



## UKINBOUND AUTUMN GENERAL MEETING

4 September 2023

*National Maritime Museum*

### **1. WELCOME**

- 1.1 Joss Croft OBE (JC), CEO, UKinbound, welcomed attendees to the Autumn General Meeting and thanked the team at Royal Museums Greenwich for hosting the meeting and networking evening.

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS GENERAL MEETING – 15 May 2023**

- 2.1 General Secretary Chris Ball reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. Daryl Benett, Go City, proposed that they were a true and accurate record of the previous meeting. The motion was seconded by Alexis Peppis, Evans Evans Tours.
- 2.2 Rob Way, Tourism Media Group proposed that there were no matters arising. The motion was seconded by Lana Benett, Tours International.

### **3. CEO UPDATE – JOSS CROFT**

- 3.1 JC presented an update on UKinbound's recent activities since the Spring General Meeting in May 2023.
- 3.2 *MEMBERSHIP.* JC announced that the Association's membership figures now stand at 402 members. He stated that this is a testament to the hard work of the team, the Board, and members. JC reminded members that they will have received invoices for renewals and for these to be settled at their earliest convenience.

He also highlighted new members in attendance, which included Adventure Tech, Bokun, Holibob, Classic British Hotels and Hotel Co 51, and encouraged existing members to meet with them during the networking evening. JC mentioned that the membership team has been meeting members and encouraged members to get in touch to arrange a meeting and discuss how to make the most out of membership or get advice and support on any challenged faced.

- 3.3 *EVENTS.* JC gave an update on recent events, which included fam trips to Bustronome, The Riverside Museum in Glasgow, Up at The O2, as well as networking evenings at Harvey Nichols, The Clydeside Distillery and Madame Tussauds and a virtual DMO update from Scotland's Tay Country. The Association is experiencing a high demand for networking evenings in London, and that registrations will be limited to one attendee per company for venues with capacity restrictions, although a second person will be added to the waiting list to try and accommodate as many members as possible.

JC also announced that the new series of China Welcome Workshops have been launched, the first of which took place in partnership with Shakespeare's England and the British Motor Museum in Warwickshire. These interactive training workshops are delivered by Helena Beard, Guanxi, who is an expert in engaging with and welcoming Chinese visitors. The Association is taking the workshops all around the country in partnership with DMO members, so that as many inbound businesses as possible can benefit. The next set is to take place in Kent, Liverpool and Bath, and the Association hopes to announce further dates and locations soon. JC encouraged DMOs that may be interested in hosting a workshop to get in touch with the team.

- 3.4 *ADVOCACY.* Recent activity included a campaign focusing on VAT-free shopping, which was done in collaboration with the Association of International Retail. As part of this, the Association has asked members to write to their MPs via the 'email your MP' section of the UKinbound website, which allows members to send a pre-loaded letter to local MP in seconds, complete with stats relevant to their constituency.

JC added that the Association has secured a parliamentary debate which received media attention, particularly the Daily Mail, The Guardian, and the Daily Telegraph. He thanked the members for their support in writing to MPs and signing the Association's open letter to the Chancellor. Members were encouraged to get in touch with JC, Cindy Ng or Tendo Consulting with any evidence-based information suggesting a shift or drop in business due to lack of VAT-free shopping opportunities.

School group travel has been another major topic for UKinbound in the last few months, and the Association has secured a commitment to make it easier for school group travel between the UK and France. Details of this are yet to be announced, however the Association is pleased to have secured oral and written questions from Tim Farron MP on UKinbound's behalf, around the progress made on school travel.

JC also covered the issues surrounding skill shortages in the industry and shared his concern around the discontinuance of Level 3 Travel & Tourism courses after 2025 by the Department of Education. He also announced that UKinbound has joined ABTA'S new Education and Skills working group which focuses on the future of further education in Travel & Tourism.

Evidence has also been submitted to the Migration Advisory Committee's consultation on the shortage occupation list.

