

Events Industry Board
Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 100 Parliament Street

19 October 2016

Attending: Nick de Bois (Chair)
Ufi Ibrahim
Chris Skeith
Chris Foy
Mike Rusbridge
Simon Hughes
Holly Riley
Ellen Mackrill
Rebecca Hadlow
Naomi White
Drew Stokes
Ken Kelling
Fiona MacKinnon

Apologies: Michael Hirst, Tracy Halliwell

Introductions from chair

The Chairman welcomed the Board and noted that the primary aim of the Board was to act in an advisory capacity to government and the Events Industry.

Update from national Boards including London and Partners

Chris Foy: reported on the Events Support Programme, including that:

- The first round of bids saw a low take-up, with only £300k awarded
- The life of the fund could be an issue, as a number of bids are for 2020 onwards
- A clear criterion for bids is needed

Drew Stokes: There have been few events applications through the Discover England Fund, although the first round did include two successful bids: one technology proposal and one for incentives. These are both good quality bids and it would be helpful to encourage the industry to take the opportunity to apply for funding for innovative ideas.

VisitEngland/VisitBritain are running roadshows on fundraising and how to bid for Discover England Fund, as well as arranging meeting with bidders to discuss their proposals. This could be an opportunity to raise awareness through the business visits and events industry.

Fiona MacKinnon (Scotland)

Fiona gave an update on the VisitScotland Business Events team restructure, which is now complete and there is now a full team in post. Association & Sectors is now a team of 4 with an emphasis of growing this sector and working in close partnership with our key cities, centres and external bodies to increase the number of Association events being secured in Scotland.

Neil Brownlee and other colleagues are currently out at IMEX Vegas with 17 Scottish Partners promoting Scotland to International Conference, events and incentive buyers. The US remains the 2nd largest market for Scotland after the rest of the UK.

Brexit is still an unknown for Scotland and they continue to conduct business as usual. The only points to note are that due to the weaker pound, many international clients who have already committed to events are asking to pay in advance to take advantage of the lower cost to them. There is also a marked increase in the number of incentive groups confirming their programmes into Scotland. Two of our key cities Glasgow and Edinburgh have lost bids due to the future financial uncertainty. At bid stage, some are very risk adverse.

The VisitScotland Bid Fund is currently closed to new applications as the £3 million allocated in the Bid Fund is now committed to confirmed events. Meetings are taking place with Scottish Government to progress a support network for future events in relevant sectors.

Update from UKTI (covering new Government departments and Ministers)

This was not possible as no representatives from UKTI attended.

Competitiveness agenda and Barriers to Growth

Mike Rusbridge spoke about the work of the barriers group and the paper it had developed. Nick had reviewed the report and consulted other members of the board. Chris Foy reported that VisitEngland will be using it as the basis of further research and to inform VE/VB's marketing strategy.

Brexit and BVEP Brexit survey

There was discussion about what use to make of the BVEP survey which had been completed, and whether it should form the basis of a formal letter from the Chair to the Secretary of State. The board decided that the Chair would write, setting out the industry's concerns and opportunities identified through the survey, and using that as a platform to lay out the EIB's role and the potential within the BVE industry to contribute to the UK's post-exit landscape. **Action: Nick de Bois to write to the Secretary of State.**

AOB

Simon Hughes (BVEP) spoke about whether there was a role for the EIB in the public discussions around the use of a London events/conference site as the temporary home of the House of Lords during the Palace of Westminster renovations. Following a discussion of propriety, it was agreed that the EIB's most appropriate role was to express a general interest in the outcome and the desirability of using London venues, but to avoid support for, or discussion about, any individual venues.

There was a discussion about the events organisers' roundtable, which was scheduled for 30 November and to be attended by the Secretary of State, and whether to push back the meeting and use the slot for Nick de Bois to meet the Secretary of State. A further discussion to follow between Chris Foy, Michael Hirst, Nick de Bois, and Ellen Mackrill.

Action: DCMS to set a new date (NB - this is now complete and the roundtable has been set for 2nd February 2017).