



UKINBOUND WINTER GENERAL MEETING - MINUTES

6 December 2021

Amba Hotel Marble Arch, streamed via Zoom

1. WELCOME

- 1.1 James Aitken (JA), Chairman of UKinbound, welcomed all attendees to the General Meeting. JA acknowledged that many parts of the sector had been experiencing an upswing in business in recent months, however the omicron variant and reintroduction of restrictions has highlighted the fragility of the industry and the significant negative impact that the Government response has had. JA emphasised the need to continue lobbying Government to ensure measures taken are proportionate and support is given to the industry.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING – 6 September 2021

- 2.1 General Secretary Chris Ball (CB) presented the minutes of the previous meeting. Daryl Bennett, Go City proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Rob Way, Tourism Media Group.
- 2.2 Jennifer Cormack, Windermere Lake Cruises proposed that there were no matters arising. The motion was seconded by Mike Newman, b2me Tourism Marketing.

3. CEO UPDATE – JOSS CROFT

- 3.1 COVID-19 UPDATE. Joss Croft (JC) welcomed all attendees gave an overview of the travel restrictions introduced since the omicron variant was identified on 24 November. At the time of the meeting 11 countries had been added to the UK's red list, all arrivals into the UK are requested to take a PCR test on or before day two with the need to self-isolate until a result is received. From 7 December arrivals into the UK from a territory not on the red list must show also proof of a negative PCR or lateral flow pre-departure test. The restrictions will be reviewed on 21 December.

It is expected that the restrictions will roll over to the next three-week review period, which will coincide with the final review dates of the Global Travel Taskforce. The view of the Association is that these measures were taken prematurely with minimal data, and JC cited WHO advice that blanket travel restrictions do little to stop the spread of new variants. Successive changes to guidelines have made it impossible for businesses and

visitors to plan. The Association will be asking Government to remove these measures as quickly as possible in line with the vaccination booster programme.

JC thanked all those who completed the recent survey asking about cancellations since the omicron variant. The results will be published in a press release to secure media coverage about the severe consequences of the new restrictions and the need for emergency support. The Association is also writing to the Prime Minister to express these concerns and members are invited to add their signatures. Members will shortly be asked to write again to their MPs to highlight the letter to the Prime Minister and push for emergency support.

- 3.2 MEMBERSHIP. The new membership started on 1 October 2021 and the Association has recently welcomed new members: EMS Destination Management, Go West, Livertours Liverpool, Timberbush Tours, Lake District Country Hotels, IHG Hotels and Resorts, Blair Castle, Famously Hawick, Manchester City Football Club, The National Gallery, Visit Devon, Visit East of England, Lovetovisit.com, Redeam, Hays Coaches, South Western Railway and The Steam Dream Rail Company. Attendees were encouraged to welcome the new members in attendance. JC highlighted Smiler who would be taking photos during the networking evening and welcomed Uber Boat by Thames Clippers as a new Corporate Partner.

JC highlighted the value of being part of a strong supportive community and encouraged members to continue to engage with the Association and each other. JC reminded members that the Secretariat are here to help, whether through marketing services, business advice, showcasing venues and destinations or general travel trade support.

- 3.3 EVENTS. Two flagship events have taken place since the Autumn General Meeting, the Annual Convention in Manchester and hosting the UK stand at World Travel Market in partnership with VisitBritain. JC reported a sense of comradeship and optimism at the Annual Convention as the industry was brought back together for the first time. Members were reminded that all the presentations and recordings from the live and virtual Convention days are available to download from the Resources section of the website.

JC reported on a quieter than usual World Travel Market, however the UK stand was the busiest throughout the show and exhibitors reported higher quality of meetings. Those interested in exhibiting in 2022 should register their interest with the Events team.

Other recent events have included a virtual fam trip to the Lake District, in-person fam trip with Brigit's Bakery, a Discover Cairngorms workshop, and networking evenings at Hard Rock Café London and Pollok House in Glasgow. A virtual fam trip to Scotland's Tay Country and an in-person fam trip to Queen's House Ice Rink with Royal Museums Greenwich will take place in the coming days.

