

Minutes of a meeting of Visit Jersey Limited (“VJL”)

Held at Liberation Place, St Helier Jersey, on Tuesday 15th September 2015

Present:	John Henwood (JPH) – Chair
Catherine Leech (CL)	Mike Graham (MG)
David Seymour (DS)	Tim Crowley (TC)
Keith Beecham (KB)	Sam Watts (SW)
Kevin Keen (KK)	
(collectively referred to as the “Board” or the “Directors”)	
In Attendance	
Aimee Maskell, AM to PM Secretarial Services (Scribe)	
Mike King (MK)	

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted from Doug Bannister (DB).

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No additional conflicts were noted. However, it was noted that, following a change of policy, Accounting Officers should not carry out non-executive directorship duties on boards for which their departments have funding responsibility; accordingly MK had resigned from the board. In future he would attend meetings in a non-directorship capacity.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the minutes dated 14th July 2015, subject to a number of minor amendments from DB.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S REPORT

The Board noted KB’s CEO Report, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, together with a Board Trends Report which KB tabled to the meeting. Referring to the latter, KB proposed always tabling this at meetings rather than in advance to ensure up to date information is provided. The Board agreed it was a very useful document. SW queried whether it was possible to produce visitor statistics without the number of visitors who visited specifically for the Island Games. DS agreed that this would be helpful, particularly because the Island Games’ visitors skew the statistics in terms of the average age and length of stay. KB advised that it may be possible to disaggregate visitors at country level and he would discuss this with David Edwards. SW also asked if previous month’s or year’s statistics could be included in the report in order to highlight any increases/declines.

IT WAS NOTED that VJ are currently undertaking some additional survey work at the Ports of Jersey (POJ) to better understand if Jersey Live and the Air Show have an impact on visitors’ decision to come to Jersey.

KB updated the Board with two additional pieces of statistical information from the STR system as follows:

(a) based on POJ’s passenger details (for visitors and residents) there has been 14 consecutive months of year on year growth in arrivals from the UK whereas there has been 10

consecutive months of year on year decline from Europe and August 2015 sea arrivals have been the lowest since 2012; and

(b) revenue per available room compared to Jersey's UK competitors has seen a 10% increase in August this year compared to last year (from £123 to £126).

DS suggested that the (b) should be qualified because most hotels that use STR are four and five star hotels and are therefore at the top end of the market. Recognising this, the Board nevertheless agreed that STR was a useful tool and supported the reference in the Jersey Destination Plan's (JDP) which highlights the importance of it.

KB summarised his Report to the Board and highlighted a number of salient points including support given to tour operators who report being encouraged by VJ's activities; however, there was a need to manage expectations regarding funding. Operators also continue to express concern about the sustainability of access to the Island, particularly regarding group travel, the coach market and Condor.

On the upcoming Walking Festival, KB reported it has changed from a VJ funded to a cost neutral operation by adding additional days/routes and agreeing changes to the way Blue Badge Guides are remunerated. Work is taking place to promote the walks on social media. Walkers will be provided with a questionnaire with a view to evaluating the benefit of the event to the economy.

KB provided the Board with details of the Winter Festival on which VJ is working with a number of suppliers to create a programme of activities. Secrets Beneath will be in the Island during November and December when they will stage a "Narnia Experience". The Board noted that Secrets Beneath are self-funding, although support will be provided from EDD and the Parish of St Helier by way of the provision of huts etc. KB advised that the Town Centre Manager is also organising a series of Christmas/year end related events including a market and ice rink in the Parade Gardens.

The Board noted that VJ are currently working on the 2016 schedule of events with a view to releasing details as soon as possible. The contract for the publication of What's On was discussed and KB reported that a further year remains on the contract, after which it will have to be re-tendered. KB was scheduled to meet the provider in the near future and would review the current contract raising a number of issues.

KB provided the Board with the social media statistics in respect of the recent "Escape to Jersey" campaign as follows:

Platform	Number of Clicks	Conversion Rate
Facebook	23085	9%
Twitter	6298	16%

In addition, You Tube had 193,686 video views and the average length of views was 48 seconds long. There was a discussion on aspects of this area of activity with the outcome that David Edwards would be asked to put together some industry benchmarks; SW suggested that the type and variety of partners as well as the level of engagement received should be benchmarked.

KB advised that the best bits of the “Escape to Jersey” campaign will be rolled into the Autumn/Winter campaign alongside the development of a micro site on “how you enjoy Jersey in the off season periods”.

