Events Industry Board Minutes
1 June 2016
14:00 - 16:00
Department of Culture, Media and Sport

Attendees:
- Nick De Bois - Chair
- Michael Hirst
- Chris Foy - VisitBritain
- Andrew Stokes - VisitEngland
- Joss Croft - UKTI
- Simon Hughes
- Martin Lewis
- Mike Rusbridge
- Tracey Halliwell (London & Partners)
- Naomi Waite
- Manon Antoniazzi
- Paul Bush
- Ufi Ibrahim
- Robert Wright
- Holly Riley (DCMS)
- Rebecca Hadlow (DCMS)

Apologies from:
- Chris Skeith (AEO)
- Will Whitehorn

The Chair began with a reminder to members to declare any potential conflict of interest.

VisitBritain Strategy:
- Chris Foy (CF) outlined the VisitBritain strategy while noting this has not yet had formal sign off from the Board.
- He flagged that key to delivery is the links with national tourist boards.

National Tourist Board Updates
Wales
- There is a positive story to tell in Wales with a new convention centre opening in 2019. However, they also continue to promote rural aspects of Wales which are also very successful in this arena.
- The National Tourist Board sits within the Welsh Government and therefore Manon Antoniazzi (MA) noted the need to allow time for consultation with Ministers within Wales.
- They are currently formalising the approach Wales in taking to BVE by creating a strategy.

England
● CF updated that they are in the process of creating a bespoke strategy for England. This will be considered by the England Advisory Board and then will go for more significant consultation with the key cities.
● The Discover England Fund launched on 11 May with first tranche of bids closed on 31 May. 20 bids received, including bids touching on business events and more will be considered on a rolling basis¹.

**ACTION:** Request that all Board members look at the programme of research and body of research being proposed as part of the Discover England Fund (found on the VE website) in case people feel there are gaps.

Northern Ireland
● Naomi Waite (NW) updated that their Tourism strategy will be published in the autumn which will features Business Visits and Events..
● The New First minister was previously tourism minister so there are good synergies and has meant good support in terms of soft power support from Government.
● They are currently carrying out a review of subvention and therefore the research reports referred to later will be extremely useful.

London
● Tracy Halliwell (TH) updated that London has a new Mayor in post.
● They are currently in the process of writing the tourism strategy for London for next 10 years.
● London and Partners held their business tourism steering group last week. The feedback was around venue capacity, space, emerging destinations, welcome.
● London has gone up to 5 in the ICCA rankings (up from 19). It currently sits at number 2 in terms of delegate numbers

Scotland
● Paul Bush (PB) outlined that since the Scottish elections, they have a new minister is now in post and tourism is now around the cabinet table
● Glasgow has also gone up in the ICCA rankings
● Scotland are currently undertaking an horizon scanning / strategy exercise up until 2015.
● A new exhibition centre is opening in Aberdeen in 2019, and there are plans to extend glasgow

**Barriers to industry**
Following an action from the previous EIB, TH and MR undertook a programme of work with the assistance of both other EIB members, and colleagues from across the events industry. This initially started as 2 works streams (barriers to the industry and the competitiveness of the industry) but was bought together due to similarities of findings. TH outlined the interim report of the Working Group's findings on barriers to growth for the events industry.

UK viewed as being more expensive than its counterparts. Reed Exhibitions indicate costs are approximately 30% higher. However, organisers do also look at the cost in terms of risk vs ROI.

There is a higher sense of independence with hotels than in other key international cities and therefore they are more aggressive on their pricing policy. Ufi Ibrahim (UI) offered to host an event with the top level hotels in London to look at possible collaboration.

**ACTION:** The Board welcomed and accepted this offer. UI to take this forward and feedback on progress to the board.

A number of members commented on the issue of hotels:

- MH noted that Paris have a hotel charter.
- ML questioned whether the sharing economy (Air B&B) is having an impact in this arena? TH indicated that some organisers are looking at alternatives - Out of 30k cardiologists at the recent London event, only 10k rooms were booked.
- NDB queried whether hotel pricings are a London problem? EIB members considered it was and it could be a driver for people holding events outside London.

- On Subvention, TH reported there was more to do with financial and soft power support to make the proposition of Britain more attractive.
- On the issue of Government support TH indicated that there needed to be a greater sense in UK bids that the destination wanted the event in question. Bid support letters, use of dignitaries and other soft power measures were needed. NDB explained to the board that following meetings with Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills, he agreed to champion this support across Government. Subsequently DCMS will be working with members of the Exports Implementation Task Force to drive through the soft power agenda.
- MR indicated the need for Government to flag what they think is important reflecting the Government’s industrial priorities.

**ACTION:** Joss Croft (JC) and Holly Riley (HR) to share priority sectors and other detailed criteria when appropriate.

- EIB members felt there was a need to be supportive of the apprenticeship narrative in the hospitality industry.

**ACTION:** All members to support this agenda where possible and work with DCMS on its work stream around perceptions of the industry.
• Board members pointed to the need for a coordinated response from destinations, with the suggestion that this may be led by Visit Britain. This could help signpost the potential business event to other regions or alternatives that match their needs if their first choice is undeliverable
• TH referred to connectivity and air routes outside London, this also included the availability and ease of rail

ACTION: MH to discuss with AEO (Chris Skeith) undertaking some research around capacity and vacancy rates. CS to provide feedback to Board members

ACTION: The findings of this sub group on barriers will be further examined by Martin Lewis (ML) and Michael Hirst (MH) in line with the research findings presented to BVEP. To report back at next Board meeting and action taken in the interim as needed.

ACTION: The Chair will then review the Board’s comments and recommend how to engage further on the report of the working group and the challenges raised. This will include engagement with Ministers.

Criteria and process
In line with the EIB mandate to support the UK events industry, a number of EIB members have been working on how the events which receive support are decided upon.

CF reported on the sub group preparing the process for financial and non-financial (soft power) support.
• The soft power package is longer term compared to funding (which runs for this financial year) but while the two are distinct they are obviously very much related.

ACTION: DCMS are keen to pilot the soft power package and would like EIB members to utilise their networks and put forward some suggestions of events they are seeking to win. Responses were requested by 15 June

• Formal bids will open in early July.

ACTION: EIB members to promote the process once live.
Comments from board members included:

- Intellectual capital to be considered and included as a benefit from any event when considering who gets support. (ML)
- Simon Hughes (SH) indicated that we should be looking to international brand names to ask what they want.

**ACTION:** The Board welcomed the offer by SH to take this forward and report back to the board.

- Paul Bush (PB) stated that while the funding and Government support is currently until 2020, the Board has a responsibility to look at 2020-2025 and be more strategic.

**ACTION:** JC would work with CF to ensure that export and investment are a central part of the plans including the need to encourage more smaller businesses to export. UKTI sectors which deliver the highest value of export wins - 26 sectors. JC will share with EIB when appropriate.

- JC indicated the new trade minister (Lord Price) could be a key ally as he sees this area as a key opportunity for investment.

**ACTION:** NDB to seek a meeting with Lord Price

- The Board indicated they were content with the process proposed

**BVEP research**

- MH outlined the draft findings from the BVEP research on subvention.
- 70% of subvention funding is at £50k

**ACTION:** Board members requested that there be coordinated communications and Lines to Take on the Board and the event support package. DCMS and CF to circulate by end of July.