Members were reminded to visit the website for the latest events information and any members interested in showcasing their destination, venue or attraction should contact the Events team.

3.4 **ADVOCACY.** JC highlighted recent advocacy activity undertaken in addition to the omicron variant response. Successes have included:

- Securing the previous change for Day 2 testing from PCR to lateral flow
- Securing changes to self-isolation rules for those fully vaccinated outside the UK
- Securing a DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the promotion of Britain abroad

Members were reminded to submit their views to Lauren Broughton by the end of the week for the DCMS Select Committee inquiry, which would be fed back to the membership to allow individual businesses to submit their own evidence alongside the Association. The deadline for submissions is 6 January.

UKinbound has also submitted evidence to five inquiries and consultations, including:

- Issuing an Autumn Budget proposal to the Treasury
- Giving evidence at the Bristol Airport Expansion inquiry
- Giving evidence at the Transport Committee Inquiry: Supporting Recovery in the UK Aviation Sector, via the Save Future Travel Coalition Group.

Engagement with MPs continues to be strong. In addition to hosting the Tourism Minister at WTM, the Association has also written to welcome the new Secretary of State for Culture Nadine Dorries MP and the new Shadow Secretary of State Lucy Powell MP, with a view to arranging meetings in the new year.

There has been significant engagement with the Department for Transport regarding booster vaccinations and changes to the UK's fully vaccinated status. UKinbound is also one of the few tourism bodies that are a part of the Department for Transport's Global Travel Taskforce roundtable and the January review consultation.

3.5 **MEDIA ENGAGEMENT.** Media engagement continues to be strong with 80 pieces secured since September, including nine pieces in national newspapers and four radio interviews. 15 comments were issued along with five press releases on subjects including the omicron variant, loss of business ahead of Christmas and the partnership with ETOA on the Britain and Ireland Marketplace.

3.2 **UPCOMING ACTIVITY.**

- A special rate has been secured for England suppliers to attend ETOA's Britain and Ireland Marketplace on 28 January 2022 with thanks to support from VisitEngland
- The process for the 2022 Members Directory will begin in January and members were reminded to check their online Directory profiles. Full details will be sent in the new year and those wanting to enhance their brand presence can contact Rob Way at Tourism Media Group.

- A fully comprehensive submission will be entered to the DCMS Select Committee Inquiry into the Promotion of Britain Abroad in early January. Members were encouraged to provide data and feedback to support the submission.

3.4 JC expressed hope for the quick removal of travel restrictions and a more positive 2022. Despite the huge adversities of the last two years the industry has remained resilient and collaborative in its approach to Government. JC thanked the Secretariat for their continued hard work during challenging and time-pressured situations, thanked the Board and Chairman for their guidance, and thanked all members for their ongoing support and engagement.

4. VISITBRITAIN UPDATE – LOUISE BRYCE & STUART HEATH

4.1 Louse Bryce (LB) gave an overview of the role of VisitBritain in supporting the industry and its recovery. These include being a key point of contact, conveying insights, understanding members' businesses, advocating and helping to create opportunities for success. Whilst VisitBritain is not a lobbying agency, by working closely with industry bodies it can ensure that any advice it gives to Government is evidence based and provides an informed understanding of the impact of Covid measures.

4.2 LB outlined VisitBritain's recovery goals which include recovering value by 2023, repositioning Britain to grow demand and long-term market share, spreading the benefits of tourism across the nations and regions, extending the season and supporting long term sustainability, and supporting the industry to rebuild through VisitEngland.

