

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 435th MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD ("VEAB") HELD AT 10.30AM ON THURSDAY, 13th OF SEPTEMBER 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
Allan Lambert
Nigel Halkes

In Attendance:

Stephen Darke, DCMS
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Lyndsey Swift (for agenda items 5 and 8)
Anthony Pickles (for item agenda item 6)
Lola Moses, 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 has now finished and has been very successful with record visits and overnight stays to Newcastle Gateshead. Sarah to give further details to the Board during the meeting
 - (ii) VEAB member sponsorship roles had commenced in large-scale DEF projects and feedback would be given on 10 October

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2018 were approved.

Agenda Item 3: Apologies

4. Apologies noted from Carol Dray.

Agenda Item 4: Declarations of interest

5. There were no new declarations of interest.

Agenda item 5: 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:

(i) Board Sponsor Relationships

- a. The Board was presented with the VEAB project allocation schedule and brief updates were provided by Denis Wormwell on his 10th of September “Gateway to the North” visit with Marketing Manchester; (ii) John Hoy on his 5th of September “Cycle England” visit with Welcome to Yorkshire; and (iii) Fiona Pollard on her 5th of September “The Great West Way” visit with Visit Wiltshire.
- b. It was noted that 12 out of 14 visits had been scheduled and the rest of the Board members were expected to report verbally at the 10th of October Joint Board Strategy Day meeting on (i) their project’s key successes; (ii) key challenges/risks; (iii) learnings for DEF 2; and (iv) areas where VEAB can add value.

(ii) Update on large scale projects

- c. Updates were provided on 14 large scale projects and challenges such as (i) sourcing cash match from the private sector; (ii) engaging with distributors and operators; (iii) capacity and resourcing of lead organisations and partners; and (iv) sustaining activities beyond the life of DEF funding, were identified. The Board was provided with summaries on the progress of the following live large scale projects:
 - i. **Discover England’s Great Walking Trails** – A partnership with P&O had fallen through causing a shortfall in cash match. The project was currently looking at other sources of match and were in discussions with the DEF team about adjusting their match target.
 - ii. **Great West Way** – Risks identified following the Salisbury chemical attacks which could impact resourcing; DEF objectives could get lost amongst a wider 10 year vision for the route that is not just about international tourism.
 - iii. **The English National Park Experience Collection** – Securing a suitable distributor in Australia and Germany to be live in the timescales, although great interest in the product was reported.
 - iv. **Cycle England** – Project began late and was slow to start up activity. Initial ROI was projected as low.
 - v. **England’s Waterways** – It was noted that this product was still developing and would therefore be slow to get to market.
 - vi. **North of England Cities Experience** – The risks of this project being heavily reliant on a digital platform solution for distribution and therefore awaiting outcome of decision on the VE/VB platform tied into the wider development and remaining delivery time. VEAB was in discussions with DCMS about potential re-profile.

- vii. **Gourmet Garden Trails of England** – Serious concerns reported as risks were tied into the wider development of a digital platform and remaining delivery time. Lead body had highlighted significant cash flow issues. VEAB in discussion with DCMS about potential re-profile and requested a meeting with the new Go To Places CEO to discuss the best way forward.
- viii. **England's Coast** – The project had a large number of stakeholders to manage which was taking significant resource. The end of funding in March 2019 poses a challenge in continuing the current level of support.
- ix. **Growing Manchester as an International Gateway to the North** – A key challenge for the project in the past few months of delivery was ensuring that the products became sustainable after 31 March 2019.
- x. **Experience England** – Match funding with partner destinations and delays in activity in India were reported as potential risks/challenges.
- xi. **England's Originals** – Risk of main focus being only on the traditional heritage cities such as London, Oxford and Bath.
- xii. **The Explorer's Road** – Despite a late start to the project their activity was moving quickly. They have asked for a change to their match funding targets.
- xiii. **The Outdoor City Adventure Breaks** –As this was a niche product with a challenging route to market, measuring success as a direct consequence of the project was proving to be a challenge. Identifying commissionable and pre-bookable products had also been reported as being difficult.
- xiv. **US Connections** – A need was identified to work closely with the new National Churches Trust bid to ensure there was no overlap in the market.

(iii) One year and amplification projects

The Board was briefly presented with the amplification and Year 2 Pilot projects by reference to the circulated materials.

(iv) Education Programme

The Board was referred to the paper circulated by Andrew Stokes for the Trade Education Programme and a discussion was held on the issues raised.

