

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 429th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VE AB) HELD AT 10.00AM ON TUESDAY, 21st FEBRUARY 2017 AT VISITENGLAND, SANCTUARY BUILDINGS, GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT

Present: Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE (Chairman)
Sally Balcombe
Denis Wormwell
Nigel Halkes
John Hoy
Sarah Stewart, OBE
Suzanne Bond

Apologies: There were no apologies, the Board noted that Sally Balcombe would be attending the Board at 12:30.

In Attendance: Giles Smith, DCMS
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Lola Moses, Secretary to the Board
Sharon Orrell
Andrew Jackson
Christopher Rodrigues

1. Christopher Rodrigues attended the Board and noted the contributions made by the Chairman of the VEAB. It was noted that the Chairman did an impressive job through a challenging time and was selected as Chairman for the England Board due to her experience which included her work with the National Trust. The Board observed that England was now in a better place and that the England fund was being deployed wisely due to the attention to detail of the Chairman. The Board expressed gratitude for the Chairman's contributions and achievements for VisitEngland.
2. The Chairman thanked the Board and noted the importance of England having a voice. The Chairman wished Denis Wormwell success in his role as Chair. The Chairman thanked Christopher Rodrigues for attending. The Chairman

introduced Lola Moses and the Board welcomed her as the Secretary to the VEAB.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2016 were approved.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

2. The following matters were arising that were not on the substantive agenda: -
 - i. Sarah Stewart updated the Board on the Great Exhibition of the North, it was noted that there were 16 months before the exhibition opened in June 2018 and that progress had been made to ensure that the correct governance, funding and content would be in place. The Board noted that the Great Exhibition of the North had gained vast interest and support. The Chair inquired whether there had been collaboration with any of the DEF participants. It was noted that the exhibition was working together with other key cities in the North such as Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Hull.
 - ii. Andrew Stokes commented that there were numerous expressions of interest and as part of the process in reviewing those submissions it was essential to ensure that where it would produce a stronger bid, ~~feedback was suggested~~ and suggested feedback to enable participants to consider combinations of expressions of interest. It was noted that this was not a recommendation to participants but a suggestion. The Board noted that it was important to find a way of supporting participants.
 - iii. Andrew Stokes, updated the Board on the work of the destination forums. The Board noted that VisitEngland would be working with the key destinations and that this matter would be covered in detail in the England Action Plan (EAP) item.

Declarations of Interest

4. The following declarations of interest were noted by the Board: -
 - i. John Hoy's interest in relation to the UK Challenge Fund and DEF.
 - ii. Sarah Stewart's interest in relation to the Great Exhibition of the North.
 - iii. Sally Balcombe's interest in relation to Historic England.
 - iv. The Chairman's interest in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

England Action Plan (EAP)

Agenda Item 6

4. The Board noted that the 17/18 EAP had to follow through from the current 2016/2017 plan. Hazel Cunningham took the Board through the EAP and the strategic priorities. The Board noted that the background to this paper involved the Director group going through the financial implications and strategic priorities across the organisation and specifically the England elements. It was noted that the Director group viewed the key customer elements including activities and value added. The Board noted that content curation rather than the creation of content was to be achieved by working with partners to improve the quality of content. Hazel Cunningham noted that the EAP focused on taking customers from inspiration to implementation and advocacy, it was noted that partnerships were important to magnify that impact. Hazel Cunningham noted that another key area of focus was developing aspirations to visit the different regions within England to ensure a dispersal of visitors across England. Hazel Cunningham advised that depending on funding VisitEngland will continue to explore BV&E activities ensuring that domestic products fit in with the Government's perspective.
5. Hazel Cunningham advised the Board of the assumptions made concerning funding for VisitEngland. The Board noted that it was assumed that the cash flat settlement would continue. It was noted that there were requirements upon VisitEngland in terms of what it needed to deliver. The Board observed that VisitEngland would need to set aside 5% of the budget due to DCMS contingency. Hazel Cunningham advised that discussions with DCMS were ongoing concerning how the contingency was to be managed going forward. It was noted that the assumptions about GREAT funding had been made, allocating £2.5m to England but that this was subject to confirmation. The Board noted ongoing key risks would continue to be managed such as the pension deficit. Hazel Cunningham advised on some of the developing projects such as the Quality Schemes and the award of the contract to the AA. It was noted that that the work with the Quality Schemes fitted in with the strategic objectives.
6. The Chairman inquired as to when VisitEngland could expect confirmation of GREAT funding for the year ahead. Hazel Cunningham advised that it was anticipated that Conrad Bird would confirm the funding at the end of February. It was noted that there may be some caveats around funding and that once a decision was made it would be taken back to the BTA Board. Hazel Cunningham advised that the BTA Board meets on 8th March and that the combine Action Plan for both VisitEngland and VisitBritain would be taken to that Board for approval. It

