



## UKINBOUND SPRING GENERAL MEETING - MINUTES

16 May 2022

*National Waterways Museum, Gloucester*

### **1. WELCOME**

- 1.1 James Aitken (JA), Chairman of UKinbound, welcomed all attendees to the Spring General Meeting. JA thanked the team at Visit Gloucester for hosting the fam trip, GWR for offering discount travel for attendees, the National Waterways Museum for hosting the general meeting and Gloucester Brewery for hosting the networking evening.
- 1.2 JA encouraged attendees to consider less well-known destinations such as Gloucester for their itineraries to allow operators to offer more authentic and value-for-money experiences of the UK and to help avoid over-tourism of other destinations as inbound tourism restarts.

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING – 6 December 2021**

- 2.1 Rob Way (RW) stood in for the General Secretary to review the minutes of the previous meeting. Stacy Whittington, QHotels Collection proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Cormack, Windermere Lake Cruises.
- 2.2 Luke Reilly, The View from The Shard, proposed that there were no matters arising. The motion was seconded by Lauren Symons, Warner Bros. Studio Tour London.

### **3. CEO UPDATE – JOSS CROFT**

- 3.1 Joss Croft (JC) welcomed all attendees and presented an update on the industry and UKinbound's recent activities since the Annual General Meeting in February 2022.
- 3.2 JC noted that this is the first time since March 2020 that there have been no restrictions on inbound travel to the UK for fully vaccinated passengers. As a result operators are busy, particularly those for whom the US is a primary market. The conflict in Ukraine has dampened some demand, EU markets are recovering slowly and Asian markets are yet to return. Early forecasts of a return to roughly 60% of 2019 look on track; JC noted that there is still some way to go and the Association will continue to emphasise this to Government. The ability to hire quality staff affordably remains an obstacle to recovery.

3.3 MEMBERSHIP. 16 new members have joined since the last General Meeting, with numbers now standing at 304. JC acknowledged the high quality brands joining in recent months and thanked the membership team for their efforts. The membership team are back to meeting members in person and attending trade shows; JC encouraged attendees to get in touch to ensure they are receiving the right benefits and to help the Association understand their businesses and issues.

3.4 EVENTS. In-person events have returned whilst virtual events continue, allowing members to continue to engage from anywhere in the country. Events since the last meeting have included: a virtual Membership Masterclass; US Market webinar; networking evenings at the Harry Potter Photographic Exhibition, The View from The Shard, Queen's Gallery Buckingham Palace, Glasgow City Sightseeing and Mharsanta; an in-person Discover Windsor workshop; virtual destination updates with Tourism Ireland and Visit Wales; and in-person fam trips with Royal Museums Greenwich and Tootbus.

UKinbound also returned to Arabian Travel Market in Dubai where there was strong interest and demand for the UK from the GCC and Indian markets.

3.5 ADVOCACY. JC reiterated that there is still a long way to go in the industry's recovery and that it would be a stretch to achieve the Government's target of recovery by the end of 2023.

UKinbound was called to give evidence at the DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the Promotion of Britain abroad as well as the UK Covid-19 inquiry on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry. JC noted that the previous Transport Select Committee found that the travel restrictions served no purpose in restraining the evolution of the virus through the UK other than delaying it by one week and forfeiting £40bn worth of revenue.

A new Tourism Industry Council International Competitiveness and Demand Working Group has been formed with JC as Chair. The group will look at solutions for the removal of ID cards for youth and student travel, access and affordability of visas, and the introduction of Electronic Travel Authorisations.

JC continues to work with the Global Travel Alliance which is formed of a group of inbound trade associations from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland to identify best practice and undertake joint activities.

The Association continues to write to MPs about pressing issues and undertaking meetings with Parliamentarians, with a new newsletter developed for this purpose. JC also presented to a group of 12 MPs and Peers at an APPG Future of Aviation Meeting on projections for the future of the industry.

3.6 MEDIA ENGAGEMENT. Media engagement continues to be strong with 158 pieces of coverage generated since February, with a reach of over 503 million people. A particular success was the news release regarding the latest business barometer results which showed business confidence had returned to pre-pandemic levels but revenues are not

catching up. JC encouraged members to complete the business barometer surveys as they provide vital statistics to support the Association's arguments to the Government and media.

