

**Notes from the meeting of the UKEVENTS Advocacy and Government  
Relations Working Group Meeting held on the .  
13<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

**Present:** Michael Hirst, UKEVENTS; Paul Black, VisitBritain; Neil Brownlee, VisitScotland; Peter Heath, PSA, Kerrin MacPhie, Mia; Rachel Parker, EIA; Heledd Williams, VisitWales;

**Apologies:** Jamie Ades, Beam; Simon Hughes, UKEVENTS; Nick Morgan, UKEVENTS Susan Tanner, NOEA.

**It was agreed to invite Clive Wratten, BTA, (subject to continuing membership) and Martin Fullard, TBOE Policy Unit to join the Working Group.**

**1. Communication & Engagement with Ministers and Government Departments.**

- Meeting with DIT Officials following letter to **Kemi Badenoch MP, Secretary of State, Department for Business & Trade**, on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 with **Joanna Thomas,, Special Adviser to SoS and Summer Nisar, Head of Policy & Delivery Unit**. Follow-up by Chris Skeith on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023.
- **Rick Stainton, Smyle Creative Agency**, who is a constituent of the Secretary of State, had a follow-up meeting in which she indicated that more data backed evidence is necessary for the Industry to make its case for support. She was looking for “good news stories” and areas where Government could help “failing” industries. Areas where she considered the Industry might help were offering employment opportunities to the over 55s; contributing to the levelling up agenda; showing greater diversity and inclusivity and its contribution to increasing exports.
- Following the Government’s restructuring of Department, UKEVENTS, had written to **Kemi Badenoch** to congratulate her on her new responsibilities for Business & Trade and point out once again the role of events in growing the economy. A letter had also been sent to **Lucy Fraser, the new Secretary of State at Culture, Media and Sport**, to highlight the value of the Events Industry to her portfolio.
- Response to letter to the Prime Minister on his appointment from **Nusrat Ghani MP**, Minister for Business & Investment Security, indicating business events fall within her portfolio.
- Positive response from **Nigel Huddleston, Minister at the Department of Business & Trade** to supporting the Industry.
- Briefing held with **Jeff Smith, MP, Shadow Minister for Tourism** on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023. He showed great interest in the sector’s ability to contribute to the visitor economy.
- Meeting to be held with **Stuart Andrew, Minister for Tourism**, on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
- **“Thank-you” reception for support during the pandemic on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2023** at QEII Centre for DCMS and other government department Ministers and Officials together with key industry representatives.
- EIA had met with **Baroness Blake, Labour spokesperson for Business and International Trade, Ruth Cadbury, Shadow Minister for International Trade, Lord Bassam, Shadow minister for Business & International Trade; Damian Green, Interim Chair of the CMS Select Committee**. All were briefed on the EIA’s Manifesto.
- A meeting is due to be held with **Stuart Andrew, MP, Minister for Tourism**, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

- Information on EIA's Manifesto and advocacy activity can be found at: [Events Industry Alliance manifesto](#) and [Parliamentary meetings - Events Industry Alliance](#)
- It was noted with disappointment that neither Tourism or Events had been included in the priority outcomes of any of the Government Departments, although it was understood this omission would be rectified in regard to the DCMS. [Making Government Deliver for the British People \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- Peter Heath indicated his constituency MP was **Michelle Donelan, the new Secretary of State at the new Department for Science, Innovation and Technology**. It was agreed they would be much merit in familiarising her with the role of events in those sectors as STEM topics comprise a substantial proportion of business events. Meetings had also been held a PSA member business with the **Cabinet Office and with ONS**, concerning SIC codes.

## 2. Updates from committee members on current active issues

- **Brexit issues** are now manifesting themselves more prominently especially relating to the extra difficulty and additional cost for international exhibitors and attendees. There was also mounting evidence of potential lost business. It is understood that ICE, the International Casino Exhibition, is going out to tender for the 2025 expo with Barcelona a strong candidate. Shoptalk is another potential event that might be lost and Farnborough had also reported the loss of an event due to Brexit considerations. PSA members remain concern about the impact of reduced touring, even now affecting EU destinations, and in particular the Night Time economy.

The importance of continuing to monitor and gather evidence of lost business as a result of leaving the EU and logging this on the online questionnaire was once again stress so the information can be passed to DCMS.

- The consideration of a **Bed Tax in Wales** is now undergoing a consultation.
- Mia was continuing to share evidence with both BEIS & DCMS.

## 3. Trading overview:

- General consensus was **that business was buoyant with trading exceeding 2019 levels**, despite the cost of living challenges and lack of human resources.
- EIA reported increased focus on Apprenticeships, Graduates and other training programmes#
- mia provided top line outputs from recent member survey: Two thirds reported increased business levels over 2019. **Impact of recent industrial action** indicated **£350 million of lost business and £550 million of postponed business**. Labour resources still number one issue with **75% indicating staff vacancies**. 91% highlighted **Sustainability** as key issue. mia looking at offering student membership
- PSA reported on business improvement with "**order books full**" until May with **good additional spending on exhibits and hospitality**.
- VisitWales indicated business **was busy but not as profitable**, citing **lack of skills** as a key issue.. **2024 was also looking good** and enquiries from IBTM were materialising well.
- VisitScotland also confirmed a **busy schedule of events** but also highlighted **workforce deficiencies and lack of skill levels**. There was some pipeline **anxiety about 2024**.
- VisitBritain highlighted enquiry levels from **North America** at 60-65%; **Europe** 30-35%. **India** was proving to be an emerging market for Incentives. **Enquiries from China**

were beginning to start-up. The **2023 Business Event Growth Programme** was on schedule and would align more to priority sectors such as **Medical, Life Sciences and Finance**.