4.3 Stuart Heath (SH) outlined VisitBritain's activities over recent months, which has included: market monitoring, sentiment tracking and trade insights, advising Government on the impacts of travel restrictions, international reassurance messaging with trade, media and consumers, running market update webinars on France, Germany and the US, and launching a domestic campaign and promotional activity around the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

4.4 SH outlined upcoming activity which includes: updating the 2016 Decisions and Influences research to better understand consumers' decision-making processes when booking a trip to the UK, supporting businesses to attend business events such as BIM and hosting 30 buyers from across North America, Germany and France at the event, a significant subsidised presence at ITB 2022, ExploreGB Virtual 2022, and continuing the market update webinar series featuring China, GCC and India – members were invited to feedback on the markets they would like to focus on. VisitBritain will continue to engage with industry on forward sales and marketing planning.

4.5 LB gave an overview of VisitBritain's January 2022 tourism campaign strategy which will include a £7m GREAT funded media and creative campaign targeting 'Buzzseekers' from Britain's highest value markets. Industry tools and assets will be provided and there will be a strong focus on welcome and reassurance messaging.

In the longer term VisitBritain will look to drive regional and seasonal spread, sustainability, business events, improving the digital experience and reach, and continuing with GREAT consumer campaigns.

- 4.6 LB and SH outlined ways in which VisitBritain will further their engagement with the industry. This includes: appointing SH as the key point of contact for the travel trade, continuing with the DMC taskforce, formalising agreements with UKinbound and ETOA that support businesses in attending trade events, and consulting with industry on future sales and marketing plans.

Industry resources available from VisitBritain include: a campaign toolkit available from January, a storytelling framework to help businesses create relevant experiences, audience insight pen portraits, insight and trade education webinar series, and the VisitBritain Shop where businesses can feature their product. Members were invited to submit their news around products and destinations for inclusion in upcoming activity.

5. Q&A

Questions and comments were taken from the floor and via Zoom.

- 5.1 John Boulding, Vox: I'd like to offer an observation. The situation we are in is somewhat akin to coming out of a war time situation. Every DMO is going to be putting huge efforts into recovering their markets and spending vast amounts of money. The question is are we spending enough? Are we doing enough to turn consumer opinion around the world back onto Britain?

I know there is the Welcome campaign which is great, but Europeans are really feeling very anti-Britain at the moment. I was in Switzerland, France and Italy over the last four weeks and the consumer mood about Britain is very negative. Not only can they not come over from Europe on ID cards anymore, there's also barrier of the travel and testing requirement. In addition there's now the feeling that they are not welcome in Britain. This is a major problem that will require a significant campaign to reach people, otherwise there will be too much lost in the maelstrom of everything that's happening globally.

JC responded: I know that Tourism Australia typically spends more in China alone than all of VisitBritain's marketing fund so there are certainly financial pressures. But to add to your observation, in a normal year many people in this room would collectively be spending more than VisitBritain does in terms of the sales and promotion of the UK internationally. Not only do we have the challenge that some of the core funding isn't there, much of the industry isn't there either. We're expecting great things of the GREAT campaign – which doesn't just cover tourism but also includes trade and education, and inward investment – so all of that will work together.

LB: We spend a lot of time and send a lot of information through to Government about what the competition is doing. The Minister was recently out in the Middle East talking to our team over there and we felt a few pennies dropped then, but that is a constant message we are sending to Government. We are being outspent all over the place. To address your point about the post-war situation – we do have to work differently and make sure that every penny of public money is spent efficiently and coordinated. And to

do that we need to work even closer with industry. That's why our Marketing Director Clare Mullin and I want even more partnership work. We are having to really focus on fewer markets and create campaigns to really cut through that high spend.

- 5.2 Mike Newman, b2me Tourism Marketing: The omicron variant is the latest 'big bad'. If you read the reports 12 months ago the delta variant was the 'big bad'. By the time next year comes we'll be looking at yet more variants. Part of the reality of Covid is that two-thirds of the poorest countries in the world, many of which we rely on as inbound markets to come and see us, aren't getting the vaccination. As an observation, shouldn't part of our messaging out to the world be: the quicker you accept the vaccinations that have been made available by your own governments, the quicker you'll be able to come and see us and we'll be able to come and see you. We can't get rid of Covid until everyone is vaccinated and not everyone is vaccinated. So it makes sense that whilst we're pushing another side of Britain, which I don't disagree with in the slightest and I'm fully supportive of, we should also be pushing the fact that as a potential overseas visitor to Great Britain, you have a responsibility. And that's just us as human beings saying, "come on, let's do this together" and then we'd be able to move on.