was noted that on the assumption that GREAT funding would be received that Andrew Stokes would carry through the 17/18 EAP.

7. The Chairman observed that that the 17/18 EAP did not contain many numbers and that there were several references to the BTA Business Plan throughout, therefore it was noted that this would pose some difficulties for the VEAB in making a judgement on the draft EAP without sight of the BTA Business Plan. Andrew Stokes advised the Board that the BTA Business Plan will go to the March BTA Board, and following that Board VisitEngland's numbers would flow through. Andrew Stokes noted that the draft EAP makes assumptions concerning the levels of funding which were not dissimilar to the previous year's level of funding. Christopher Rodrigues advised that there were two elements which put pressure on the VisitBritain funding for which VisitEngland is exempt. It was noted that VisitBritain had to purchase some of its services overseas and that the VAT situation meant that it could not recover the full VAT.
8. The Board observed that there was an immediate opportunity in England and that it would be a key year to advocate what was on offer in England when compared with the costs of international travel. The Board's attention was drawn to the total spend of British travellers overseas compared with spend in England. The Board noted that this was a good opportunity to explore city breaks and other activities. It was noted that the EAP was quiet on this point and that the GREAT fund may assist in developing this area.
9. Hazel Cunningham took the Board through the revenue streams available, it was noted that the Core GIA funding remained at £6.9m, GREAT funding was estimated to be £2.5m, DEF was £11.5 for 17/18, it was noted that there were smaller items of funding which were set out in the settlement letter, such as the £260K for the Mayflower. Hazel Cunningham advised that the total budget for 2017/18 would be £21.4m. The Board noted that the allocation of VisitEngland's strategic items were in adherence with the assumed budget.
10. The Chair noted that in order for the BTA Board to gain more input from the VEAB that there needed to be more KPI's agreed at the beginning of the financial year to allow the VEAB to comment on the performance. The Board discussed the challenge for the Board in giving concise advice to the BTA in the absence of firm numbers. The Board agreed that it was vital to have an evaluation framework by which performance could be monitored. Christopher Rodrigues commented in his capacity as Chair of the BTA that the BTA should be able to inquire of the VEAB as to whether it is in agreement with the balance between the priorities in the budget and the strategic items identified in the EAP. It was noted that the BTA needs to be informed and counselled by the VEAB.

11. The Board discussed at length the domestic marketing element. On balance members felt that the paper needed to elaborate further on the role of domestic marketing. Andrew Stokes advised that the stance that VisitEngland was taking concerning domestic marketing was much stronger than reflected in the paper. The Board commented that the paper needed to reflect this and crystallise the view taken by VisitEngland setting out the strategy. Andrew Stokes, commented that the new Marketing Director (Clare Mullin) commenced in January and was clear on the marketing strategy, it was noted that she had previously worked for the National Trust.
12. The Board noted that the introduction to the draft EAP for 2017/18 was very optimistic when compared to the discussions at the January BTA Board. It was noted that the challenges presented in relation to the financial position and the consequences for the BTA contrasted with the introduction set out in the EAP. The Board discussed the importance of having a coherent narrative for DCMS across both the BTA and VE Boards. Andrew Stokes commented that input into the EAP came from different colleagues, he noted that the EAP lived for different audiences and that the introduction was drafted from the perspective of a public audience. The Board agreed that the introduction needed to be reviewed again in respect of the tone.
13. The Board discussed the currency fluctuations in the £ pound sterling and the award of the Quality Schemes to the AA. The Board noted the potential with the AA since the AA has a significant number of domestic customers. The Board discussed the importance of exploring the opportunities with the AA to utilise email for marketing incentives to AA customers. Andrew Stokes advised that this was a priority for the AA contract.
14. The Board discussed the Government Tourism Action Plan. Giles Smith commented that this document was heavily used in Government. The Board noted that this document was published post the Brexit referendum. It was noted that although matters have progressed since the publication that the contents were still valued. The Board noted the Government's Industrial Strategy which was published in January and noted the opportunities that it presented in the tourism sector, such as policy development and the development of a tourism sector deal. Giles Smith commented that these opportunities could be reflected in the draft EAP. It was noted that DCMS would like to provide further detailed comments on the draft EAP in due course. Giles Smith observed that since the EAP was a public document it needed to appeal to many different audiences, he commented that it needed to focus on the potential opportunities and the direction of travel rather than highlight the risks or financial challenges. It was noted that the Action Plan should discuss some of the potential compromises that would need to be made outlining where the risks and benefits occurred. Giles Smith commented that

