

Events Industry Board Working Group - 1st February 2021 meeting note

Attendees:

Laura Backhouse (LB), Sarah Baylis (SB), Paul Black (PB), Nick Brooks-Sykes (NBS), Neil Brownlee (NB), Claire Fennelow (CF), Tracy Halliwell (TH), Jamie Haworth (JH), Michael Hirst (MH), Nigel Huddleston MP (NH), Jennifer Jenkins (JJ), Darren Johnson (DJ), Kerrin MacPhie (KM), Kate Nicholls (KN), Hanna Ostling (HO), Duncan Parish (DP), Fay Sharpe (FS), Chris Skeith (CS), Paul Thandi (PT), Naomi Waite (NW), Heledd Williams (HW).

Agreed actions:

- **DCMS to set out how this group will support the Tourism Industry Council, including expectations around when and what reports will be presented to TIC.**
- **Chair to liaise with DCMS and members to agree 'exam questions' for each subgroup to develop proposals on, and to propose timeframes for each subgroup's work.**

Introductions

- **Minister Huddleston** briefly joined the call to welcome new and returning Events Industry Board members, thanking them for their collaboration throughout the pandemic. He said that he wanted this working group to build on these relationships to develop informed policy. He noted increased recognition across government of the importance of business events, and invited the group's insight on what the UK should target and how the UK government should prioritise its support for events.
- **MH** set out the remit for the EIB, as per the terms of reference circulated to members. MH said that articulating how to deliver the objectives set out in the UK government's Tourism Recovery Plan will be the primary focus of the EIB, alongside determining how the industry can best support wider government objectives.
- MH encouraged members to bring their expertise to consider how business events can best drive demand in the wider visitor economy, support leading sectors, and ultimately achieve the Tourism Recovery Plan's goal to make the UK the World's Meeting Place.
- **DP** added that the Tourism Recovery Plan is the ministerial mandate that we are working to deliver post-pandemic, and that the refreshed EIB will help us co-create solutions that deliver the Tourism Recovery Plan's objectives.

Structure of group

- **MH** moved on to agreeing the group's terms of reference.
- On the scope of events covered, members agreed the EIB would primarily focus on business events for the time being, and that the terms of reference were flexible enough to allow the group to look at all events where this broader take would add value. MH said that, in the long term, expanding the group's focus to 'all events' would make sense if structured appropriately.
- **KN** agreed with the organisational structure of the EIB and other working groups reporting into the Tourism Industry Council, which in turn reports into the Inter-Ministerial Group on the Visitor Economy. KN said that this represents the most effective approach to seek a leverage route up to Cabinet level.

- **KN** added that she sees good breadth in ToRs to look at both domestic and international objectives for the sector, and encouraged the group to first focus on identifying the immediate post-reopening challenges facing the sector.
- **KM** agreed that the EIB should consider domestic and international contexts, pointing to the multi-year lead in times for international events.

Agreeing forward workplan

- **SB** introduced the discussion slides and asked the group to use today's discussion to agree on a forward work programme.
- **MH** invited members' views on the priorities that deserve the EIB's attention over the coming year, with an emphasis on the barriers and/or opportunities related to the sector's recovery and delivering the Tourism Recovery Plan's objectives.
- Following a productive discussion, four priorities were identified during the discussion. These were:
 - i) **Addressing immediate recovery issues** (inc. labour shortages) - Kate Nicholls volunteered to lead a 'task & finish' group, supported with events industry insight from Claire Fennelow and Kerrin MacPhie.
 - ii) **Confidence building** - what industry and govt can do to emphasise it is safe and positive to attend events. Darren Johnson (lead), Tracey Halliwell, Chris Skeith.
 - iii) **'The Delegate's Journey': improving the UK's welcome** - how to sell the UK's strengths, demonstrate its keenness to host business events, smooth out potential post-Brexit issues, transport and logistics. Nick Brooks-Sykes (lead), Jennifer Jenkins.
 - iv) **Identifying how government and industry could most effectively support, target and create events in the UK's leading sectors.** Paul Thandi (lead), Kerrin MacPhie and Chris Skeith.
- Members agreed that, at a later date, they would turn to the long term objective of improving **skills and careers** in the sector.

Feeding into other TIC working groups:

***N.B.** The three other TIC working groups are yet to be established.*

- **Accessibility:** Kate Nicholls volunteered to speak on EIBWG's behalf. Rachel Parker (Association of Event Venues) nominated to join.
- **Sustainability:** Fay Sharpe to provide nomination.
- **International:** TBC.

Updates

MH invited the Devolved Administrations, VisitBritain and DCMS to provide brief updates.

- **PB** welcomed members' enthusiasm for identifying how to target our support on events in the UK's leading sectors, and said that this is a key focus for VisitBritain. He said that the Business Events Growth Programme supported 24 events in 2021/22, and that this programme has demonstrated its potential for both winning and growing events in the UK's top sectors.
- **NB** said that VisitScotland's priority is getting the sector reopened and, more broadly, continuing to highlight the contribution that events make to policy development across key sectors.

- **NW** said that Tourism Northern Ireland is working with the sector to launch a skills recruitment drive and is continuing to deliver the Conference Support Scheme. NW added that they are expecting to return to 2019 levels in 2025.
- **HW** highlighted the recently launched Event Wales strategy, in which business events share an umbrella with sport and cultural events. On the topic of winning events, HW challenged the group to consider how to navigate the context of the four nations to most coherently promote the UK as a whole.
- **SB** said that DCMS is looking at how to improve the UK's competitive position, and that DCMS will be keen to make the most of the group's industry knowledge to identify events with the biggest growth potential.

AOB

- **MH** said that the next EIB is planned for mid-May, with an autumn meet planned for mid-October. (DCMS to confirm dates.)