

## CONFIDENTIAL

### MINUTES OF THE 440<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF VISITENGLAND ADVISORY BOARD (VEAB) HELD AT 10.30AM ON 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019 AT VISITENGLAND 151 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD, LONDON SW1W 9SZ

**Present:** Denis Wormwell, Chairman  
Nigel Halkes, Board Member  
Fiona Pollard, Board Member

**In Attendance:** Sally Balcombe, CEO  
Hazel Cunningham, Business Services Director  
Carol Dray, Commercial Director  
Patricia Yates, Director of Strategy & Communications  
Andrew Stokes, England Director  
Stephen Darke, Head of Tourism Affairs, DCMS  
Henry Bankes, General Counsel and Company Secretary  
Lyndsey Turner-Swift, Head of England Action Plan (for agenda item 6)  
Dale Rustige, Governance Executive (Minutes)

**Apologies:** Allan Lambert, Board Member

#### **Agenda item 1: Chair's Update and Introduction**

1. The Chairman welcomed the Board to the meeting.
2. The Chairman noted that there were three new members appointed to the Board by DCMS and will be starting their terms of office on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The new members' names could not yet be formally announced due to the political purdah in place ahead of the general elections in December 2019.

#### **Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the Last Meeting**

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019 were approved.

#### **Agenda Item 3: Apologies**

4. The Board noted apologies from Allan Lambert.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Declarations of interest**

5. There were no new declarations.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Political Update**

6. The Board received a verbal update from Patricia Yates on political matters and the following points were noted:
  - (i) The pre-election purdah is currently in place ahead of the December general elections.
  - (ii) The Annual Review Launch had been postponed to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020 due to the purdah.
  - (iii) In anticipation of new political outcomes following the elections, political party manifestos would be monitored to determine where tourism sat on party agendas.

- (iv) Steve Ridgway has agreed to continue on and lead the Tourism Sector Deal for another year.
- (v) Activities around Brexit contingency planning continued, including the delivery of reassurance messaging across European channels. A recovery campaign was also under development.

#### **Agenda item 6: Discover England Fund (DEF) Update**

7. The Board noted the DEF Update paper. Andrew Stokes and Lyndsey Turner-Swift provided a verbal update with reference to the paper and the following was noted:
- (i) There has been £3.25m overall spend to date under the Year 4 budget. £1.4m had been claimed to date by grant funded projects, with final grant claims increasing the full allocation to £2,177,000. There has been some over-programming of around 10%, which will continue to be monitored.
  - (ii) The budget and priorities for Year 5 was noted. The total budget was £5.45m and the key DEF elements had been identified. The budget has been split into the following areas: international marketing & distribution; grant funding for existing projects; TXGB and trade education; research; administrative costs; strategic challenges; and accessibility.  
**Action: One of the DEF elements for Year 5 was for markets to be identified based on product mapping with overseas teams and preference for travel and spend in regional England.**  
**It was agreed that the market opportunities identified would be provided to the Board for review at the next meeting in March 2020 (Owner: Andrew Stokes)**
  - (iii) Board Sponsor Project Review Meetings continued to provide key learnings across the different projects; key themes include some project applications being over-ambitious, product development taking longer than anticipated, and lack of understanding of the travel trade.
  - (iv) A list of the recent achievements of the DEF was noted by the Board. The Board noted that it would be useful for KPIs and metrics to be included on the DEF project achievements for targeted presentation to political stakeholders and the Treasury.
  - (v) The ambitions for the year ahead and examples for sustainability and legacy were noted.

#### **Agenda item 7: England Priorities**

8. The Board noted the Corporate Priorities for 2020/21 and Future Direction paper. Andrew Stokes provided a verbal update with reference to the paper and the following was noted:
- (i) Corporate priorities for 2020/21 have been agreed and will inform business planning across the organisation.
  - (ii) The Board was informed of the five BTA priorities for 2020/21, which are:
    - a. Position Britain and England on the global stage
    - b. Enable UK tourism to be successful
    - c. People focus and building the organisation's culture
    - d. Achieving 100% compliance on key policies; and
    - e. Future proofing – securing funding and ensuring a clearly defined scope across the industry
9. The Board was presented with VisitEngland's priorities and how these were mapped out against the BTA priorities. The focus will be on securing its foundations and future proofing to ensure a strong strategy. Deliverability was also considered when identifying key areas, with some being indicative and depending on future political outcomes.
10. The Board noted concerns regarding the impact on tourism from the political situation in Hong Kong, potential recession in the US, and the GREAT campaign likely evolving.
11. The Board discussed the organisation's role and scope as a national tourist board. It was noted that the organisation held more of a facilitative role in its relationship with businesses in the tourism trade. However, it was noted that there was potential to commercialise certain services in the future.

12. The Board discussed the matter of the compulsory registration of businesses and the potential impact of this on the organisation. This was linked to the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The Board noted that the organisation would not be able to take on this activity, as it does not have the required resources.
13. The Board had a discussion regarding business events, including KPIs and metrics on its activities. The Board was informed that KPI monitoring and reporting was being undertaken.

**Action: It was agreed that Kerrin MacPhie, Head of Business Events, would be invited to present an agenda item on business events and its KPIs on activities at a future meeting.**

#### **Agenda item 8: TXGB and Taking England to the World Update**

14. The Board noted the Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TXGB) and Taking England to the World (TETTW) Update paper. Carol Dray provided the Board with a verbal update and the following was noted:
  - (i) 21 seminar sessions had been delivered with over 700 DMOs trained so far through the TETTW programme. Feedback received from quarterly evaluations has been positive. The partnership with Google Digital Garage would continue through to 2020.
  - (ii) The TXGB platform's booking system was live, listing over 800 bookable attraction and experiences. Progress with setting up distributors and suppliers for the platform was noted.
  - (iii) One of the key challenges was in getting buy-in from DMOs in adopting the platform. Some re-education was required for DMOs on platform functionality. One of the barriers was the existence of many different booking systems across the industry and the challenge of connecting up the platform with these.
  - (iv) The Board was informed of the future plans for TXGB, including the establishment of its Governance Board. Consideration would also be given on how to best work with DMOs going forward, as they all operate in different models.

#### **Agenda item 9: Any other business**

15. VEAB's role in Compliance Matters  
The Board had a discussion about core role as a group, including its role on compliance matters. It was noted that its core function was in an advisory capacity. The Board also noted that its Chair sits on both the BTA Board and Audit Committee, so should be aware of matters brought forward to those forums.
16. Business Plan  
The Board noted that it would be useful for it to be sighted on the organisation's business plan. The Board was informed that the plan was presented to the BTA Board, however the 2020/21 plan would be shared with the VEAB.

**Action: It was agreed that the Business Plan for 2020/21 would be shared with the VEAB.**

17. Quality Assurance Schemes  
The Board received an update on the Quality Assurance Schemes arrangements. It was decided that a non-tender action (NTA) to renew the contract with the current provider for another year would be taken to ensure the continued and smooth delivery of the service. This follows on from proposals presented to the Board at the previous meeting in September 2019.

#### **Agenda item 10: Date of Next Meeting**

18. It was noted that the next meeting will be on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (10:30-14:30).

#### **Agenda item 11: Close**

19. The Chairman closed the meeting at 14:30.