the EAP appears quiet on the role of DMO's and queried whether there should be more content on this area. Giles Smith advised that DCMS would feedback on this aspect in due course.

15. Andrew Stokes advised the Board that VisitEngland had made further progress than what was reflected in the EAP on destinations. It was noted that the work of Carol Dray and the Partnership Team had taken a new approach to DMO's. The Board discussed the work with partners on the gateway status of Birmingham and Manchester together with their match funding contributions. It was noted that this was an entirely new approach that would be implemented with other DMO's and their partners. The Board commented that the work with DMO's needed to be reflected in the EAP. The Board discussed the various options that could be explored with seed funding in enhancing partnerships and destinations. The Board recommended that the EAP should draw a distinction as to the options that could be achieved with funding and the consequences that could occur without such funding.

Christopher Rodrigues left the meeting.

Agenda item 4a: 2017/18 Action Plan

16. Andrew Stokes referred the Board to the priority 1 set out in the 2017/18 EAP. The Board noted that the 21 Year 1 projects were in their critical delivery period with activities and expenditure to be completed by the end of March 2017. Andrew Stokes advised that it was important for VisitEngland to disseminate the learnings prior to the Year 2 projects commencing. Hazel Cunningham advised that some of the bidders were dependent upon demonstrating success in Year 1 to bid for additional funding for activities in Year 2. The Board discussed the requirements and success factors that bidders would need to establish to secure further funding. Andrew Stokes advised the Board that all 21 projects have tailored KPI's for which their performance could be evaluated.
17. Andrew Stokes referred to the DEF update paper contained at agenda item 4 d. The Board noted that of the Year 2 projects that there were 32 expressions of interest received. It was noted that the total value was £38m against a budget of £13m. Andrew Stokes advised that the number of bidders has now been reduced to 14. The Board noted the Rail Delivery Group who were bidding for a national app. It was noted that this would bring the large-scale bids to a total of 15. Giles Smith commented that DCMS were moving forward with Andrew Stokes and his team with matters such as the online portal.

