



## **UKINBOUND SPRING GENERAL MEETING - MINUTES**

6 September 2021

*London Transport Museum, streamed via Zoom*

### **1. WELCOME**

- 1.1 James Aitken (JA), Chairman of UKinbound, welcomed all attendees to the General Meeting. JA highlighted the positive signs of recovery and the prospect of a busy 2022 as long as barriers to entry, such as stringent testing requirements and the traffic light system, are removed. JA advised attendees to review their terms and conditions with clients and suppliers to support the industry's recovery, and signposted attendees to the UKinbound Group Friendly Charter.

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING – 10 May 2021**

- 2.1 General Secretary Chris Ball (CB) presented the minutes of the previous meeting. Andrew Guthrie, JacTravel proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Lana Bennett, Tours International.
- 2.2 Jennifer Cormack, Windermere Lake Cruises proposed that there were no matters arising. The motion was seconded by Helena Beard, Guanxi.

### **3. CEO UPDATE – JOSS CROFT**

- 3.1 Joss Croft (JC) welcomed all attendees and thanked the team at London Transport Museum for hosting the meeting and networking evening. JC reminded attendees of the COVID-safe rules in place, and presented an update on UKinbound's recent activities since the Spring General Meeting in May 2021 as follows:
  - 3.1.1 **MEMBERSHIP.** JC welcomed new members Crimson Hotels, Jubilee Market, The Rottingdean Club, Smiler, Lemax, The Bowes Museum, The London Bridge Experience, Travlet, Global Dream Travel, Visit Cardiff, and Argyll and the Isles. Total membership numbers are now back up to 300. JC reminded attendees that membership renewals are due for 2021/2022.
  - 3.1.2 **EVENTS.** The virtual events programme has continued with three business support webinars, virtual DMO updates and fam trips to Fife & Perth and White Cliffs Country, two sector-specific roundtables and a CPD accredited course on welcoming autistic

guests run. All virtual events are available to watch back on the Resources section of the UKinbound website, with the exception of the CPD course. Those interested in more information on welcoming autistic guests should contact Nic Lander at Willy Wonka Travel. Looking ahead, the Events calendar will incorporate both in-person and virtual events, using live streaming where possible to ensure as members as possible can continue to benefit.

JC welcomed the new Events Manager Morganne Abou-Haydar.

JC gave a preview of the Annual Convention due to take place on 16 & 17 September in Manchester and confirmed that UKinbound will return to host the UK stand at World Travel Market and further details will be sent out the following week.

3.1.3 **ADVOCACY.** JC recognised the continuing challenges for members and the disappointing response from Government to more than a year of lobbying activity, including members' letters to MPs. The Association will continue to push for sector-specific support, extension of furlough, removal of all testing for vaccinated individuals from green and amber list countries, and to delay the removal of ID cards and collective passports.

JC gave an update on advocacy activity since the Spring GM:

- Founding member of the Save Future Travel Coalition
- Leading role in the Travel Day of Action event on 23 June which was attended by over 800 people at Westminster – including leading the PR strategy
- Launched the second phase of the #SaveInboundTourism campaign which saw a Tourism Export Recovery Fund proposal delivered to the Treasury and briefed to over 70 MPs and Peers– with thanks to members and Scottish associations who provided the statistics that informed the proposal. The proposal included two key asks: a fund for tour operators/DMCs and the extension of furlough
- #SaveInboundTourism boat event on 20 July which saw more than 30 members and two MPs in attendance
- Continued to liaise and meet with MPs and Pees, including meetings with the Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham, Shadow Tourism Minister Alex Sobel MP, Shadow Aviation Minister Mike Kane MP
- Continued to be the only tourism association to join Ministerial transport roundtables
- Continued to be an active member of the Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group and the Tourism Industry Council where members' concerns are fed directly

JC thanked members for their continued engagement with their local MPs and for their support in the Association's lobbying activity. Looking ahead, the Association will continue to push for the Tourism Export Recovery Fund and an extension of the furlough scheme, and take part in the Global Travel Taskforce Review.

3.1.4 **MEDIA ENGAGEMENT.** Media engagement continues to be strong with 216 pieces of coverage generated since May, with a reach of 498 million, including in mainstream broadcast and print media. Coverage was generated from comments on various

Government announcements, the Tourism Export Recovery Fund, #SaveInboundTourism activity, business barometer results, the group friendly charter and the Association's Silver Sustainability status.

JC highlighted a key challenge with public sentiment not being supportive of inbound tourism, with an August YouGov survey reporting that 39% of UK citizens support quarantining all inbound visitors, and 26% supporting a ban on all inbound flights.

- 3.1.5 **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS.** Members were reminded that the team can offer marketing support as trading restarts. The Year in Review has recently been published, highlighting key activities and achievements over the past year.

JC reported that the Association has achieved Silver accreditation from Green Tourism as a result of renewed focus on sustainability and will continue to develop sustainability resources for members.

The Group Friendly Charter was launched for accommodation providers to provide a set of flexible terms to encourage collaboration with tour operators. Members were encouraged to sign up where relevant and the scheme may be rolled out for other sectors.

- 3.2 JC thanked members for their ongoing support and introduced Kurt Janson, Tourism Alliance.

#### **4. THE STATE OF THE UK TOURISM INDUSTRY – KURT JANSON, TOURISM ALLIANCE**

- 4.1 Kurt Janson (KJ), gave an overview of the current state of inbound tourism, highlighting that the media and Government perception of tourism does not reflect reality for inbound tourism, with visitor numbers significantly down on 2019 and not projected to recover until 2023. Employment is a challenge across the industry, and the Tourism Alliance is pushing for the EU Youth Mobility Scheme which will allow young people up to 25 to work in the UK for two years without the need for a visa.

- 4.2 KJ discussed the Government's Tourism Recovery Plan and the need for further initiatives to achieve the 2023 targets. These may include: introduction of a 5-year visa, suspending or lowering APD rates, providing incentives for conference organisers, reinstating the VAT Reclaim Scheme and expanding it to cover the EU, using ETAs to stimulate travel.

- 4.3 KJ outlined a number of priorities that the Tourism Alliance is working on, including Collective Passport, the Package Travel Regulations review, and lobbying on retaining VAT at 12.5%.

#### **5. Q&A**

Questions were taken from the floor and via Zoom.

- 5.1 James Aitken, Cashel Travel: What is the likelihood that the cost of VAT going back up will be passed onto customers? Since the VAT reduction I have not seen suppliers reducing prices accordingly.

KJ: We did a survey just before Christmas and found that businesses were either using the VAT reduction for additional wages, the additional costs related to being COVID secure, or for generating alternative income streams – it was all being used in one way or another to support the survival of their businesses. I think that’s still a legitimate use of the VAT reduction given the circumstances, but as business levels return to normality we would expect prices to also come down accordingly.

5.2 Helena Beard, Guanxi asked: Do you have any insights on the return of international students this term? We saw some reports that flights from Hong Kong on Cathay Pacific were sold out within 30 minutes for students coming from China so there has been some positives but we haven’t seen any exact data.

KJ answered: The difficulty is that any time a restriction comes off, there is a surge of bookings – it’s hard to say whether that demand is sustained over a longer period or if it represents just a small proportion. When we came out of lockdown last year there was a huge surge in demand around July but this seemed to be those who were less risk-averse and did not represent the overall population. That may be what’s happening here so we will need to assess over a longer period of time.

JC thanked Kurt Janson, the London Transport Museum and all members.

**CLOSE OF MEETING.**