The Board noted that *experienceJerseyCI.com* hub has now been launched which enables people to upload their content together with calls to action. KB advised that there are no results from this campaign yet but reassured the Board that these will be reviewed. He added that industry appears very supportive of the different ways VJ is marketing the Island.

KB advised that Adam Caerlewy-Smith is currently seeking expressions of interest from local companies regarding the brand development/proposition work which needs to be undertaken on VJ’s behalf. The Board noted that the contract will be put out to tender in November 2015 and, while local entities would be encouraged to participate and afforded every opportunity, off-Island companies would not be excluded. SW confirmed that her role as a director of VJ created a clear conflict of interest and accordingly her company Orchid would not be competing for the contract.

IT WAS NOTED that a review of VJ’s IT (including its website, CRM system and all applications) will be undertaken this autumn. KB advised that an agreement needs to be reached regarding the use of the domain Jersey.com.

Referring to the budget, KB advised that the remainder of the 2015 Budget and Business Plan has been approved; the 2016 Business Plan has been presented to the States; and a VJ Audit Committee meeting will take place on 23rd September to approve the 2016 budget. Thereafter States’ sign off will be sought and the Business Plan and Budget will be released.

KB advised that a number of staff have completed their probationary periods (including himself), and Karen Evans and Meryl Le Feuvre have now joined the team. It was noted that an event was held in August to introduce the staff to the trade. Unfortunately, despite promoting the event in the newsletter, a number of industry representatives expressed disappointment not to have received a personal invitation. KB therefore suggested that promotion of events would need to be done differently in future. He would circulate a list of names, contact details and profiles of the members of staff of VJ to the industry.

5. MODERNISING THE PROVISION OF TOURISM INFORMATION ON JERSEY

KB summarised his paper entitled “A recommendation for modernising the provision of tourism information on Jersey”, which considered the range of issues related to encouraging repeat visits, increasing visitor spend and how best to facilitate the provision of information services in the 21st century whilst managing current expectations. Rather than VJ attempting to provide all services in-house on limited resources, he proposed that VJ should form a partnership(s) in order to meet the target growth in spend and encourage repeat business.

KB said there were three aspects to the provision of visitor information (1) obtaining information; (2) curating information; and (3) distribution of information, and he suggested that whilst VJ should be responsible for (1) and (2), appropriate partners should be responsible for (3). He acknowledged a mixture of face to face and digital services are required. However, much thought needed to be given to what customers’ needs will be in four or five years’ time and KB referred the Board to the series of recommendations set out in the paper.

After a wide-ranging and comprehensive discussion on the issues raised it was agreed that KB would seek expressions of interests from third parties for the provision of visitor information services and liaise with Ports of Jersey (POJ) who are currently contracted to provide services.

The timescale for the process was discussed. Logically, expressions of interest would lead to tendering and it could take some time. It was noted that POJ had indicated their willingness to extend present arrangements if necessary. KB would report back to the Board in due course and it was noted that, as VJ was required to exit their current premises by the end of Q1 next year, there was some urgency attached to the matter.

6. POST LIBERATION PLACE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

On the topic of premises, the Board noted a paper prepared by KB entitled "Post Liberation Place office accommodation", a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda. The Board considered what might be suitable office accommodation for the VJ marketing team. It was agreed that there was currently an abundance of secondary office accommodation available in the Island which should not be unduly difficult to secure. KB pointed out the issue is slightly complicated due to the requirement for warehousing / storage space in the short term.

The Board considered what might be the appropriate location for VJ's offices. KB stressed that whilst accessibility was important he remained very open on the location. The Board agreed regarding location that no option should be ruled out and that the principal requirement was for decent, comfortable working conditions for the staff whilst allowing easy access and engagement for the industry; nearby parking would be an important consideration. KB would put together a working party, with Director support as required, in order to progress the matter.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Board noted the pro forma appraisal questionnaire, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda together with a summary of the performance review (appraisal) process. KB reminded the Board that the Business Plan sets out how the organisation will be evaluated. Appraisals provide a process whereby staff are assessed linked to the Business Plan. He added that the staff are in favour of an appraisal process as this has a bearing on the performance-related element of their remuneration. KB advised that whilst the appraisal process relates to deliverables, it also deals with the manner in which they are delivered, noting that it is a balance of competencies and outcomes. He added that due to the small size of the organisation, he will oversee all appraisals.

