

Minutes of Meeting of the VisitScotland Board held on 23 October 2025 at VisitScotland’s Office in Glasgow, and via video conference (MS Teams)

- Present:

Stephen Leckie (Chair)
Barbara Smith
Lindsey Paterson
Steven Walker
Cara Aitchison
Shona Marsh
Paul Easto
Keith Nicholson (MS Teams)
- In attendance:

Vicki Miller (Chief Executive Officer)
Rob Dickson (Director of Industry and Events)
Ken Neilson (Director of Corporate Services)
Cat Leaver (Director of Strategy and Competitive Intelligence)
Jill Walker (Director of Marketing and Digital)
Mike Slack (Chief Technology Officer)
Lynn Jack (Chief People and Culture Officer)
Emma Hallington (Senior Advisor to CEO)
Joanne Hellen (Executive Assistant)
Lynne Cooper (Regional Director, Glasgow City Region) - *attended for Glasgow City Region Visitor Economy update item*
- Observers:

Kevin Fallon, Sponsorship Team Leader (Scottish Government)
- Apologies:

None
- Minutes:

Joanne Hellen

INTRODUCTIONS

1. The Chair welcomed the attendees to the hybrid meeting. Kevin Fallon was welcomed to the meeting in an observer capacity from Scottish Government.

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 18 September 2025

2. The minutes of the Board meeting held on 18 September 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

3. No conflicts of interest were raised for this meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

4. All matters arising were confirmed as either completed or covered during today's meeting.

BUDGET REFORECAST

5. The Director of Corporate Services presented the second budget reforecast (RF2) for 2025-26, reporting an overall positive position.
6. Key financial pressures across the organisation were noted, including an income shortfall in some areas and how the organisation was financially adjusting to accommodate that, as well as areas where funds could be reinstated to allow for the delivery of planned activities.
7. Strategic Change Programme allocations remain largely committed to cover further organisation design costs and financial risks for the remainder of the financial year. The Board reviewed and approved Management's proposal to reinstate core funding into other strategic pillars (primarily marketing) as the year develops and asked to be kept updated on progress.
8. It was noted that iCentre costs, previously allocated to Organisational Development, will be reallocated to Place Development for RF3.
9. The Director of Corporate Services provided an update on the Ballater premises. The cinema at Rothesay has reopened where thanks had been received from the operating partnership for VisitScotland's support.

ACTION: Management to provide updates on progress on the ongoing financial reforecasts.

The Board approved the RF2 budget reforecast.

POLICY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

10. The Director of Corporate Services presented a revised policy management process for approval.
11. Risk criteria have been set to determine appropriate levels of review for each policy, which will reduce the number of policies requiring Board review by approximately 50% over 3 years. Feedback from the ARC has been incorporated into the process. It was confirmed that all policies will still remain accessible to the Board.
12. The Board noted the transparent, risk-based principles underpinning the process, which will remain subject to periodic ARC review and further adaptation if required.

The Board approved the updated process.

POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

13. The Director of Corporate Services presented an updated Procurement Strategy and Policy Framework for 2025-2028 for review. The 3-year strategy aligns with the Corporate Plan and incorporates activity on Sustainability and Net Zero commitments and reflects Fair Work First principles. The ARC have reviewed the strategy and confirmed alignment. The strategy will be brought to the next Board meeting for

approval.

ACTION: Board feedback on the Procurement Strategy to be provided via the dedicated email channel prior to December meeting.

14. The Director of Corporate Services presented two policies for approval
 - Fair Work First – a new policy guiding VisitScotland compliance with the Fair Work legislation.
 - Business Continuity – updated following internal audit work and now including additional information on business impact assessments.

The Board approved the two policies.

PEOPLE & CULTURE PLAN

15. The Chief People and Culture Officer presented the People & Culture Plan for approval. A version of the plan will be published externally that will align with outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan. An operational version will be developed to support operational delivery identifying department-level activities and reporting metrics.
16. The Chief People and Culture Officer highlighted the plan focused on organisational values which will guide activity beyond the Strategic Change Programme. Measurement of staff engagement levels will be through a programme of pulse surveys on key topics to ensure a proactive approach and establish measures of staff engagement levels.
17. The Board discussed the topic of staff engagement surveys, including the importance of careful design, appropriate frequency and visible incorporation of feedback into management decisions.

The Board approved the People and Culture Plan.

CHAIR REPORT

18. The Chair introduced the Chair Report provided in the Board pack. Including an update on the British Tourism Authority Board strategy day.
19. The Board discussed ongoing challenges for industry, in particular relating to Scotland's ability to remain competitive internationally in terms of cost. The Board noted the importance of VisitScotland's role to ensure that Local Authorities considered implications of any Visitor Levy implementation and the impact that would have on consumer costs as part of any consultation process.
20. The Board discussed the importance of proactive political engagement and continued collaboration with industry bodies to demonstrate the importance of the visitor economy to Scotland's overall economic performance. VisitScotland's role in promoting the value of the tourism sector as an economic driver, supported by data and insight, was noted as critical for influencing strategy and promoting and growing responsible tourism. Showcasing opportunities of world class events were also noted via the Royal Highland Show and Men's Open.

