

MINUTES OF THE 438th MEETING OF BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY

HELD AT 10:00 ON TUESDAY 21 JUNE 2018 AT

VISITBRITAIN, 1 VICTORIA STREET, WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1H 0ET

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

In Attendance: Sally Balcombe
Hazel Cunningham
Lola Moses, Secretary to the Board
Carol Dray (for item 6)
Andrew Stokes, England Director (for item 6)

Agenda item 1: Chairman's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting.
2. The Chairman updated the Board on recent developments impacting tourism, the Board noted the following:
 - (i) The Chairman introduced Mark Taylor, a board member of London & Partners, as an observer to the Board following the departure of Kevin Murphy.
 - (ii) It was noted that agenda items had been updated and that a new agenda was circulated.
 - (iii) The Industrial Strategy bid is progressing well and it is supported by Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.
 - (iv) It was noted that Hazel Cunningham was waiting for a decision from Treasury on the pension scheme.
 - (v) There were three key items up for discussion and approval at the meeting, namely item 7 – the five year BTA Strategy; item 8 – the BTA Annual Report and Accounts; and item 9 – the DEF Platform Pilot. It was suggested that the DEF Platform Pilot was discussed ahead of the Annual Reports and Accounts.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. The Minutes of the BTA Board meeting held on 20 March 2018 were approved, subject to minor amendments.

Agenda Item 3: Apologies

4. The Board received no apologies.

Agenda Item 4: Declarations of interest

5. There were no new declarations of interest.

Agenda Item 5: Five Year BTA Strategy

6. Sally Balcombe introduced this item to the Board. It was noted that members had reviewed the background paper for this item ahead of the Board meeting.
7. Board members engaged in a lengthy discussion on the BTA's five year strategy as expressed in the paper for this item. Board members confirmed their endorsement of the Strategy. It was noted that a further review and discussion on this item would take place at the Joint Strategy Day for BTA and VE members in October.

Agenda Item 6: DEF platform update

6. Andrew Stokes and Carol Dray provided the Board with a verbal update on recent developments on the DEF Platform and Shane Crockett from V3 held a demonstration of the platform, the following points were noted:
 - ⓪ Following the approval by the Board of £0.5m to fund a DEF Platform pilot programme it was reported that the following objectives have successfully been met:
 - The following DEF projects have been identified as tests for the pilot programme: Gateway Manchester, Cultural Cities of the North, Gardens and Gourmets, Coastal Path.
 - The applicability of the technology solution to meet complexities of chosen DEF projects had been tested through a variety of products based on: (i) pass products, attractions, accommodation and itinerary planners; and (ii) Geographical spread covering the North and South of England.
 - The End to End technology had been tested in live environment and real bookings had been made.
 - The cost of a beta phase platform roll-out and potential future phase had been reduced as the pilot reduced uncertainty within the cost base.
 - ⓪ Shane Crockett held a demonstration of the platform to the Board.
 - ⓪ Andrew Stokes and Carol Dray presented an executive summary to the Board for a

DEF platform beta phase and amplification phase by taking into consideration the following factors:

- If the platform solution is needed by SMEs, DMOs and Distributors;
 - If the choice of technology platform fulfils the requirements of the DEF projects, and if the platform is a proven solution;
 - If the platform represented good value.
- (M) Approval was sought for a further investment of £3m (plus £0.2m of potential optimism bias) of the existing Discover England Fund to develop the DEF platform beta phase – with potential to move to an amplification phase (the “**Additional Investment**”).
- (V) The Board discussed (i) the costs involved and considered the cost evolutions presented in the report as well as the cost of doing nothing; (ii) the next phases of the DEF platform; (iii) the DEF platform risk register; (iv) the business change and education programme costs; and (v) delivery times.
- (M) After discussing the matters raised in the report the Board approved the Additional Investment whilst noting John Lindquist’s disapproval.

STRATEGY, PERFORMANCE AND OUTLOOK

Agenda Item 7: BTA Annual Report and Accounts (Year Ended 31 March 2018)

7. Hazel Cunningham presented the Annual Report and Accounts to the Board and noted the following points:
- (O) The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 13 June 2018 were circulated to the Board.
 - (O) The Report and Accounts have been audited by the NAO and the audit concluded that they were compliant with regulations, no adjustments were required.
 - (O) The only point flagged up was that former members of the US team were still pending a final decision on exit bonuses/contractual compensations – external legal advice was being sought on the matter. The Board was assured that these developments will not affect the Reports or Accounts in any way and that a final decision on the above matter was pending Treasury approval.
 - (M) GDPR compliance was discussed and it was noted that following an in-depth updating exercise the organisation was now GDPR compliant.
 - (V) The timeline for approval of the Accounts was outlined, it was estimated that they should be ready for publication on the government website by 17 July 2018.
 - (M) The Board unanimously approved the Report and Accounts and it was agreed that Hazel Cunningham would circulate an update note to the Board once the US severance pay flagged up in paragraph 7(iii) had been approved.

Agenda Item 8: CEO Report

8. Sally Balcombe presented a verbal update to the Board, the following points were noted:
- ⓪ New HR team was the result of issues identified at previous Board meetings and as a result of an internal audit. More processes added including appraisal system. Further details provided at REMCO.
 - ⓪ Overseas positions that were difficult to recruit for have now been filled.
 - ⓪ Head of Finance retired and there is ongoing recruitment for a replacement.
 - Ⓜ Concern of hitting government targets was still a concern as report in previous Board meetings.
 - Ⓜ DEF projects were running smoothly, there is a positive sentiment ahead of September.
 - Ⓜ Problems have been flagged with IPS reports, China figures were misleading and the agreement with IPS was under review.
 - Ⓜ The Meet GB inaugural meeting received great feedback and it will be repeated.
 - Ⓜ VisitBritain will need to move offices on short notice as notified by BEIS that more office space is required by the Brexit Team at the 1 Victoria Street building. BEIS offered to cover costs of moving, however there is still no formal agreement in place. The move is likely to happen late September/early October. It was noted that DCMS was sympathetic with the moving situation and was looking forward to considering BEIS' formal written offer.

Agenda Item 9: Market Snapshot

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

Agenda Item 10: Risk Register

The updated Corporate Risk Register was circulated to the Board and was taken as read.

Agenda Item 11: Any Other Business

John Lindquist noted that more detail was required in the Tourism Trends papers for market share values.

No other business was reported.

Date of Next Meeting

To be held on 18 September 2018 (10:00 to 14:30).

Close

Without there being any further business to discuss, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 14:30.

Chairman's Signature