

VisitEngland

MINUTES OF THE 439TH MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VEAB) HELD AT 10.30AM ON THURSDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER 2019 AT VISITENGLAND 151 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD, LONDON SW1W 9SZ

Present: Denis Wormwell, Chairman
Sally Balcombe, CEO
Nigel Halkes, Board Member
John Hoy, Board Member
Allan Lambert, Board Member
Fiona Pollard, Board Member
Sarah Stewart, Board Member

In Attendance: Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications
Andrew Stokes, England Director
Stephen Darke, Head of Tourism Affairs, DCMS
Lola Moses, General Counsel and Company Secretary
Emma Mead, Head of Global PR and Influencer Marketing
Lyndsey Turner-Swift, Head of England Action Plan (for agenda item 8)
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (minutes)

Apologies: Carol Dray, Commercial Director

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) Sarah Stewart and John Hoy were due to finish their terms of office on the VEAB. Following an agreed extension, their tenure would end on 31st October 2019. The Board thanked both Sarah and John for all their commitment and all their efforts on the Advisory Board.
 - (ii) The sifting process of applications for posts on both the BTA and VEAB Boards had taken place. There was a strong candidate pool and over 70 applications were reviewed. Interviews were scheduled to take place in October 2019.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 6th June 2019 were approved.

Agenda Item 3: Apologies

4. The Board noted apologies from Carol Dray.

Agenda Item 4: Declarations of interest

5. There were no declarations.

Agenda Item 5: Political Update

The Board received a verbal update from Patricia Yates on the following items:

6. Spending Round
The new spending round for 2020-2021 was announced. Funding had been confirmed and approved for the Discover England Fund (DEF) totaling £5.45m. It was noted that of the 50 arm's length bodies (ALBs), only two had the funding approved and one of them was for the DEF. A full multi-year spending review would follow in 2020.
7. Elections
Parliament had been suspended and was due to return on 14th October 2019. It was noted that Helen Whately MP had been appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism. The Board was also informed that the CEO and BTA Board Chairman would be meeting with Nicky Morgan MP, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
8. No-Deal Brexit
There were continued government briefings on the possible extension of Brexit negotiations. The VisitEngland team had developed no-deal contingency plans, including worst case scenario factors. There would be a focus on delivering communications that provided reassurance and clear messaging for the European and international markets on Brexit.
9. Tourism Sector Deal
The Board noted the paper which provided an overview and progress timetable of the Tourism Sector Deal. It was noted that the organisation would be hosting the Tourism Sector Deal Conference on 18th October 2019. A big programme was planned for the event, with over 100 industry stakeholders due to attend.

Agenda item 6: England Marketing

10. England Marketing Update
The Board received a presentation from Emma Mead on the microgapping campaign work. The following points were noted:
 - (i) Phase 1 of microgapping campaign had ended in August 2019 and planning for phase 2 was underway. Phase 1 offered lots of learning that would inform the campaign going forward, such as a clearer picture of the key drivers of the target audience. The final appointment of the commercial partner was underway, which would facilitate content to be directed into commercial bookings.
 - (ii) Research work had been undertaken on a campaign specifically for "family experiences". It was identified that the family audience were inclined to naturally adopt domestic breaks and include them in their holiday portfolio. The selected focus audience would be families with pre-school children. The aim would be to have the campaign live between January and March 2020.
11. England Tourism Week
The Board noted a paper on the review undertaken of the England Tourism Week (ETW) framework. The review was led by Fiona Pollard, who presented her findings to the Board. The aim of the review was to identify areas that were working well and areas for improvement. The primary recommendations that came out of the review were:
 - Making ETW more targeted and relaunching it with a fresh approach, with more industry involvement.
 - For the ETW Board to have a clearer terms of reference and expectations.
 - Have Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) representation on the ETW Board.
 - Have a high profile ambassador to spearhead the launch of ETW.
 - Have a focus on using ETW as an opportunity to "influence the influencers" (i.e. politicians, key industry stakeholders).

APPROVED: The Board approved the recommendations from the review.

Agenda item 7: Quality Assurance Schemes Contract

12. The Board noted the paper that outlined the proposals and business case for the Quality Assurance Schemes Contract. Andrew Stokes provided the Board with a verbal update and the following points were noted:
- (i) The proposal was to undertake a non-tender action to extend the contract with the current provider for another year. The Board was informed that a full tender for such as short contract term would unlikely attract other bidders other than the current provider.
 - (ii) The proposed approach would ensure business continuity and minimise disruption to the current service. A business case had been prepared for DCMS approval.

Agenda item 8: DEF (Discover England Fund) Update

13. The Board noted a paper on the DEF update. Lyndsey Turner-Swift provided a verbal update and the following points were noted:
- (i) The overall spend to date in the year 4 cycle has been £1.4m. £490k has been claimed to date by grant-funded projects and this was in line with the back-ended nature for grant funding claims. Grant funded projects are expected to claim full allocation of over £2m by the end of October 2019.
 - (ii) There has been good progress on the Large-Scale Amplification & Reprofile Projects. The project focus would now be on sustainability.
 - (iii) DEF successes were highlighted, which include: over 800 products available through DEF large scale projects, dozens of live bookable experiences, creation of more cycle routes with Cycle England, growth in the volumes of excursions to the North and Manchester, and a year-on-year increase in flight and hotel bookings from China.
14. The Risk and Mitigation Register for the DEF project work was noted by the Board.
15. There had been some international recognition for the DEF as a successful tourism model, particularly from New Zealand which had identified it as a good model.

Agenda item 10: TXGB Status Report

16. The Board noted the paper which outlined an update on the work relating to Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB) and Taking England to the World. Andrew Stokes updated the Board and following points were noted:
- (i) The TXGB programme had been delivered with practical real-life insights from consumers and trade. It has been offered as a full-day programme, with a modular approach. Up to 4000 SMEs would have undertaken the training programme by March 2020. Positive feedback has been received from independent evaluations undertaken on the training workshops.
 - (ii) There were plans for the new governance oversight structure for the TXGB project. There would be representation from the BTA Board, VEAB, Directors, DCMS, DMOs and industry stakeholders.

Agenda item 11: Any other business

17. Joint BTA/VEAB Board Strategy Day
- (i) Sally Balcombe provided an update to the Board on the Joint Strategy Day on 15th October 2019. Sustainability would be one of the key items in the agenda, with a focus on balancing economic growth with sustainability and how this can be achieved.
 - (ii) **ACTION: Ms Balcombe had asked Board Members for help on information relating to sustainability and to send her models/case-studies on sustainability that they were able to share.**

Agenda item 12: Date of Next Meeting

18. The dates of the next meetings were noted as follows:

- (i) Joint BTA Board and VEAB Strategy Day on Tuesday 15th October 2019 (10:00-15:00)
- (ii) VEAB meeting on Wednesday 20th November 2019 (10:30-14:30).