21. The Board discussed approaches to communication to Scottish Government on the value of the visitor economy and our unique position as a national body to deliver sustainable growth and to demonstrate ambition and value and evidence links to national and regional prosperity, emphasising the value of data and insights in identifying areas of greatest impact.

The Board noted the Chair Report update.

CEO Report

22. The Chief Executive Officer introduced the CEO Report and provided an update on key areas.
23. The Chief Executive Officer noted the industry performance section and highlighted that new data sources are now providing improved forward-looking insights. International performance shows a positive trend; domestic performance is slightly improving but remains fragile.
24. Internal business planning will commence in November, assessing current year outcomes taking into account current external factors and insights. Focus areas will include sustainability, equality and diversity and communities. Budget alignment will follow once funding levels are confirmed in January 2026
25. Workforce planning timelines have been communicated to staff and implementation is now underway. The iCentre estate is scheduled to close by 31st October. The positive and professional approach of all impacted staff was acknowledged, alongside strong cross-team collaboration across facilities, technology, people, communications, and business engagement.
26. Autumn/Winter marketing activity was noted to have been well-received. Conference season is offering multiple speaking opportunities to showcase VisitScotland's work to grow the visitor economy and the support and advice available to industry.
27. The Board discussed the Glasgow 2026 Commonwealth Games. Although not directly involved, VisitScotland is working closely with the Commonwealth Games delivery teams to ensure that we are able to maximise and leverage any potential marketing and industry opportunities with the CEO sitting on the Ministerial Assurance Group.

ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

28. The Director of Corporate Services presented an advance draft of the Annual Report and Financial Statements.
29. ARC and Management have provided feedback and the audit has commenced and is progressing well. The Director of Corporate Services outlined some additional enhancements to the Performance Report to be incorporated.
30. The Director of Corporate Services highlighted a new section in the performance report that focuses on performance against the National Performance Framework and National Strategy for Economic Transformation, which has been developed with auditor feedback to report upon the organisation's contribution to the Scottish Government strategies.
31. The Chief Executive Officer noted that key National Tourist Board partners are working

together to ensure consistent ways of calculating key measures and ensure that comparative baselines on economic performance can be established.

32. The final draft version of the Annual Report and Financial Statements will be provided to the ARC to complete a final review and will submit for approval to the Board at the meeting on 4 December.

ACTION: Board members to review their own biographies and register of interests in the Annual Report and advise of any updates

ACTION: Board members to provide any feedback on Annual Report within two weeks.

The Board noted the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

FINANCE AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE REPORT

33. The Director of Corporate Services presented the Finance & Business Performance Report, noting that ABC updates are now provided on a monthly cycle to align with financial reporting to aid planning and consistent reporting.
34. A small number of financial ABCs were noted with an amber RAG rating due to a number of reasons. All are being monitored and spend plans developed and were considered by Management to present no significant risk to the overall budget position of VisitScotland.

The Board noted the Finance and Business Performance Report.

VISITOR ECONOMY UPDATE – GLASGOW CITY REGION

(The Regional Director for Glasgow City Region joined the meeting.)

35. The Board received a regional update on Glasgow City Region (also known as Glasgow & Clyde Valley), which comprises eight local authorities and approximately one third of Scotland's population. Tourism was identified as a key sector with significant growth potential
36. The region was noted to benefit from a strong hotel and infrastructure provision and strong partnerships with key strategic stakeholders. Key regional assets were highlighted, including maritime heritage, Glasgow's UNESCO City of Music status, rural offerings and a strong cultural and events calendar. Business events were noted as an important contributor to the regional economy.
37. Several strategic priorities with short- and long-term focus were highlighted, including the SEC expansion and Glasgow Airport route development and connectivity.
38. The mid-2026 reopening of Paisley Museum was noted as a flagship project expected to deliver social and economic benefits and increase visitor footfall. With initial investment from Glasgow City Region, Inverclyde has developed a new tourism & events strategy to grow its visitor economy, with key assets including Greenock Ocean Terminal, Newark Castle and many outdoor activities.
39. The Board noted the value of VisitScotland's support in driving travel trade product

development and working with partners to develop strong messaging for the region, particularly for international audiences.

40. The Board noted the region's position of 5th in the Global Destination Sustainability rankings as a leading example to other destinations in Scotland and queried whether any learnings could be applied to other regions.

(The Regional Director for Glasgow City Region left the meeting.)

AOB

41. The Scottish Government Public Appointments team have made a data request that requires contacting all Board members. Board members will be required to give their permission for contact details to be shared. A request will be sent by CEO Office.
42. The Director of Strategy & Competitive Intelligence noted a correction to information provided at the September meeting in the CEO Report, noting that not all figures were adjusted for inflation, but were each annotated accordingly.
43. The December Board meeting on 4th December will take place in Edinburgh.

CLOSE

Thereafter, the meeting was brought to a close.