18. Hazel Cunningham advised that the large-scale projects include marketing as part of the bid process and that 40% of the bid could be spent on marketing. The Board noted that the bidders needed the ability to take the projects to market. The Board noted that a glossary of the different terminology would be useful when identifying the different types of projects.
19. Denis Wormwell noted the importance of identifying a success criteria for the projects and that this would be essential to secure more funding from DCMS. Giles Smith commented that DCMS would need the evaluation. The Board noted that DEF was a three-year fund, which would leave a one year gap between the DEF fund ending and the next funding review period. Andrew Stokes advised that one of the strategic priorities identified by Sally Balcombe in the BTA paper was the need to look at advocacy and proving through evaluation that DEF was successful, then discussions for further DEF resource (DEF 2) could commence. The Board discussed the need for the 17/18 EAP to lay the foundation for DEF 2, it was noted that the plan should not just evaluate the Year 1 projects but should advocate for further DEF resource. The Board observed that post the regional growth fund that the same approach was taken to secure further funding.
20. The Board commented that it was important for the EAP to demonstrate the opportunities that would arise due to receiving the funding by illustrating by reference to the projects and clearly setting out the various stages of how the funding had been utilised. Hazel Cunningham confirmed that the PMO team have this information and that the team were considering the best way to present it to the VEAB.
21. The Board discussed the challenges that occur when funding is received with a restricted timescale in which to utilise it. It was noted that the true benefit of such funding is not realised and that there was a need for long term planning. Andrew Stokes advised the Board that a two-year approach had been taken for the DEF projects to implement the learnings from reports such as the South West report. The Board recommended that the approach taken to DEF projects should be set out in the EAP. The Board advised that the priorities set out at the end of page 3 of the EAP needed to clearly summarise that the Year 2 funding applications related to the £13m which equates to 32% of the fund.
22. Andrew Stokes referred to priority 2 set out in the 2017/18 EAP. It was noted that BV&E tourism was slow to develop and that as such it did not facilitate an immediate return on investment. Andrew Stokes advised that he was working with Giles Smith to explore ways of changing the BV&E activity. The Board noted that VisitEngland was examining whether there was a national product that could support BV&E growth across destinations.

23. Andrew Stokes explained the importance of BV&E to the destinations. The Board noted that a long-term strategy would be needed for BV&E. Andrew Stokes clarified that the £410K was the VisitEngland contribution and that there was £1m of GREAT funding available. The Board agreed that the EAP should be updated to state that the £1m is available and that the parts of the BTA Business Plan which are relevant to the EAP should be included.
24. The Board noted that the various projects set out in priority 3 of the EAP had not been presented to the VEAB. It was noted that there needed to be a plan for reporting on the projects to enable the VEAB to give advice to the BTA Board. The Board agreed that with the large-scale projects it would be beneficial for VEAB members to champion a project to ensure that at least one member of the VEAB had a detailed knowledge of the project.
25. The Board agreed that on brand, marketing and promotions that it would be essential for VE and VB to work closer together on product development.

| Sharon Orrwell joined the meeting

| 26. Sharon Orrwell referred the Board to the N/SWTGF Interim Evaluation Report that formed part of the Board Pack. Sharon Orwell took the board through the paper, the following matters were noted by the Board: -

- i. The evaluation activities included project monitoring, surveys of consumers and businesses and legacy interviews.
- ii. The reported concluded that although success in the delivery of projects was achieved the time constraints in the programmes led to them being less effective than might have been the case if given a longer period for delivery.
- iii. The report did not comment on the return on investment results but this would be included in the final report expected at the end Quarter 2 of 2017.
- iv. Based on the surveys to date the final measure of returns would be lower than the original targets set. It was noted that this was due to many factors such as the relatively short delivery period for the projects.

| Sharon Orrwell left the meeting

27. The Board noted the importance of capturing the lessons learnt for the benefit of the DEF fund going forward. The Board discussed whether the evaluation outcomes could assist in deciding how DEF is spent for the year's gap in the funding. Andrew Stokes confirmed that this was the approach being taken by VisitEngland.

Agenda item 4 e – Awards for excellence

28. Andrew Stokes took the Board through the paper that was prepared ahead of the Board, it was noted that several destinations had the highest entry to their awards. Andrew Stokes advised that VE was keen to develop the awards with the AA. It was noted that the AA only worked with participants of their schemes. The Board agreed that VE should explore this potential further with the AA.
29. The Board deliberated on the nominees for the award for the outstanding contributions to tourism. The Premier League was discussed as a potential collaborative partner and the value that could be added to the respective brands was recognised. It was noted that VB have a relationship with the Premier League. Board members were reminded that the 2017 awards would take place on Monday 24th April at the Hilton Waldorf Hotel in London and that the event would be afternoon tea (between 15:00 to 18:00) held on the Palm Court. The Board were reminded that members were welcome to attend. The Board discussed the number of awards recommended for 2018 and considered whether it was appropriate to continue with 25 awards. The consensus of the Board was that 25 awards should be maintained.

