

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 426th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VE AB) HELD AT 12.00PM ON MONDAY, 6TH JUNE 2016 AT VISITENGLAND, SANCTUARY BUILDINGS, GREAT SMITH STREET, LONDON SW1P 3BT

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

Apologies: Denis Wormwell

In Attendance: Christopher Rodrigues, BTA Chairman
(via teleconference)

Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Suneet Joseph, Secretary to the Board
Chris Foy, Head of Business Visits & Events

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2016 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

2. The Chairman noted the forthcoming English Destinations Forum event currently scheduled for 5th July 2016 and requested the VE AB to be notified of any subsequent change in scheduling. It was noted by the VE AB that the Event is an important tool to communicate and proactively engage with industry stakeholders and for the need to invite the right mix of attendees to ensure maximum benefit from the sessions and discussion. Sally Balcombe advised that the format and agenda were still to be confirmed and that the team would continue to work on the format and agenda items. The Chairman

noted that she was happy to provide any support and assistance to the team if so required.

Declarations of Interest

3. 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.
4. Sarah Stewart and John Hoy declared an interest in any discussions relating to the Discover England Fund.
5. Sarah Stewart declared an interest in any discussion relating to the Regional Growth Fund project from which her organisation had benefited.
6. John Hoy declared a potential interest in the UK Challenge Fund and Discover England Fund.
7. Sally Balcombe declared an interest in any discussion relating to VisitEngland's activity with Historic England of which she was a Commissioner.
8. 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

9. Andrew Stokes advised the VE AB that according to the planned timeline for delivery of DEF, matters were on track.
10. The VE AB discussed the involvement of the VE AB with reference to the BTA Marketing Plan. Sally Balcombe confirmed that, in accordance with its role as an advisory body, the VE AB would be advised and kept up to date about the Marketing Plan as opposed to the VE AB themselves advising and monitoring the Marketing Plan. It was noted that there was potential for marketing activity following implementation of DEF work which VE AB would have more involvement with. It was noted that the "Holidays At Home" domestic campaign is now a #OMGB campaign and as such, all approvals had to come from the GREAT Board (which was the same approval process for Visit Britain and VisitEngland). Lise-Anne Boissiere confirmed that as for all #OMGB campaigns, there would be a post campaign review of outcomes of what has been delivered and an evaluation of campaign performance via the agreed performance dashboards.

11. The VE AB discussed the issue of how some local destinations are marketing themselves in relation to local tactical campaigns and internationally without any reference to a wider England strategy. The VE AB discussed whether VisitEngland had a role to play in engaging with local destinations to ensure that local destinations aligned their work with BTA to maximise success of local campaign funding.
12. Sally Balcombe noted that the role of VisitEngland was not to advise local destinations on how to market or to advise destinations on the merits of local tactical campaigns. Lise-Anne Boissiere also noted that whilst local authority discretionary spend was not something that VisitEngland could involve itself in or advise on, VisitEngland could and should make it as attractive as possible for local authorities to work and collaborate more with VisitEngland, which is a key objective behind DEF.
13. The VE AB further noted the unique opportunity that VisitEngland has to educate and influence local destinations in their activities and to foster a culture within and between destinations of the “whole being greater than the sum of its parts”. Sally Balcombe confirmed that the dedicated VisitEngland money and resource would be utilised with the aim to persuade as many people to back the DEF opportunity. It was further noted that VisitEngland did not have the resources or mandate to specifically undertake influencing and engagement activities with destinations as a standalone workstream and that the significant workload resulting from the administration of the DEF would mean very little spare capacity to take on such influencer activities with destinations.
14. There followed a discussion about whether an online toolkit containing advice and guidance could serve as an easy to use vehicle to support destinations in aligning their local and international activities with the wider aims of VE. Such toolkit could also specifically contain guidance on types of marketing activities that local destinations should not undertake without seeking prior guidance from VisitEngland. In terms of Business Support activities, consideration was to be given to the options and/or role of VisitEngland in this space. Such consideration should include the possibility, if appropriate, of an online toolkit to support, guide and align marketing activities aimed at international visitors.

