

Minutes of Meeting of the VisitScotland Board held on 05 June at VisitScotland’s Office in Stirling and via video conference (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) (MS Teams)
Jill Walker (Director of Marketing and Digital)
Lynn Jack (Head of People and Culture)
Emma Hallington (Senior Advisor to CEO)
Joanne Hellen (Executive Assistant) (MS Teams)
Claire Dickson (Senior Manager Global PR) (Part-meeting)
Fiona Holmes (Senior Brand Marketing Manager) (Part-meeting)
Keith Campbell (Market Development Manager) (Part-meeting)

Apologies: None

Minutes: Joanne Hellen

INTRODUCTIONS

- 1. The Chair welcomed the attendees to the hybrid meeting.

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2025

- 2. The minutes of the Board meetings held on 27 March and 24 April 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 3. No conflicts of interest were raised for this meeting.
- 4. All attending confirmed that their Register of Interests updates had been submitted and were up to date.

MATTERS ARISING

5. It was noted that all matters arising are completed or covered during today's meeting.

BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

6. The Director of Corporate Services presented the draft Terms of Reference to the Board for approval. The document has been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee and internal auditors, with their feedback now incorporated. The Board were invited to provide feedback and comments. Highlighted areas for discussion included the current policy approval process, the identified minimum quorum of members, the proposed co-opting option, and the option of appointing a vice chair.
7. Discussion followed around the current process of having all policies approved at Board-level and whether this should be split across Board and ELG. It was agreed this should be reviewed with a proposal to be brought to a future meeting.
8. Some minor wording revisions to the Terms were proposed to provide greater clarity around the Board purpose and provide timescales around declaration of conflicts of interest.

ACTION: Update Terms of reference based on feedback and submit the revised version to ARC for review. Final version will then be submitted for approval at a future Meeting.

ACTION: Proposal to be brought to future Board meeting relating to policy approval process

POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

9. The Head of People and Culture and Director of Corporate Services presented five policies for consideration. All policies will be brought to the next board meeting for approval.

For consideration:

- Absence Management
 - Annual leave
 - Long Service
 - Special Leave
 - Travel & Subsistence policy – which has undergone detailed review. Maximum rates have been increased in line with inflation and following consultation with a staff working group and, where possible, keeping in line with best value practices.
10. Board discussed the updates to the maximum rates in the travel and subsistence policy but noted the duty of care VisitScotland had for its staff and that their safety should always be the priority, this should also be factored into the application of policy and any exceptions considered.

ACTION: Board feedback to be provided via the dedicated email channel prior to July meeting.

CHAIR REPORT

11. The Chair provided the Board with an update on his recent VisitScotland activities, which included attendance at New York Tartan Week and Connect conference in Aberdeen, and an

overview of recent meetings with Scottish Government Officials as part of the Chair appraisal process.

12. The Chair updated the Board on a recent meeting with the Deputy First Minister they attended with the Chief Executive Officer. Discussions focused on Public Service Reform, updates on the Rural Infrastructure Fund and the opportunities around investment for Tourism and the role VisitScotland can play to support this.

The Board noted the Chair Report update.

CEO REPORT

13. The Chief Executive Officer introduced the CEO Report and gave an update on the recent Compulsory Redundancy policy proposal. A business case has been presented to Scottish Government via the prescribed route and is now awaiting final sign off. The potential implementation of this policy was communicated to impacted staff first, then to all staff via a Townhall meeting. The Head of People & Culture noted that the group of potentially impacted staff are being supported and that engagement is ongoing with the Union to ensure that they remain updated.
14. The Board noted the update and acknowledged the sensitivities around the potential implications of the implementation of the HR policy for both impacted staff and the whole organisation.
15. The Chief Executive Officer noted the addition of new real-time data sources relating to serviced and short-term let accommodation which will support stakeholder discussions and ensure activity can be agile and responsive. The team is looking across the insight programme to identify gaps and any new innovative data sources. A new intelligence report is being developed for the Senior Leadership team to keep them abreast of current trends to support short-term operational decisions but will continue to ensure that our focus remained on long-term strategic outlook.
16. The Board noted the Best Public Sector Event award the team had received for the 30th Scottish Thistle Awards at the Scottish Event Awards on 24 April. Noted great endorsement of significant cross organisation effort and congratulated the team.
17. It was noted that more detailed information and reporting on specific activities, such as VisitScotland Connect and Tartan Week is available to the Board via the supplementary folder on SharePoint.

