

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 434th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD ("VEAB") HELD AT 10.30AM ON TUESDAY, 1st OF MAY 2018 AT VISITENGLAND 1 VICTORIA STREET ST, WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1H 0ET

Present:

Denis Wormwell, Chairman
Sally Balcombe
John Hoy
Sarah Stewart, OBE
Fiona Pollard
Suzanne Bond (via telephone)

In Attendance:

Stephen Darke, DCMS
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Carol Dray, Commercial Director
Patricia Yates, Strategy & Communications Director (for agenda item 6)
Lyndsey Swift (for agenda item 5)
Robin Johnson (for agenda item 7)
Kerrin MacPhie (for agenda item 7)
Dan Fara, (taking minutes on behalf of the Secretary to the Board)

Agenda item 1: Chair's Update and Introduction

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting.
2. The Chairman updated the Board on the following matters:
 - (i) The Great Exhibition of the North programme was now announced and preparations for the launch event on 22 June 2018 were well underway.
 - (ii) Explore GB in Newcastle took place on the 1st and 2nd of March 2018 and the Executive team were considering pushing the event later in the year starting from 2019.
 - (iii) English Tourism Week took place from the 17th to the 25th of March 2018 and this year included a Conference as well as the usual parliamentary reception, constituency day and tourism superstar events. The conference helped to swell the numbers at the parliamentary reception.
 - (iv) The 2018 Business Plan was approved by the BTA board. At the meeting it was also noted that there was to be a consultation in Northern Ireland on VAT and APD issues. Input for the consultation was requested by 19 June 2018 and any suggested changes to these taxes could open the door for discussions in England as well on the same topic.

- (v) VisitEngland's 2018 Excellence Awards took place on the 23rd of April in Bath.
- (vi) It was proposed that some of the future VEAB Board meetings be held at other locations other than at 1 Victoria Street, London.
- (vii) VisitEngland's senior managers' conference was held on the 16th and 17th of April 2018 at the Intercontinental Hotel in North Greenwich, London.
- (viii) Mazars have been engaged to audit the technical plan of the DEF platform, verbal updates will be provided at the next board meeting.
- (ix) The Chairman had meetings with (i) the Tourism Minister who was very supportive of VE's ongoing plans; and (ii) Dame Judith Macgregor of the BTA board and Aimee Pitman to discuss ongoing matters. It was also noted that the Chairman would also have further meetings with the BTA's chairman, Steve Ridgway to discuss the role of VEAB.
- (x) Visit Wiltshire representatives had a meeting with the Chairman in which they expressed their interest in the new Tourism Zones and noted that they were very keen to understand how the Tourism Zones would operate. It was agreed that Patricia Yates' team would consult with them and engage in consultation meetings across the country to increase awareness and address queries.
- (xi) The Head of VE Research, Sharon Orrell, had left the organisation and the board noted its gratitude for her good work and long term service.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting

- 3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2018 were approved.

Agenda Item 3: Apologies

- 4. Apologies noted from Nigel Halkes, Allan Lambert and Lola Moses.

Agenda Item 4: Declarations of interest

- 5. John Hoy advised of a change in circumstances and would resubmit an amended declaration of interest to the Company Secretary.

Agenda item 5:

(i) Update DEF (Discover England Fund)

- 6. Andrew Stokes and Lyndsey Swift updated the board on the progress of DEF projects. The board was referred to the paper circulated prior to the meeting, the following main points were noted:
 - a. The Board was presented with a summary of pilot projects per year, it was noted that the current total was 40 projects of a value of £19.2 million.
 - b. Growth in activity was noted year on year and DEF Year 2 has seen very good engagement with six new pilot projects for Business Events, Luxury Sports, Electric Cars, Food & Drink and Music Festivals. 14 large scale projects have been set-up and are in delivery.

