political/ Tourism Affairs**

13. Patricia Yates updated the Board on Political and Tourism Affairs, it was noted as follows: -
  - I. That the Government would return to the House of Commons on 14th February 2019, seeking continued support for the Government's motion in negotiating the UK's exit from the EU according to the approach which won a majority of MPs on 29 January 2019.
  - II. That there was an advisory note that there should not be a hard BREXIT.
  - III. That there were three items on the backstop: a) that was replaced by a trade deal b) that it was fixed in time or c) an alternative that the backstop would not exist at all.
  - IV. That the no deal planning for BREXIT continues to progress.

### **Agenda Item 10: Tourism Trends**

14. The Tourism Trends paper was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

### **Agenda Item 11 and Item 12 Forecast 2019 and Productivity**

15. The Forecast 2019 and Productivity papers were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. The Forecast for 2019 was approved, and it was recognised that the forecast could change.

### **Agenda Item 13: BREXIT Update and Risk Register**

16. The BREXIT update and Risk Register paper was circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

### **Agenda Items 14 - DEF Platform Update**

17. Hazel Cunningham updated Board Members on the DEF Platform. The DCMS Investment Sub – Committee gave its approval to proceed with the procurement. It was highlighted that final approval and the agreement with the successful bidder would be signed imminently.

### **Agenda Item 15: Business Planning 19/20**

18. Hazel Cunningham provided the Board with an update on the 2019/20 Business Planning. There was a discussion on the funding arrangements for 2019/20, the cost pressures and the risks involved. It was noted that the Board would receive a paper for the 19/20 Business Plan and Budget for the March BTA Board for approval.

### **Agenda Item 16: VisitScotland Update**

19. Lord Thurso provided the Board with a presentation on VisitScotland's activities.

### **AOB**

There was no further business.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

To be held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at VisitBritain's offices in London.

### **Close**

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 13:30.

Chairman's Signature

Original Signed