- 3.7 **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS.** The 2022 Members Directory was recently published; JC encouraged members to use this resource to contact other members. Those who have not received their copy should contact the team.

UKinbound's digital channels continue to show strong year-on-year growth meaning members' content and the Association's activities are reaching a larger audience than ever.

JC welcomed new Marketing & Communications Executive, Karolina Dancewicz who will be supporting members with marketing services.

Upcoming activities include the UKinbound Map and Year In Review, both of which will be published in the summer. The UKinbound Map is the only one of its kind and a free resource for tour operator and hotelier members to share with their customers. Opportunities are available to feature in both publications; members should contact Rob Way or Cindy Ng for more information.

JC highlighted that the Association won Best Webinar Series and Best Industry Professional Services Website at the Travelmole Web Awards.

- 3.8 **UPCOMING ACTIVITIES.** Forthcoming activities include a meeting with Shadow Tourism Minister Jeff Smith MP; the launch of the Tourism Industry Council's new inbound tourism sub-committee; the Annual Convention on 28 & 29 September with bookings opening in the first week of June. In November UKinbound will return to World Travel Market; more information will be sent out in due course and members can register their interest by emailing [wtm@ukinbound.org](mailto:wtm@ukinbound.org).

- 3.9 JC thanked the team at Visit Gloucester for hosting the fam trip, the National Waterways Museum for hosting the General Meeting, GWR for offering discounted travel, and Gloucester Brewery for hosting the networking evening. JC thanked those who took part in the CEO Roundtable, the Board of Directors, and to the Events and wider UKinbound team.

#### **4. DESTINATION UPDATE - STEVE GARDNER-COLLINS, REBECCA CLAY, VISIT GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

- 4.1 Steve Gardner-Collins, Director and Chair of Visit Gloucestershire gave an overview of the organisation and its priorities, including collaboration across all visitor experience businesses to create a new county-wide initiative for the visitor economy, a recovery strategy based on 'place', a focus on heritage, incorporating sustainability, and engaging the local community and young people to encourage careers within the visitor economy.

- 4.2 Rebecca Clay, Tourism & Destination Marketing Manager, presented product highlights for the region including Gloucester Cathedral, accommodation including the Lightship, walking and brewery tours, and an active festival and events programme.

## 5. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY – QA RESEARCH

5.1 JC stood in for Richard Bryan, Qa Research to present the results of the 2021- 2022 Membership Survey. Key findings included:

- Networking and access to the UK travel trade was the top reason for renewing membership; tour operators rated lobbying representation, and keeping up to date with industry developments highly
- 70% of members are attending more than four events per year, with B2B workshops and networking evenings seen as most beneficial.
- There is strong support for North American and European sales missions
- Members newsletter, event mailings and regular COVID-19 update emails rated as very useful by nearly all respondents
- LinkedIn was rated the most preferred social media channel for following Association updates
- Three quarters felt UKinbound were effective at lobbying; JC noted that whilst the same strategy and arguments were used with the various Governments in the UK, results varied with Scotland providing more support for the travel industry than England.
- Travel restrictions, recovery support, the impact of Brexit and staffing shortages are the top of members' lobbying wishlist
- Members indicated they would like to see more Tour Operators in UKinbound
- Over half of members measure ROI as increased number of contacts and expect to see the benefit after 1-2 years
- 89% of members were satisfied with their membership – consistent in previous years. JC acknowledged that this means one in ten members are not satisfied and the Association would like to hear from them to help maximise benefits.

## 6. Q&A

6.1 A member asked: You mentioned Arabian Travel Market – are there plans for any other overseas activities such as sales missions?

JC answered: Part of our overseas strategy is to work out who is playing where, and to avoid duplicating what other organisations such as VisitBritain are doing. The UK doesn't have a coordinated presence at Fitur in Madrid for example, so there are opportunities. We need to identify where there is space and what the demand is for that.

Third party exhibitions are easier for us to organise; although we are developing a database of overseas buyers, we don't have contacts in the same way as VisitBritain does, so organising sales missions can be very difficult for us. Organising exhibitions is a little bit easier as the audience comes to us. So we're working with VisitBritain to identify where their activities are and understanding where we can complement each other.

**NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting will be announced in due course.

There was no other business.

**CLOSE OF MEETING.**