

Visit Isle of Man Executive Agency Minutes

Date: Friday 12th December 2025
Coffee: 09:00-09:30, Meeting: 09:30-12:30, Lunch & Tour: 12:30-13:30.

Venue: iMuseum, Kingswood Grove, Douglas.

Board Attendees:-

Agency Chair: Steve Pickett, Interim Chair (SP)

Agency CEO: Deborah Heather (DH)

Political Member: Mrs. Sarah Maltby, MHK (SM)

Board Members: John Keggan (JK), Connie Lovel (CL), Andrew Jamieson (AJ), Steven Taylor (ST), Claire McColgan (CM), Hannah Lo Bao (HLB) Graham Makepeace-Warne

In attendance: Andrew Stewart (AS), Natasha Johnson (NJ) Guest, Stuart Clague (SC) Guest, Jess Kelly (JK1) Guest

	Agenda Item	Owner	Action
VM 15-25	<p>Standing Items:</p> <p>Apologies – Brian Thomson</p> <p>Conflicts of Interest (Other than those declared) - None.</p> <p>Hospitality/Gifts – BT & GMW guests of Sapphire at the excellence awards, DH & Nicola Wilkinson attended through tickets supplied by the awards themselves as DH was part of the judging panel.</p> <p>Approval of Previous Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved and noted the updated Minutes from April as per ST feedback 	Chair	
VM 16-25	<p>Updates:</p> <p>Chair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SP welcomes the attendees, and Graham Makepeace-Warne to his first meeting. Confirms that V-loM/Tourism is building momentum and holding our own with respect to numbers. He confirms the end of the investigation and that we are all glad to see it come to an end. <p>Airport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HLB discussed changes in British APD in the recent budget and that we do not know how this might impact on the IoM budget as yet. Discussed the possible use of a PSO (public services obligation) classification on certain routes in order to negate APD as some Scottish Airports do and the CI are considering. Nov figures were up at the airport due to increased EasyJet flights Airport ranked as 4th best airport in the British Isles DH wanted to thank HLB and the Airport team in turning around the relationship with EasyJet post a tumultuous period for both parties. DH explained that EasyJet were happy with their consolidated program and the much-improved operation at Ronaldsway. 		

Hospitality

- SP/ST discussed how it is a quiet time for hospitality, a time when losses are often the case
- Discussed the potential impacts from proposed minimum wage increases and the pace of that change being the hardest thing to accommodate for businesses but that could be countered by attracting more visitors.
- SM brought up the employment of children regulations, and that this was being reconsidered as risk was putting off many businesses
- Trade was driven by weekend demand and discussed getting locals out during the week. Board discussed Liverpool and Leeds, the opportunities presented by sporting events, students and shopping.
- Reported it had been a good summer with good weather bringing people out
- Discussed flattening quieter periods through proactivity
- SP confirms the Hospitality Board wanted to continue and were also keen to drive numbers
- Board discussed UCM, training and transferable skills, including life skills learnt in hospitality. UK tourism strategy, skills and academies and sharing skills

Biosphere GMW

- **Periodic review:** Document has been reviewed in full by the Technical Subgroup of the Board and final edits are now being completed by the team, before being sent to the UK Man & Biosphere Committee for their initial review in Jan. There are some outstanding pieces (final refinement of the zonation map, population data for each zone) which Beth is working with GIS and Cabinet Officer on.
- **State of the Biosphere Report:** A public-facing report synthesising the findings of the Periodic Review will be developed next year, launched in September around the official submission of the periodic review.
- **Biosphere IOM Strategy:** The 2027-2036 Strategy will be developed in 2026 in consultation with stakeholders, setting the direction for the next ten years with a longer-term vision of what the Isle of Man wants to be. Based on engagement throughout the periodic review process, a framework has been developed which the strategy will be developed from:
 - Priorities: Community, Economy, Environment
 - Foundations: Collaboration, Governance, Resource
 - Delivery: Education & Awareness, Policy, Research
- **Board:** Responsibility for governance has now formally transferred to the Board, with subgroups forming to address specific areas. We currently have:
 - Technical Subgroup – overseeing periodic review
 - Risk & Audit – developing a risk register for Biosphere IOM
 - Research & Innovation – developing a Research Strategy to drive strategic research and identify funding mechanisms
 - Partnerships & Partners – initial focus on development of the Partner Programme

VM 17-25	<p>Operational Strategy Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH talks to the operations update, explaining about current work on the 'festivalisation' of events and how it relates to the MICE research V-loM had done earlier • Discussed the Cruise strategy, the briefing and selection process that CL had supported with, the report is due in mid-April • NJ explained the Emily Clarkson coverage/Island surpassing expectation approach • Dog friendly campaign using influencers and journalists • Lexington opportunities coming through all very last minute 	DH (Presentation)	
VM 18-25	<p>Visit Performance Review Dashboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH presented the updated numbers including the YE forecast. • Growth in visitor numbers is expected to be minimal and generally driven by cruise, but spend has grown exponentially increasing the visitors economy's contribution beyond recognition • DH expressed a belief that this was due to a combination of a few factors including targeting a different demographic, better pricing strategies (more professional operations) in some cases and some increased costs outside of inflation 	DH (Presentation)	
VM 19-25	<p>Visit Strategy Review and Update 2022-2032</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH presented current figures against pre-covid numbers and how V-loM is faring against the 2022-2032 strategy. • ST expressed he would like to see V-loM working towards something closer to a 3-year strategy, to ensure activity is aligned, focusing on product pillars, and a long-term version of the 'noise' campaign. • JK pointed out the opportunity presented sometimes from smaller but more targeted reach through PR/Influencers- more likely to drive conversion. • Discussed improved performance being around 20% supported by winter lets for longer stays relocating. And the opportunity driven by data [REDACTED]. • [REDACTED] discussed [REDACTED]' improved performance with hotels up by 20% and [REDACTED] by 25% and that further investments will be made to consolidate and drive performance further and that the [REDACTED] was flying. That 10% of potential premium leisure visitors are day visitors via the [REDACTED] 	DH (Presentation)	
VM 20-25	<p>Travel Trade /FIT Activity/update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC delivered his Travel Trade presentation and what the focus and activity had been for 2025 • Discussion took place around quality and issues regarding Travel trade wanting a better class of hotel these days, asking for a minimum 4-star product • CL pointed out that 80% of visitors are not price sensitive, [REDACTED] • Discussed about being 'locals' dependent in the winter. The opportunity presented by the GDS, the SPC timetable and data around booking windows. 	SC (Presentation)	

VM 21-25	Agency Review Update and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jess Kelly (JK1) updated the Board about the Agency review and focusing on staff, collaboration and Board economic data/TOR/governance 	JK1	
	AOB (Any Other Business) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AJ asked about V-loM restructuring and where it was. SP confirmed it had been on hold because of the investigation but that it would be revisited. 	ALL	
	Next Meeting Date: Friday 19 th June 2026 Proposed Future Dates: Friday 18 th September 2026 Friday 11 th December 2026		