(v) Verbal Update on the DEF Platform and Budget Update

- a. The board was provided with a verbal update on DEF and referred to the Budget Position paper circulated prior to the meeting.
- b. The Board noted: (i) that the proposed budget transfer into 19/20 was included in the circulated budget paper but that the figures were now of a higher amount of £5.45m (previously £3.5m) to reflect delays on the digital platform and the impact on project delivery and central marketing and distribution; a decision was still pending but crucial; (ii) that the over programming of DEF Year 3 project grant awards of circa £0.3m was agreed by the Programme Management Board to help mitigate underspends at the end of the financial year and that projects were underway slightly later due to increased due diligence from the

Cabinet Office for grant recipients; (iii) and that there were likely to be minor adjustments made across budgets in Q3 as plans were formalized and underway in key areas.

- c. The Board discussed the 2018/2019 expenditure to date, considered the DCMS DEF budget transfer request and went through the progress and risks as well as the mitigation plans. Concerns were raised on timings and DCMS response.

Agenda item 6: Political/Tourism Affairs

7. Anthony Pickles provided the Board with a verbal update on Industrial Strategy/Spending Review:
 - a. Sector Deal was still pending as approval had been delayed by BEIS. A decision was expected in the upcoming couple of weeks following the Board meeting.
 - b. The Rt. Hon Jeremy Wright MP was appointed as new Secretary of State for State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on 9 July 2018. It was noted that he was enthusiastic about tourism and about the prospect of a tourism sector deal.
 - c. It was noted that there was uncertainty around when the spending review would take place next year. The budget was expected to come out in October or later on in the year. Stephen Darke provided an overview of process involved to the Board.
 - d. 2019 marks the 50 year anniversary of the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

Agenda item 7: Business Performance

8. Sarah Stewart circulated papers to the Board and held a presentation on the Great Exhibition of the North (the **Exhibition**). The following points were noted:
 - a. NewcastleGateshead was named the number one place in the world to visit in 2018 by Rough Guides and it welcomed more than four million visitors over the summer.
 - b. Surveys conducted during this period showed that 32% of visitors to the area cited the Exhibition as the primary reason for their visit, whilst 75% engaged with the Exhibition's content.
 - c. Hotel bookings in the area reached record levels with more than 363,000 hotel rooms occupied during the Exhibition.
 - d. The social media and digital reach of the Exhibition was of over 19.7 million people.
 - e. The Exhibition featured over 10,000 contributors including artists, scientists and inventors who had content on display across 30 core venues and a further 83 locations in the area.
 - f. The Exhibition also registered record numbers of volunteers with 1,175 people having registered to volunteer, aged between 16 and 78.
 - g. Hundreds of businesses were engaged over the Exhibition's 80 days.

Agenda item 8: DEF 2

9. Andrew Stokes and Lyndsey Swift referred the Board to the paper circulated prior to the meeting, the following main points were noted:

- a. VEAB's learnings from DEF 1 included: (i) limited sector capacity; (ii) lack of knowledge within local tourism business and DMOs; (iii) state aid impact on shape of the fund, grant criteria and ability to fund private sector; (iv) the need for clarity of roles between VE/VB and DEF projects.
- b. It was noted that a need to balance supply and demand was needed and that longer lead in times for product development resulted in limited ROI in early stages of a project.
- c. The DEF 1 bottom up approach led to too many projects with overlapping geographies and similar products.
- d. The Board discussed DEF 1 findings in detail moved on to consider the following options for DEF 2:
 - i. Amplifying and replicating what has worked well in DEF 1 projects;
 - ii. Developing new products in response to identified market gaps/opportunities aligned with VE/VB strategy;
 - iii. Generating international and domestic overnight trips and spend;
 - iv. Product development that addresses seasonality;
 - v. The need to ensure products are accessible and joined up for the consumer through working with transport hubs and gateways;
 - vi. Distribution and promotion internationally and domestic;
 - vii. Strategic solutions to national barriers; and
 - viii. Strengthening sector expertise and capability in important areas such as working with the trade, international distribution, market readiness.
- e. The Board also considered and discussed the following suggested DEF 2 work streams:
 - i. Grant funded projects – to amplify or replicate what has worked well in DEF 1 and develop new products for identified markets/gaps/opportunities.
 - ii. Distribution – through the DEF online platform and VB intermediary strategy.
 - iii. Domestic and international promotion.
 - iv. Capability and expertise through the trade education programme, VE/VB resource within projects.
 - v. Strategic Challenges – nationally delivered and opportunity to work across Britain.
- f. A distinction between DEF 2 and Tourism Zones was noted and it was suggested that each work stream should be kept separate.

Agenda item 9: Any other business

- 10. There were no items of other business.
- 11. There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting.

Agenda item 11: Date of Next Meeting

29 November 2018 (10:30 to 14:30)

Chairman's Signature

Original Signed