JC responded: I agree with that, but we do need Governments to be releasing the vaccine stocks that they hold as well. You're right, a lot of the time the decisions that are made are made with the view of outbound/returning Brits, rather than inbound visitors. We saw that with the Day 2 lateral flow tests, which were done specifically to avoid Brits being caught overseas, and the impact of which was that foreign nationals will be caught here when visiting the UK. The Tourism Recovery Plan it's very light on anything international. There is a National Lottery Scheme, there is the development of a domestic pass, but nothing substantial for the international side. What we have to do is push Government to make sure that there are international elements in there and that's where the Select Committee Inquiry comes in.

I think the most exciting thing in the Tourism Recovery Plan is the cross-Whitehall Ministerial meeting. One of my big concerns about this problem is that tourism has been forgotten and we've been hung out to dry. That's deeply, deeply regrettable and so frustrating for the people that have spent many, many years building up their businesses and teams. But one of the big concerns is what happens next time? Because as you say there will probably be another variant or something else coming down the line. The cross-Whitehall element, if delivered properly, may allow a wider understanding of tourism across Government and we all know it just isn't there at the moment. People understand hospitality but they don't understand tourism. So I think that the cross-Whitehall element offers us some hope in terms of what happens next time, and there probably will be a next time

LB: I think it's a good idea and we have a responsibility not only to tell our country but to be a global citizen. I will take that back to our marketing team to see if we can incorporate that kind of messaging and what the appetite is.

- 5.3 Issac Shohet, Axis & Globe: I appreciate all that has been done by various bodies including VisitBritain, UKInbound, and others. But isn't it about time for us to have a Ministry of Tourism in this country?

JC: My VisitBritain colleagues likely won't be able to comment on this, but I used to work at VisitBritain for many years and this has been debated for a long time. Is tourism better off as a big fish in a small pond, i.e. as part of DCMS, or would we be better off as a small fish within, say the DIT or BEIS? There doesn't seem to be an easy answer.

A recent Government strategy paper looks at delivering a trillion pounds in exports over the next decade, but tourism is the fifth largest export sector and it only gets one paragraph in that paper. I believe that if we were to be in the DIT as the fifth biggest export, on a par with the pharmaceutical and automotive industries, then we may be better off. There is an argument that we need to make it work wherever we are, and that's the work we do day upon day but admittedly not with the success that we or you would have liked.

[JC asked the audience for a show of hands on whether tourism should remain with DCMS or moved to another government department. The response was not unanimous but a greater number indicated tourism should be moved to another department.]

IS: I have been in the tourism industry for decades and we have always been taken for granted. It has always been accepted as a matter of fact that Britain is great, that everyone in the world wants to visit this country and we are so well known internationally, and so on. But I don't know where this is getting us because we are not being taken seriously.

JC: I think we are seeing the results of that – the fifth biggest export industry is suffering decreases of 85% - 95% this year. People will only realise how important it is when it's gone. We saw that during 9/11 and we saw that during foot & mouth whereby there were no visits to the countryside - the rural economies were collapsing. It took that for Government to really recognise the importance of tourism and at that point they invested in a £30million campaign. That's something we can be pushing for and continue to push for. In all of our lobbying and advocacy we say that Brand Britain is damaged, consumers have a choice and we need to be shouting about Britain as open, tolerant and welcome.