Agenda item 4 c -Quality Schemes

30. Hazel Cunningham took the Board through the National Tourism Quality Scheme: Transfer of Service Delivery Provider paper. The following points were noted by the Board: -
- i. The draft BTA contract had been issued to the AA, BTA received comments back and were working through them.
 - ii. The TUPE data had been received in respect to the 4 directly affected VE employees. Half a post would remain to manage the contract going forward.
 - iii. BTA had meet with QiT to discuss the exit strategy and the transition plan.
 - iv. BTA and AA had maintained regular discussions on the transition to the new service provider.
31. The Board noted that good progress was being made with the AA. It was noted that William Smart was the project lead from the BTA's perspective with Hazel Cunningham and Andrew Stokes available to deal with any matters which escalate. The Board noted that the EAP was silent on the plans for the contract in a year's time. It was noted that in order to achieve the second objective of the sale in twelve months' time that work needed to start as soon as possible and was thus a 2017/18 activity. Hazel Cunningham advised that this activity was set out in the BTA's work plan for the project with the AA and confirmed that the BTA Executive was committed to those timings. It was noted that the EAP was written for a public audience.

32. The Board discussed the valuations needed for the Quality Schemes, it was noted that this was an area for discussion going forward. It was noted that there was a potential conflict of interest with the AA being the only potential buyer. Hazel Cunningham confirmed the discussions that had taken place with the BDO and confirmed that this was a priority.
33. The Board discussed the budget plans and the minimum license fee payable by the AA. It was noted that the AA contract represented an increase compared to QiT. The savings created by the reduction of output costs from the TUPE were also acknowledged.
34. The Board noted that a full communications strategy was in place. The Board noted that any communications needed to be subject to contract until the final agreement had been executed. Hazel Cunningham advised that the BTA would consider a letter of intent to progress with matters quickly. It was noted that there would be more proactive communication once the agreement was signed. Andrew Stokes advised that roadshows in conjunction with the AA would take place to highlight the new service provider to existing as well as new participants of the Schemes.
35. The Board commented on page 10 of the EAP in relation to the advice, engagement and communication activity planned for 2017/18. The Board noted that two destination forums would be suitable and that further detail was needed as to what was meant by destination steering groups. Andrew Stokes advised the Board that the steering groups referred to the work with the core cities, rural, coastal and BV&E.
36. The Board referred to the delivery sustainable long term impact section on page 11 of the EAP. It was recommended that once the BTA Business Plan was agreed that it would be beneficial to extract some numbers for input into this section of the EAP. The Board noted this section should include reference to securing DEF 2 and the importance of crystallising VE's view here would be important. It was noted that the reference to the KPI's and the evaluation framework should also be made.
37. The Board referred to the papers for information and noted the contents.

Denis Wormwell left the meeting.

Sally Balcombe and Andrew Jackson joined the meeting.

Agenda Item 5 – Governance Review

38. Andrew Jackson took the Board through the stage 1 paper on the governance review for the BTA and the VE Boards. The Board noted the following matters: -

- i. The paper was forward looking to explore how the two Boards could work together to promote the interests of tourism.
 - ii. VEAB needs to agree an agenda with BTA and the primary vehicle for this should be the EAP.
 - iii. A programme for engagement and activities for the year ahead should be agreed, including how VEAB engages with stakeholders.
 - iv. VEAB's task was to give views and recommendations to the BTA.
 - v. VEAB and BTA to agree protocols for the levels of support the VEAB will receive.
 - vi. VEAB could play a stronger role with advice on the DEF applications.
39. The Board noted that to take the governance review forward, Andrew Jackson would meet with the new Chairs and Sally Balcombe and agree the way forward for the two Boards. It was noted that the Chair's may then wish to meet with their respective Boards in order to discuss the strategy for governance going forward. Andrew Jackson advised that the new Chairs are likely to review the membership of their Boards to ensure that they have the right balance of skills and experience.
40. The Chair thanked Andrew Jackson for his contributions. It was noted that the papers that come to the VEAB receive comments but that they may not be amended for the BTA Board. Andrew Jackson commented on the process and recommended that a protocol could be put in place to ensure that the VEAB receives the information that it needs and can provide advice to the BTA Board. The Board agreed to this approach.
41. The VEAB discussed various ways of representing England matters at the BTA Board. Andrew Jackson advised that there were several ways that this could be addressed. The Board noted that the new BTA Board Chair Steve Ridgeway was minded to give more time to England matters and will consider whether the 45 minutes at the beginning of the BTA Board was the best way of facilitating this is.
42. Sally Balcombe commented that currently Scotland, Wales and London do not attend the England matters at the beginning of the BTA Board. The Board noted that Scotland and Wales are full BTA Board members and that currently the full discussion on England items occurs in their absence but that the decisions are then taken into the full Board. It was noted that the West Lothian question exists and that the Board would need to consider how this is handled. Sally Balcombe commented that there was less of an issue with Scotland and Wales, it was noted that they add value and behave appropriately. The Board noted that London was the biggest part of British tourism, and that although London is not the BTA's remit it would be important to look at England and London collectively.