- c. The Board discussed the approach taken to having multiple smaller projects as opposed to fewer large projects. It was noted that delivery partners were not very experienced with large scale projects and that issues of capability/capacity were identified as well as product development and marketing concerns being raised. The DMO's were receiving training on development, VE had dedicated members providing training on DEF projects and there was now more expertise in the market than in previous years. It was also noted that a more diverse approach was taken to avoid having too much focus on large projects and missing out on smaller, more diverse opportunities that cover areas which had little or no focus.
- d. Trade websites were launched in September 2017 which showcase products developed and how trade partners can access them. The aim of the websites is to raise awareness and integration of new products into trade programmes.
- e. The board was briefly presented with the DEF distribution partnerships, a major focus on the Buzzseekers, Explorers and Rail campaigns was noted, and the results for those partnerships due in May 2018.
- f. The spend on DMC Year 2 activity was discussed, out of the £10m year 2 budget there was an underspend of £207k, resulting in a total spend of £9.793m. The underspend was the result of a mix of admin underspend (currency fluctuations, difficulties recruiting to DEF B2B posts overseas and DEF platform pilot late commencement due to approvals process and time required to negotiate supplier contract) and programme underspend (a small number of DEF projects had underspends as well as one unanticipated late cancellation).
- g. It was noted that a discussion was currently ongoing with DCMS on whether underspent funds could be carried forward into the next year – a risk that these funds would no longer be available was noted by the board.
- h. The board noted the risk of budget deadlines for DEF year 3 being changed.
- i. DEF year 3 was discussed and a focus on continued delivery of large scale projects was noted. The following priorities were outlined: (i) building the case for DEF 2; (ii) amplification of DEF year 1 and year 2 pilot projects that have shown early successes; (iii) delivery of a small number of new projects in year 3 that address specific thematic and target market gaps not yet covered by the fund. The board was briefly presented with the DEF Year 3 application timelines and the identified market gaps and opportunities justifying the direction of travel towards smaller and more diverse projects.
- j. Only two DEF year 3 risks with a high overall probable impact were identified on the risk register: (i) state aid compliant against VE or DEF funded projects leading to funding claw back; and (ii) package travel directive changes impact on DEF objectives and scope DEF year 3 activities – it was noted that both risks are being mitigated.

(ii) VEAB Sponsorship Role in Large-Scale Projects

- 7. Andrew Stokes and Carol Dray briefly updated the board on VEAB's sponsorship role in large-scale projects. The board was referred to the paper circulated prior to the meeting, the following main points were noted:
 - a. It was identified that VEAB needed to have an oversight role in sponsoring specific DEF projects to provide appropriate support and challenge to ensure successful delivery. This would help develop relationships through external engagement with key DMOs and partners.

- b. It was proposed to the board that each member of VEAB takes a sponsorship role for 1-2 of the £1m projects that were in the delivery stage. A discussion was held on the implementation of the role and a suggested project allocation sheet was circulated. There were no comments on the sheet and the board provided positive feedback on the project allocation. It was noted that the timeline for implementation was yet to be agreed and would be circulated at a later stage.

(iii) **DEF Platform**

- 8. Andrew Stokes and Carol Dray updated the board on the progress of the DEF platform. The board was referred to the paper circulated prior to the meeting, the following main points were noted:
 - a. The board was taken through a summary of the DEF and the objectives for the platform as well as the process up to date including (i) identifying a market failure gap; (ii) consultation period; (iii) supplier recommendation; (iv) choosing a technical solution; and (v) agreeing to a delivery plan and engaging the suppliers for the pilot.
 - b. The pilot was discussed in more detail and the board was presented with the products and regions that were being tested as part of the pilot phase of the DEF Platform.
 - c. It was noted that the build/configuration of the online OBX platform was slightly ahead of schedule and was ready by 26 April 2018, the other 8 week sprint timelines and milestones were on track with the DEF Platform Pilot platform testing to be completed by 25 May 2018. Other timelines include (i) a meeting with DCMS on the week commencing 28 May 2018; (ii) results and beta business case delivery by 14 June 2018 (to be considered at the next BTA board of 21 June); (iii) discuss preliminary results at the next BTA board, DCMS finance papers of 28 June 2018 and DCMS finance meeting of 12 July 2018.
 - d. The board noted that a more comprehensive update was needed with a higher level of detail containing results from the Pilot. The board then needs to assess the results and have sufficient proof that the business model works. The following points were agreed to be raised for discussion at the next BTA board in relation to the DEF Platform: (i) demand; (ii) demonstrate that it fits the current business model; (iii) capability; and (iv) education and training on how to use the new platform.