- 5.4 Jonathan Wall, Elman Wall Travel Accountants: Our company sit across the whole travel industry, and Joss has been tremendous in some of the Zoominars we've held across the industry during the pandemic. The issue is amplified across inbound, business travel, outbound tour operators, because everyone talks about the same thing, everyone talks about tourism being ignored. The truth is hospitality does so well because beer is beer. Travel is incredibly fragmented, it's incredibly different, in this room everyone does different things. Until the industry can speak with one voice, which is nigh on impossible, we are not going to get heard and it's an extremely complex product. My local MP is Oliver Dowden; I had a session with him recently and they just don't understand tourism. We know Grant Schapps well and the department just doesn't understand it, and because they don't understand it they don't focus on it. It is complex, it is fragmented, and you can shout and shout but until we have a unifying travel body we're just not going to get that understanding and we're always going to be the poor relatives to hospitality.

JC: I find it interesting that the Tourism Recovery Plan had nothing at all on outbound travel. One of the encouraging elements of the past 20 months has been that working with the Business Travel Association, with Advantage, with ABTA. We formed the Save Future Travel Coalition so that we can make arguments to Governments with one voice

but it doesn't always work. For example FCDO advice on safety in overseas markets is irrelevant to us, and others have very little interest in some of my areas. So it is difficult when we do have diverging strategies and ambitions. But I would like to think that the relationships that have been built up, some of which have been through some of the Zoominars that you've done, will stand us in better stead. We did a survey around jobs and job losses with ABTA and the Save Future Travel Coalition, working with a single message on these types of issues holds more power than when we do it by ourselves. But I don't have an easy answer for how to get Government to understand but we will keep beating on that door until it gets opened.

LB: And we do try to bring it home to individual MPs by impressing upon them the impact on their local businesses through initiatives like England Tourism Week and some of our general engagement. But you're right they don't really get it but referring to it as an export has been a good shift.

- 5.5. Helen Peters, Shakespeare's England: I'd like to ask about the Commonwealth Games and the BATH programme that I know VisitBritain is working on with the West Midlands Growth Company to deliver on behalf of DCMS. With the way things are going, it looks like some of the planned sales missions on the back of the baton relay - going around the key commonwealth countries of India, Canada and Australia are likely to be heavily compromised. Will that money be ringfenced and will it remain safe still able to be used perhaps with slight tweaks. Because I know sometimes with these funds if it's not for the exact purpose it cannot be used. I would like some reassurance that that money won't go to waste and we will still be able to draw down and use it.

LB: We haven't got round the inability to carry money over into a new financial year. We are working on it and have a great new Financial Director who is really trying to work with Government to allow us to do that. But if we can reallocate it and spend it before the end of March in the realms of that project than we most definitely will. But that is the one hard line - carrying money across financial years. We will pick this up and come back to you.

SH: That's right, we're not across all the details of how that's going to be affected and what will happen with it, but we'll take that one back and come back to you.

- 5.6 Karin Urban, Tour Partner Group: As outbound tourism is recognised more than inbound tourism, would it make sense to join forces with their trade associations? It worked in Germany where the new Government is about to expand their very generous support programmes into the end of June 2022 for the benefit of the whole tourism industry.

JC: As mentioned I do work very closely with the outbound sector, and outbound have had their own issues. Government recognises that outbound doesn't help with our balance of payment deficits - it takes money out of the country whereas inbound brings in foreign exchange. The outbound associations are very keen to work with us because we're the 'money' part of it, and I'm very keen to work with them because they're the 'votes' part of it. So that's where that happy union comes from and Save Future Travel is exactly what that's about - making joint submissions to Government, letter writing to MPs. We do that already but I'm sure there's more we can do on that front. They have suffered some of the same issues as us, such as homeworkers, lack of retail presence which meant they did not receive leisure & hospitality grants or business rates relief support. There are commonalities where outbound has suffered in the same way that inbound has, which is why it makes perfect sense for us to be working together.

JC thanked Louise Bryce and Stuart Heath, thanked all the members for their continued support and wished all a Merry Christmas.

CLOSE OF MEETING.