43. The Board discussed the proposal for an annual joint Board strategy for the VE and BTA Boards to occur at least once a year. It was noted that this would achieve greater understanding between the Boards and promote strong working relationships.
44. The Board discussed whether the EAP could be used as part of the BTA Board Pack. The Board noted the danger of duplication between the Boards and the need to be efficient between the work of the VEAB and the BTA Board. The Board agreed that it may be beneficial to invite members of the BTA Board to attend the VEAB meetings.
45. The volume of papers produced for the Boards was discussed and the consensus was that concise papers would be more beneficial. The Board identified scope for much shorter papers, examples were drawn from the presentation provided by Andrew Stokes on the EAP and the presentation delivered by Hazel Cunningham on Quality. It was noted that the papers that are produced by BTA for its own management purposes could be utilised for the Board papers at the VEAB which could then go on to the BTA Board with minor amendments to reflect discussions and recommendations of the VEAB. Sally Balcombe advised that this is an approach that the BTA would support but commented that the VEAB makes a lot of request for papers and that as such, the BTA would require a request for less paper. It was noted that sometimes a verbal update would be appropriate.
46. The Board noted that today's agenda focused on the EAP and that short papers on aspects of the EAP would have assisted. Andrew Jackson advised that this approach could be worked into the protocol of how the Board operate. Andrew Jackson advised he would compile models of annotated agenda and supporting documents for the Boards to consider.
47. Sally Balcombe commented on the approach to Board papers discussed with Steve ~~Ridgeway~~Ridgway. It was noted that the use of visuals such as dashboard could be used to facilitate shorter papers. The Board noted that it was essential to agree on the level of detail for the papers. It was noted that the VEAB goes in to greater detail than the BTA Board on England matters.
48. The Chair recapped on the earlier discussions in relation to the need to feed KPI's and outcomes in the EAP. It was noted that this could be used to achieve shorter papers with the EAP being used as an agenda for future Boards. The Board agreed that being more explicit as to the advice that is being sought on agenda items would assist in VEAB delivering advice to the BTA Board. Sally Balcombe confirmed that this was now occurring at the BTA Board.

49. The Board discussed the role of DCMS in providing approval for the EAP. Andrew Stokes recapped on the earlier discussion and advised that Giles Smith would need to provide further input into areas. Giles Smith commented that he would give this further thought to whether the EAP was consistent with the management letter.

50. Andrew Jackson summarised the next steps that he will be carrying out. The Board noted that Andrew Jackson will:-

- i. Produce draft programmes for the VEAB and the BTA Board.
- ii. Draft a protocol of how the two Boards will work together (including options).
- iii. Convene a meeting with Sally Balcombe, Denis Wormwell and Steve ~~Ridgeway~~Ridgway to discuss documents and agree a way forward equipping them for their first Board meetings in May (the Chairs may wish to bring colleagues from their Boards). Practical issues will be discussed such as the nature of papers, the cycle of the meetings and the West Lothian question.

51. The Chair commented on the other opportunities to bring the two Boards together should a joint meeting not occur as part of the governance review. The Board noted that it would be beneficial for the two Boards to meet at least once a year.

Any Other Business

There being no other business the Chairman called the meeting to a close.

Sally Balcombe led members of the Board with a toast to the Chair for all she had done for England.

Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 24th May 2017