JC discussed presenting to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Future of Aviation on the challenges facing the inbound tourism and emphasised on the importance of engagement with parliamentarians to reinforce the standing of inbound tourism as a key economic, employment and global soft power driver.

- 3.5 *MEDIA ENGAGEMENT.* JC reported that UKinbound has been featured in over 43 pieces of UK media coverage over the last three months, with a combined reach of over 5.1 million. Highlights include coverage from The Guardian, The Telegraph, Daily Mail Travel Mole and Travel Weekly.
- 3.6 *MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS.* The UKinbound UK & London 2023/24 map was published over the summer, with nearly 30,000 copies distributed to tour operators, hotels, and visitor centres. The Year in Review was also distributed to members, covering the Association's key activities over the past year. Social media presence and marketing activity continues to grow, with 66 newsletter features and nine bespoke mailings distributed to an audience of over 1,300 travel trade professionals, with an average open rate of 40%. Members were encouraged to contact the Marketing team for more information on marketing opportunities.
- 3.7 *UPCOMING ACTIVITIES.* UKinbound Annual Convention will be held in Belfast, with over 340 delegates attending – an increase on previous record from 310. Members were reminded to select their B2B preferences, and for those members attending for the first time, to watch back a Webinar covering all things Convention, which can be accessed on the resources section of the UKinbound website. UKinbound Awards for Excellence will also be taking place at the Annual Convention, and members were encouraged to vote for this year's winner of the Member Choice Award by Friday 8 September.

JC also encouraged members to register for the upcoming China Welcome Workshop which will be held on 9 October in Leeds Castle, Kent.

JC added that UKinbound and ABTA are hosting a joint Parliamentary drop-in event on the expansion and reform of Youth Mobility Scheme, with 25 MPs confirming their attendance. He suggested to members to invite their local MPs via the EMAIL Your MP section of the UKinbound website.

The current Board of Directors is nearing the end of their term, and the Association will be starting the elections process in October for 2024-2027 term. UKinbound is looking for potential candidates who are passionate about the industry and the Association, with experience in senior leadership, strategy, finance, and governance. Members were encouraged to speak to current board members, JC or Antony if they have any further questions.

#### **4. GUEST SPEAKER – JOHN BOULDING, VOX GROUP**

- 4.1 John Boulding, VOX Group, gave a detailed presentation to members on how technology is impacting the tourism industry, including digital literacy, innovation, data-driven

decisions, and sustainability. He discussed the impact that the pandemic has had on accelerating technology, which is considered as the new reality, and explained the effect that this is having on travellers across the world.

## **5. Q&A**

- 5.1 Chris Ball, Clermont Hotel Group asked JC: What conversations are being held about what young people are being taught? You are being taught housekeeping, how to run the front office, but no one studies business development or travel trade. What conversations are therefore happening to promote our area of the industry?

JC responded: That's exactly the process that we are now in. The group that's being pulled together, of primarily ABTA but also other Associations in the industry such as the Business Travel Association. That's the opportunity for us to shape it because I think the process includes two service providers which have been appointed, and it is now up to the industry itself to say what we want. If you have done hospitality as a course, you may have done housekeeping, front desk, or something like that, but if that's not sufficient for your needs, as an industry you need to tell us what those needs are. Is it IT, contracting – what is it? And then we can feed that back into the process. There will have to be an element of consistency across inbound and outbound, but there should be anyway. So yes, that's the opportunity and we will be coming out to ask you a bit more information about what you think your future staffing requirements are going to be, what skills you are going to need. If the industry does not feel that it is relevant, the Government will not support it. So, a., we need to show that there is a real demand and I think we can easily do that given the number of vacancies and the barriers for growth that staff vacancies are causing, and the next is what we really need that is going to drive value for those students and the businesses that they work for as well.

## **CLOSE OF MEETING**

JC thanked the team and Board, and members for their continued support.

## **NEXT MEETING**

TBC