The performance-related scheme is based on a combination of overall business and individual performance, assessed against specific criteria.

The method of appraisal was discussed together with the need for objectivity. It was acknowledged that part of any review was inevitably based on judgement, but it was also vital that performance was assessed against hard numbers. KB reiterated that he will oversee all appraisals and consideration would be given to engaging with third party providers of HR support in order to provide independence. This was supported by the Board. It was noted that in the final analysis all compensation was a matter for the discretion of the Board.

8. CONDOR FERRIES PROPOSED SCHEDULE FOR 2016/17

The Board noted the proposed 2016 Condor Ferries Schedule for 2016, a copy of which was circulated with the agenda. Whilst KB acknowledged that improvements appear to have been made from the 2015 schedule, he continues to receive complaints on a weekly basis regarding

Condor. He advised that he responds to these and forwards them on to Condor (and POJ if appropriate) who copy him in to their response. The Board expressed concern about Condor's performance, its possible negative effect on repeat business and ferry operator's poor engagement with customers and the wider public and times of delay and difficulty. Condor's inadequacies should not be allowed to damage Jersey's reputation.

MK pointed out a review of Condor's performance has been commissioned by Jersey and Guernsey, the results of which are not yet available.

KB advised that the Schedule was provided to VJ by the Head of Marine Services at the States of Jersey with a request that VJ provide him with any relevant feedback prior to the States' approval of the Schedule. KB would circulate it to industry for their feedback.

9. DESTINATION PLAN CONSULTATION UPDATE

KB provided an update on the consultation process in respect of the JDP. Four breakfast meetings have been held at which approximately 50 people from across the industry have attended. Feedback had been generally very positive and a wide range of views on a number of topics received. The closing date for submissions had now passed, but input was still being received and accepted.

10. TDF UPDATE

KB and MK updated the Board on recent events which culminated in the chairman of the TDF tendering his resignation; it appeared other, longer-serving members of the TDF panel would also offer their resignations although some of the more recently appointed were likely to stay. The core of the apparent disagreement related to a difference of view as to whether the TDF was an advisory or an independent executive body.

The Minister had reversed some TDF recommendations, which he was entitled within his powers, to do. MK emphasised that the Minister's actions were supported at officer level.

The TDF currently has no funding available and there is no provision for it to be re-capitalised in the MTPF for 2016-19. The Minister has therefore proposed that an application to the £20m growth fund be submitted, albeit that this is already over-subscribed. JPH reminded the Board that it had been the clear view of the TSB that there should be closer alignment between VJ and TDF and he believed the Minister would take this view into account in any review of the TDF and its Terms of Reference. However, he accepted that new funding would be required in order for the TDF to have a meaningful role.

11. AOB

JHA – it was noted that Helen Hart has been appointed JHA Association Manager.

Self-Catering – CL queried if any progress had been made promoting Airbnb in the Island and MK responded that 28 Airbnb properties are actively being marketed. Unfortunately, some of these may be operating illegally. EDD are therefore reviewing the legislation in order to assist the market to operate. However, it may be difficult to change the legislation because it affects the Housing Law and therefore it may take some time. The Board noted that Senator Ozouf has received objections from the industry regarding the promotion of Airbnb. The Board acknowledged that Airbnb will help to grow the market, but they sympathised with industry's concerns given that hotels are highly regulated and Airbnb is not. To illustrate, hotels are facing significant costs relating to fire protection regulations which did not apply to Airbnb; yet should

there be a fire incident at an Airbnb property it would affect the reputation of the whole Island. The playing field is not level.

Time Share – DS suggested that if the Housing Law is being reviewed consideration should also be given to time-share and MK advised that this issue has been raised as part of the discussions. KB added that he has received a letter supporting the introduction of time share in the Island recently.

Jersey Conference Bureau (JCB) – KB confirmed that VJ was now dealing with all conference enquiries which were previously dealt with by the JCB and he was working with Hamish Reid to put together a best practice guide for conferences in the Island. TC proposed that the team dealing with conference enquiries should visit the properties involved to ensure that they are familiar with the facilities they can provide.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting was due to take place at Liberation Place on 10th November 2015 at 2pm. It was further noted that the AGM would take place on 15th December 2015. The Board agreed that the meeting schedule for 2016 should be arranged as soon as possible and it was resolved that KB and Rachel Winchurch would circulate this in due course.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 5pm.