



UKINBOUND
THE VOICE OF INBOUND TOURISM

UKINBOUND WINTER GENERAL MEETING - MINUTES

5 December 2022

Thistle Marble Arch

1. WELCOME

- 1.1 James Aitken (JA), Chairman of UKinbound, welcomed attendees to the Autumn General Meeting and thanked the team at Thistle Marble Arch and Clermont Hotel Group for hosting the meeting and networking evening.
- 1.2 JA acknowledged that it had been another difficult year for the industry but noted members' positivity for 2023. Although the industry continues to face challenges such as inflation, limited accommodation availability and lack of staff, these challenges present the opportunity for businesses to innovate and develop creative solutions that can help ensure long term success.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING - 5 September 2022

- 2.1 General Secretary Chris Ball reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. Helena Beard, Guanxi proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Mike Newman, b2me Tourism Marketing.
- 2.2 Daryl Bennett, Go City, proposed that there were no matters arising. The motion was seconded by Stacy Whittington, The QHotels Collection.

3. CEO UPDATE - JOSS CROFT

- 3.1 Joss Croft (JC) welcomed attendees and presented an update on UKinbound's recent activities since the Autumn General Meeting in September 2022.
- 3.2 **MEMBERSHIP.** The membership currently stands at 333 and continues to grow, welcoming a diverse range of new members in the last quarter. JC highlighted new members Frameless and Discover Global Network who were in attendance and encouraged attendees to meet with them during the networking evening.
- 3.3 **EVENTS.** JC gave an update on recent events including the Annual Convention and Awards for Excellence Gala Dinner in Aberdeen, World Travel Market where new Tourism Minister Stuart Andrew MP visited the UKinbound stand, fam trips and

networking evenings in Liverpool, Edinburgh and London, and a destination update webinar with Visit Wales. JC reminded members that video content and presentations from the Annual Convention and virtual events are available on the Resources section of the website.

JC highlighted forthcoming events: fam trip with Brigit's Bakery Afternoon Tea Bus Tour on 13 December; members networking evening at the Camden Brewery on 10 January 2023; the Annual General Meeting at the Science Museum on 6 February 2023; Discover Kent Experience in February 2023, and the Spring General Meeting at Historic Dockyard Chatham in May 2023.

JC reminded members that UKinbound has partnered with ETOA on Britain & Ireland Marketplace, taking place on 27 January 2023. UKinbound supplier members can benefit from a £200 discount when booking through a unique code; full details are available on the UKinbound website.

- 3.4 **ADVOCACY.** Recent activity included briefing the new Secretary of States in all relevant Government departments on the value of inbound tourism; pushing for a one-to-one meeting with the new Tourism Minister; publishing a policy paper that recommends a new student group travel visa to combat the removal of ID cards. JC noted that the latter was warmly received by the Tourism Industry Council and will be elevated to the Inter-Ministerial Group for consideration. UKinbound continues to work with the Association of International Retail to ask Government to review their data on the benefits of VAT-free shopping.

In October, UKinbound submitted a response to the House of Lords inquiry into the EU-UK relationship, highlighting the negative impact of Brexit and opportunities to grow inbound tourism if new policies were implemented. JC is due to give evidence in person to the European Affairs Committee.

JC thanked members who have written to their MP regarding the new research undertaken with ABTA, which highlights the value of inbound tourism and its growth potential to each constituency. Members were encouraged to share any responses with the team.

JC informed members that Head of Public Affairs & PR, Lauren Broughton, is now on maternity leave and Paul Gaffney, Tendo will take on the Association's advocacy work, whilst Antonia Stratford will take on media work.

- 3.6 **MEDIA ENGAGEMENT.** JC reported that UKinbound has been featured in over 85 pieces of UK media coverage over the last three months, with a combined reach of over 135 million. Highlights include coverage in The Times, Financial Times, The Independent, and City AM.
- 3.7 **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS.** The UKinbound @ WTM magazine was published in November and distributed to stand visitors. Digital reach continues to grow, with over

1,400 followers gained on LinkedIn in the last year. Newsletters continue to achieve average open rates of more than 30%. Members were encouraged to contact Karolina Dancewicz for more information on marketing opportunities.

- 3.8 **UPCOMING ACTIVITIES.** The latest Business Barometer survey has been sent out and the Annual Membership Survey will be sent in January. Members were encouraged to complete these surveys as the results help shape the Association's membership offerings and policy and media work.

Expressions of interest will be sent in due course for international exhibitions, including Arabian Travel Market 2023 and some European opportunities in 2024.

Work will begin on the 2023 Members Directory shortly, and members were encouraged to start updating their online profile information.

4. GUEST SPEAKER – PAUL GAFFNEY, TENDO CONSULTING

- 4.1 Paul Gaffney (PG) gave an overview of UKinbound's advocacy highlights over the last two years, which included lobbying campaigns outside Westminster and significant growth in UKinbound's presence in Government and in media – noting that during the pandemic, media coverage for the Association outstripped that of larger organisations such as ABTA.

PG presented an update on the current political situation and how that might mean for inbound tourism.