Agenda item 6: Political/Tourism Affairs

- 9. Patricia Yates provided the Board with a verbal update on Industrial Strategy and also noted the following:
 - a. Consultations for the 2019 spending review would commence in autumn 2018.
 - b. The English Tourism Week was successful and had 69 MP's taking part. The Tourism Minister wrote to all English MP's which resulted in 27 drop-ins at the event.
 - c. Two sector deals were announced for AI and Creative Industries with two others expected to be announced. The tourism bid was well received and a result was expected imminently.
 - d. DCMS' collaboration on tourism zones was ongoing, the aim is to have a political decision made early on.
 - e. Inbound statistic figures have been delayed until July 2018.

- f. Interest has been expressed on Tourism Zones and sector deals on regional levels.
- g. Concerns have been raised about tourism not being pushed as a priority on the government's agenda – it was noted that there is a need to stress the importance of tourism as a growing industry.

Agenda item 7: Business Events

10. Robin Johnson and Kerrin MacPhie noted the following points with reference to the paper circulated before the board:
- a. Kerrin MacPhie, the Head of Business Events, was welcomed as a new joiner and held a short presentation on her role and the broader objectives of the Business Events team.
 - b. It was noted that Business Events were an enabler and communicator and that their objectives included increasing VE's global reach and providing event support based on best practice and by aligning objectives.
 - c. The board noted that the value of the UK events sector was £43bn which was broadly split in conferences and meetings (£19bn), incentive travel (£1.2bn) and top 10 UK travel agencies (£3.5bn).
 - d. Areas and English destinations of focus were presented to the board. The size of opportunities in these destinations of focus was then presented in the ICCA rankings, it was noted that there was a need for improvement, especially for cities other than London.
 - e. It was noted that MeetGB was a success and that it helped with understanding London's surrounding areas, it was a very good mapping exercise.
 - f. The board was presented with promotional videos for England cities and also ongoing campaigns and materials aimed at increasing awareness & consideration of the UK as a business events destination.

Agenda item 8: Quality Schemes

11. Hazel Cunningham provided the Board with a verbal update on the quality schemes and also noted the following:
- a. The AA had appointed a new Managing Director.
 - b. Improvement in service has been noticed since meetings took place with AA.
 - c. AA noted challenges on customer support recruitment.
 - d. Discussions are being held about benefits for quality scheme participants.
 - e. New quality schemes website was launched and the board noted that they were pleased with the look and feel of the new site.
 - f. Format for the new magazine was agreed and plans to start looking at marketing plans going forward were underway.

- g. Review of strategic partnerships was ongoing, it was noted that VisitEngland were waiting for AA to come back with predictions.
- h. DMO landscape was discussed, waiting for a more detailed plan from AA. It was noted that DMO's were happy with AA's current approach, relationships and services have improved.

Agenda item 9: England Action Plan – End of Year Progress Update

- 12. Andrew Stokes updated the board on the England Action Plan. The board was referred to the paper circulated prior to the meeting, the following main points were noted:
 - a. Amber statuses have been mapped as such because of concerns on timing. The board briefly went through all amber statuses and took the paper as read.
 - b. Stephen Darke expressed his concern on the Tour De Yorkshire report being delivered late, as delivery was completed in March 2017.

Agenda item 10: Any Other Business

- 13. A reminder was made to the board about the Great Exhibition of the North beginning on 22 June 2018 and an invitation to attend the launch was extended to all members of the board.
- 14. There were no items of other business.
- 15. There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting.

Agenda item 11: Date of Next Meeting

13 September 2018 (10:30 to 14:30)