

## VisitEngland

### MINUTES OF THE 425th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD HELD AT 10.30AM ON FRIDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016 AT VISITENGLAND, SANCTUARY BUILDINGS, GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT

**Present:** Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, CBE (Chairman)  
Sally Balcombe  
Suzanne Bond  
Lise-Anne Boissiere  
Nigel Halkes  
John Hoy  
Sarah Stewart, OBE

**Apologies:** Denis Wormwell

**In Attendance:** Christopher Rodrigues, BTA Chairman  
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director  
Andrew Stokes, England Director  
Suneet Joseph, Secretary to the Board  
Chris Foy, Head of Business Visits & Events  
Lyndsey Swift, Head of Discover England Fund

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

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2016 were approved and signed.

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

2. The Chairman noted that there have been a number of queries regarding the VE online business tool and that further work would be required to develop and enhance the tool for maximum user benefit.
3. The Chairman noted the importance of taking the learnings from the ongoing review of the Northern Tourism Growth Fund, South West Fund and Hadrian's Wall Fund to maximise the effectiveness of managing the Discover England

Fund through its phases. The VE Advisory Board noted that full evaluation and analysis of the success of the Funds would take 6 months to complete.

4. The Chairman noted that it would be helpful for the VE Advisory Board to have an update specifically in relation to the Great Festival of the North at the appropriate time.

### **Declarations of Interest**

5. Sarah Stewart declared an interest in any discussions relating to the Great Festival of the North, Northern Tourism Growth Fund, the Newcastle-Scandinavia Fund and the Hadrian's Wall Fund as her organisation would benefit from these.
6. Sarah Stewart and John Hoy declared an interest in any discussions relating to the Discover England Fund.
7. Sarah Stewart declared an interest in any discussion relating to the Regional Growth Fund project from which her organisation had benefited.
8. John Hoy declared a potential interest in the UK Challenge Fund.
9. Sally Balcombe declared an interest in any discussion relating to VisitEngland's activity with Historic England of which she was a Commissioner.
10. The Chairman declared an interest in any discussion relating to Shakespeare Birthplace Trust of which she is a Trustee.

### **England Action Plan (EAP) & Discover England Fund (DEF) – Update**

11. Andrew Stokes provided the VE Advisory Board with an overview of the process and timeframes relating to Year 1 bids for the Discover England Fund. There then followed a discussion about emerging themes and patterns of the bids that had been received to date together with the types of feedback and comments received by bidders.
12. The VE Advisory Board noted the importance of ensuring availability of sufficient resource to effectively manage and evaluate bids as they come in. It was noted that additional resource was available via the PMO and other

directorates to manage any challenging workloads arising from a high volume of bids being submitted.

13. The VE Advisory Board discussed the importance to review as soon as possible after the closing deadline of Round 1 bids for Year 1 DEF funds so that any necessary changes in the tone and/or substance of communications with bidders could be quickly implemented to maximise the quality of Round 2 bids being developed and submitted.
14. The VE Advisory Board noted the importance of bidders fully understanding the objectives of the DEF including the types of “big iconic programmes” of work (which could consist of a number of individual elements or strands of activity from a variety of participants).
15. The VE Advisory Board discussed the latest drafts of Summary Guidance & Criteria documents for Years 2 & 3 and provided extensive comments and feedback to be incorporated in future iterations. It was noted that the Guidance should provide as much clarity as possible to bidders so that they could frame their bids in the best possible way.
16. The VE Advisory Board discussed the importance of complying at all times with applicable EU rules relating to State Aid and public procurement. VE has an important role to play in ensuring bidders had clear, practical information and guidance on State Aid risks and steps to mitigations to assist them in developing and framing their bid documentation.

### **Update on review of Quality Schemes**

17. Hazel Cunningham advised the VE Advisory Board of the status of the ongoing review together with the various options for moving forward. There followed a detailed discussion of the options and the needs of the affected industry stakeholders. There was general agreement that there were only two realistic options. Hazel will reissue the papers clarifying those options which both require further work. A final recommendation will come to the VE Advisory Board in September.

### **Update on status of Annual Report for VisitEngland**

18. Hazel Cunningham provided the VE Advisory Board with an overview of the current status of the Annual Report together with an overview of the process and key milestones around finalisation of the Annual Report and Accounts, including approval by the Audit Committee in early June.

## **VE 2017 Awards**

19. Andrew Stokes gave a status update of the planning for the 2017 VE Awards which was discussed by the VE Advisory Board with the focus on staging the Awards in such a way to provide maximum impact and industry recognition.

## **Update on England Business Visits & Events (England BVE)**

20. Sally Balcombe advised the VE Advisory Board that a written paper to be presented to the Board on this matter was still in draft form and further work was needed before it would be ready to be submitted to the Board for review. Sally Balcombe did note that BV&E was a complex area that needed careful review especially due to BVE being a whole new area for VisitBritain having been out of this space for a number of years. Chris Foy provided the VE Advisory Board with a high level overview and update on the Event Support Programme and the Event Industry Board and intended workings.

## **Any Other Business**

21. The Chairman noted the recent domestic launch of the #OMGB campaign and the huge success that it had already generated in the first week since launch in terms of breadth and depth of media coverage.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016