The Board noted the CEO Report update.

STRATEGIC UPDATE – MARKETING

(The Senior Brand Marketing Manager, Senior Manager Global PR and Market Development Manager joined the meeting.)

18. The Director of Marketing and Digital outlined key points from the Marketing Strategy paper included in the Board pack.

19. The Senior Brand Marketing Manager, Senior Manager Global PR and Market Development Manager provided further insights into the current marketing approach, which included opportunities with OTA and media partnerships, intermediary marketing, and the promotion of Scotland as a must see, year-round destination. It was noted that this approach will contribute towards the Business Development and Market Development pillars of the organisational strategy and focus on stimulating domestic and global demand for sustainable travel experiences in Scotland, encouraging travel to support regional and seasonal spread.
20. The Board noted the breadth and depth of work being delivered and the volume and quality of long-standing partnerships and relationships developed by the in-house team.
21. Discussion followed which highlighted the importance of finding the right balance between remaining agile in the international market whilst also ensuring that we are focused on our long-term objectives around sustainable growth. The board noted the importance of harnessing the power of organic storytelling, which alongside our intermediary, partnership and PR activities demonstrated a huge breadth of activity that enabled us to make the most of the budgets we have available.
22. The Board noted the opportunity to share externally with partners and Scottish Government the range of activities that are delivered and the range or specialist skills within the teams. The Marketing and Digital Director noted ongoing work to develop an industry focused Marketing Framework that would be externally facing that focused on developing a collaborative approach to marketing Scotland, the importance of storytelling and how they can play a critical role.
23. The Board discussed the importance of establishing a consistent narrative in relation to ROI and measurement. The Chief Executive Officer noted that this is being considered as part of the wider measurement framework.

ACTION: Update on the external Marketing Framework to be shared with the board

The Board noted the update.

(The Senior Brand Marketing Manager, Senior Manager Global PR and Market Development Manager left the meeting.)

STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME UPDATE

24. The Chief Executive Officer updated the Board on the progress of the Strategic Change Programme workstreams, referring to the Strategic Change Programme Highlight Report included in the Board pack.
25. The Director of Corporate Services provided an update on the remaining property assets across the iCentre network as a result of the closure programme.
26. The Chief Executive Officer noted that work continues on the People and Culture review, which aims to identify skills requirements and efficiency opportunities to support the strategic priorities of the Corporate Plan and ensure that the organisation remains fit for purpose.

The Board noted the update.

SG PRIORITIES

- 27. The Chief Executive Officer updated the Board on Scottish Government's recently published Programme for Government. It was noted that VisitScotland's strategic pillars of Market Development, Place Development and Business Experience Development can be clearly mapped to the identified 6 Point Export Plan noted in the Programme. It was also noted that there were clear opportunities for alignment and collaboration with other policy areas to maximise outcomes.
- 28. The Board welcomed the update and requested that this item continue to be reviewed at future board meetings.

ACTION: VisitScotland response to the Programme for Government to be reviewed at future Board meeting

2024/25 YEAR END UPDATE

- 29. The Director of Corporate Services introduced the 2024/25 Year End update report included in the Board pack. It was noted that year end was progressing well, and the interim audit was underway.
- 30. There were no queries from the Board.

The Board noted the 2024/25 Year End Update Report.

FINANCE AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 31. The Director of Corporate Services introduced the Finance and Business Performance Report, highlighting the new format for reporting. A new KPIs metrics dashboard is in place which is subject to further development. It was noted that the performance report would continue to evolve aligned to the overall measurement framework.
- 32. There were no further queries from the Board.

The Board noted the Finance and Business Performance Report.

AOB

- 33. The Senior Advisor confirmed that the next meeting is in person in the Borders and a potential stakeholder event may follow the meeting.
- 34. The Senior Advisor noted opportunity for Board attendance at the upcoming Scottish Open Golf event in July, with other key stakeholders due to attend.

ACTION: VisitScotland to contact the Board regarding attendance at the Scottish Open Golf

CLOSE

Thereafter, the meeting was brought to a close.