- 2023 is expected to be difficult, with significant challenges coming from departmental budget cuts and forewarning that business rates relief and energy bills relief would only last until Spring. A key risk is a lack of support for businesses and lack of understanding of how the tourism industry operates.
- The recent Government upheavals and trend towards Labour in the polls means that UKinbound will focus on building strong relationships with MPs across the political spectrum in the event of a Labour coalition Government at the next General Election. It is anticipated that the Labour Party will start developing their manifesto in February 2023 and UKinbound will work to influence that as much as possible – collaboration with other trade bodies will be key to ensure an effective single voice.
- Priorities for 2023 will include reinforcing inbound tourism's value as a key export and proponent of the Government's Global Britain and Open Britain agendas. Key focal points include accessible visas, visitor welcome and experience, international perception of the UK, international competitiveness, limited access to language skills. PG noted that any policy asks should include what and why, how much it will cost, and how the Government will benefit.
- PG noted that effective advocacy work is reliant on members engaging with their MPs through letter writing and inviting MPs to visit their businesses - a website is being developed to help members write to their MPs simply by inputting a postcode.

6. Q&A

- 6.1 JC asked PG: I thought it was interesting that we haven't heard that Boris Johnson will not be standing, given that we know how potentially financially rewarding not being an MP will be for him. Do you think that's tied to the political instability you're talking about?

PG responded: I think he announced that he was standing again but not that he would stand for the same seat. I would imagine that he might stand in areas where MPs have stood down despite a relatively safe majority. The reason he's doing this may be political instability but also a belief that he can come back either before or after the election. It also gives him a continued platform, office and profile - the example is Theresa May who stayed as an MP after resigning as Prime Minister and who has arguably been more impactful as a backbench MP.

- 6.2 Helena Beard, Guanxi asked PG: You mentioned a website was being developed for writing to our MPs. I'm based in Brighton - will the MP then be able to identify me as a member and prioritise a meeting?

PG: We have all the UKinbound members mapped by MP according to postcode, so we will identify the ones that will be most strategically valuable - for example Tim Farron MP of the Lib Dems in the Lake District - and I imagine Brighton will also be a priority area. When you go onto the website the letter pops up and you can press send - you can amend it but the process is much easier than before. We will help arrange the meetings and we will also write a template press release and give you a briefing on who the MP is. That's why we will stagger them by priority areas to ensure we get through them all.

- 6.4 JC commented: If you don't follow Theresa May, I have to say she is fast turning into a tourism champion.

PG added: Yes, we also work with a lot of the airports and I had an interesting conversation with her during the pandemic ahead of the debate on quarantines. She asked if it would be helpful if she spoke in the debate, and she did and was brilliant. She has become a far more useful parliamentarian than I would have imagined.

- 6.5 JA asked PG: Do you think it's worth attending the party conferences?

PG responded: No - you pay an astonishing amount of money for very little return. You could do fringe events where the Minister attends, but we don't lack access to the Tourism Minister. Unless you're something like Heathrow where having visibility there is important, I wouldn't recommend going.

- 6.6 Mike Newman, b2me Tourism Marketing asked PG: Politically, tourism has been very good at shouting about policies that we as an industry know are not beneficial - be it visas or the fact that that APD is a bad idea. Occasionally we do get a small win, but most of the time we shout, and they say "that's very interesting but the answer is no." Is there a better angle that we as an industry can take? Because we know that APD is a bad idea

but as you rightly pointed out it's not going anywhere. So, what could we say that might make some headway?

PG responded: APD is a challenging one because it's an illogical policy, and that should mean that any Government would want to reform it. However, it gives them £4bn per year. I go back to the two questions about how much it would cost and what Government would get from it – and we've never answered that. I had a candid conversation a few years ago with an Aviation Minister and a Treasury Minister about this. The Aviation Minister Paul Maynard said that he agreed wholeheartedly on the issue, but when I spoke to the Treasury Minister, Virgin had just announced they'd released another five routes, so the argument about APD harming connectivity is very difficult to make. I personally don't think we'll see APD cut - in the current climate the argument is to make sure it doesn't go up and that's where our attention should be. It's a classic example of why, on VAT for international visitors, we're doing what we're doing. The industry can tell Government that APD costs X, harms Y, makes routes less competitive etc., but if it's not the Treasury's own analysis they won't care, and they won't instruct the Office of Budget Responsibility to do it, because they might say it harms connectivity and then they lose £1bn. So I don't think we're ever going to win that. The other side is that we need to hit net zero by 2050, and although aviation has come on a long way in the last few years it's still an easy target and it's still a high emitting industry. So for me it's more of a defensive position, both with the Conservative Government and with a potential Labour Government. There's been a lot of noise in Westminster about France's decision to ban internal flights. That will start to get more political traction, but what they haven't focused on is that the flight are only banned if you can get a high-speed train in under 2.5 hours. Well, 2.5 hours on a high-speed train in England gets you from London to Sheffield, so it's not really going to be impactful in that regard.

7. ANNUAL CONVENTION 2023

JC announced that the Annual Convention 2023 will be held in Belfast, and introduced Tori Henry, Tourism Ireland who gave a brief overview of the city's highlights.

CLOSE OF MEETING

JC thanked the team and Board, and the members for their continued support, and wished all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

NEXT MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 6 February 2023, at the Science Museum, London.

CLOSE OF MEETING.