Update on England Business Visits & Events (England BVE)

15. Sally Balcombe advised the VE AB that what was being presented today was the latest version of an England BV&E paper that sat alongside the VB BV&E Strategy. Chris Foy led the VE AB through a presentation about the key

principles behind the England BV&E paper, its connectivity with VisitBritain BV&E Strategy and potential gains. There followed a discussion about the BV&E landscape in England, England situation analysis and VisitEngland's approach in supporting bids. Sally Balcombe advised that this England BV&E paper was high level in its purpose and not intended to be a detailed activity plan.

16. The VE AB discussed what "soft power" support could comprise of in terms of non financial support being provided to bidders. The VE AB considered that the sector would welcome the England BV&E support programme to secure /win bids for hosting events in England as it had in the past. The importance of sharing best practice already in existence, including from Convention Bureaux, was highlighted. Chris Foy noted that feedback and comments would be solicited from industry stakeholders (from end of July timeframe) to further inform and shape an England BV&E Delivery Plan. The VE AB requested an update from Chris Foy on England BV&E for the VE AB board meeting in September.

Update on review of Quality Schemes

17. Hazel Cunningham advised the VE Advisory Board of the status of the ongoing review together with the two shortlisted options for moving forward. There followed a detailed discussion of the two options and the need to carry out thorough impact assessments on affected industry stakeholders for each of the options. The VE AB noted that where any of the options resulted in new contracts being awarded, this would have to comply with all applicable rules and regulations on public procurement process and/or State Aid compliance. A final recommendation will come to the VE AB in September. It was further noted that in implementing any changes, brand and reputational risks for the organization had to be well managed including the preparation of a Risks Mitigation & Communications Plan.

Update on Year 1 Pilots & Quick Wins

18. Andrew Stokes advised the VE AB that as of 31st May, deadline for Round 1 bids for Year 1 projects, 21 completed bid applications had been received. A document was tabled which provided a high level overview of the bids received to date and there followed a discussion about the locations covered by each bid together with the funding applied for. There was a discussion about the process moving forward for further evaluating each of the bids and shortlisting successful bids for the next stage(s) in the awards process and the composition and role of the Awards Panel, chaired by Sally Balcombe. It was noted that the Awards Panel would include subject matter experts including from financial perspective to effectively scrutinise bids. Those members of the VE AB not in any position of conflict of interests would

have sight of the documentation put forward to the Awards Panel for assessment together with the recommendations from the Awards Panel. It was noted by the VE AB that it was important to ensure that appropriate records are made and retained at each stage of the evaluation and awards stage for audit purposes.

19. In terms of accountability, the VE AB acknowledged that it did not have a role or responsibility in making the actual decision to make any award – that was for the BTA to make in its sole discretion. For the benefit of complete transparency with stakeholders and bidders, the VE AB discussed the importance of identifying what specific tasks or activities the VE AB had specifically advised on with regard to the DEF – such as providing input on the evaluation criteria and advising the BTA Board on the recommendations put forward by the Awards Panel.

Update on Summary Guidance & Criteria for Years 2 & 3 of DEF

20. The VE AB provided some feedback and comments on the latest version of the Summary Guidance document for consideration when preparing the next iteration of the document. The VE AB highlighted the continuing importance of mitigating any risks with public procurement and State Aid rules and regulations.

Update on Key Lessons & Learnings from South West Fund (SWF), Northern Tourism Growth Fund (NTGF) and Hadrian's Wall Fund

21. The VE AB noted that the full evaluation and analysis of the success of the NTGF, SWF and Hadrian's Wall Fund would take up to 6 months to complete following the closure of those Funds and requested an Update to be provided for the VE AB board meeting on 24th November 2016. Andrew Stokes highlighted that from a preliminary interim review, the following observations/themes were already apparent: the need for destinations to embrace a "partnership model way of working"; the importance of project management to ensure compliance with timescales set out in delivery plans and the importance to quickly identify "mission creep" on any given activity to ensure destinations retain overall focus on key objectives for delivery.

Any Other Business

22. The Chairman noted that it would be helpful for the VE AB to have an update in relation to the Great Festival of the North at the September VE AB meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 9th September 2016