#### 4. Business of Events Policy Forum

- RW outlined the Policy Unit's plan for 2023 and its intended engagement with the Department for Business & Trade during **International Trade Week** when briefing sessions would be held on **exporting opportunities**.
- The Policy Unit would be seeking input on areas of policy priorities to be developed and research needed to support policy positions both in the UK and where appropriate with comparisons with practice within international competitive destinations.
- An Industry event would continue to take place in the Autumn. There would also be a number of roundtables .
- **An Advisory Board and the APPG** would be used as sounding boards to develop policy ideas.
- Briefing of Opposition parties is also taking place..
- **The Policy Forum prospectus can be viewed at:** [Policy Unit – Building a Stronger UK Events Sector \(the-business-of-events.com\)](https://www.the-business-of-events.com)

#### **The objectives and role of TBOE Policy Forum in relation to UKEVENTS were outlined as:**

- TBOE is positioned as an events industry 'Think Tank' in which policy concepts are discussed, researched, and explored (through opinion editorial, events, discussion etc)
- Policy development will primarily focus on the "big picture" issues leaving tactical issues on "nitty gritty" areas to be pursued by trade associations, either individually or through UKEVENTS collaborative action.
- The Policy Unit will create 'Positioning Papers' that encompass the interests of the entire spectrum of the Events Industry, which will outline policy concepts. UKEVENTS along with their partners decide whether individual policies are accepted/aligned
- TBOE will create an Advisory Council to feed thoughts and insight into policy concepts
- TBOE will create a schematic diagram which identifies how TBOE, UKEVENTS, VisitBritain and Partners are structured/related. This will be agreed collaboratively and published
- TBOE to run events which consult with market sectors with the objective of gathering intelligence to form policy concepts
- Whilst TBOE will present and promote its findings to influencers and policymakers, Industry representative bodies, co-ordinated through UKEVENTS where appropriate, will continue to be the primary advocates to policymakers of those positions adopted by partners.

#### **Key Policy Areas**

**Members were asked to identify their priorities for policy development. UKEVENTS had put forward some key areas:**

- The Scottish model of policy alignment to key sectors was highlighted and a briefing on this model would be provided.
- A number of areas had been suggested by UKEVENTS as follows:**
- a. Why Government needs to **take the UK Events Industry seriously**. (A general intro to the Industry, its role, value, positioning, relationship with policymakers, challenges and opportunities)
  - b. The Industry's contribution to **Green Growth**. (Sustainability, resilience and creativity)
  - c. **Spreading prosperity across the UK** using events as a strategic delivery partner. (Levelling up, filling the seasonal gaps, connectivity)

- d. The role of Events in **growing trade, exports and inward investment**.
- e. The role of events in **community and destination prosperity**.
- f. The role of events in the exchange of knowledge and value creation to improve society
- g. Providing the **high skilled jobs of the future**
- h. Events as a **showcase for innovation and creativity** on the world stage and delivering on a range of National and International policy objectives
- i. **Lowering barriers and incentivizing growth and investment** (Better regulation, tax incentives for growth and investment)

#### 5. Tourism Industry Council update.

- Introduction of a **Workstream Leads Group** to set the Council's strategic agenda, ensuring it is joined up with and responding to the work of the Working Groups, which cover Events, Accessibility & Inclusivity, Sustainability and International Competitiveness and Demand. Chris Skeith is a member of this Group.
- Representing event interests are:
  - Michael Hirst – Tourism Industry Council.
  - Jennifer Jenkins, Worldspan – International Competitiveness & Demand Working Group.
  - Nick Brooks-Sykes – Marketing Manchester - International Competitiveness & Demand Working Group.
  - Anna Abdelnoor, ISLA – Sustainability Working Group.
  - Dan Thurlow – Scottish Event Campus – Sustainability Working Group.
- It was noted that the **Outdoor Events sector** had tried and failed to gain representation on the Council and Working Group. This was considered very disappointing given the high value of outdoor events in the visitor economy and their ability to drive demand. The opportunity to join the EIB Working Group might arise once that Group completes its current objective and moves onto a new remit.

More information on the new governance structure, terms of reference and full membership of the Council and its working group will shortly be published on the Council's page on gov.uk

#### 6. APPG activity update.

- **The 2024 Business Plan** had been agreed and was now being progressed. [Homepage | Events \(inparliament.uk\)](#)
- **Theresa Villiers MP**, Chair of the Group, was due to visit Belfast for the Balmoral Show and it was hoped to arrange a programme for her covering the sector's activity in Northern Ireland.
- **Lucy Powell, Shadow Secretary of State for CMS** has joined the Group..
- A briefing was being arranged for **Lucy Fraser MP, the new Secretary of Ste at DCMS**.
- **All Members of Parliament** are being contacted with an Industry briefing.

#### 7. Protect Duty

- Now to be named "**Martyn's Law**".
- **Draft legislation due in the Spring with the legislative process expected to take 18 months.**
- Consultations with CTITE/AEV and Live taking place.
- **ICC Wales** continues to lead on best practice and have published draft risk assessment and a venue training guide. [Protect Duty Report - ICC Wales](#)
- There will be varying levels of requirement depending on **venue capacity**.
- Advise on the probable legislation and requirement for adherence available on the **ProtectUK website**. ["Martyn's Law" - What you need to know | ProtectUK](#)