

Visit Isle of Man Executive Agency Minutes

Date: Friday 15th August 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 Keggins (JK), Connie Lovel (CL), Brian Thomson (BT), Andrew Jamieson (AJ), Steven Taylor (ST), Claire McColgan (CM), Leigh Morris (LM).

In attendance: Andrew Stewart (AS), Hannah Lo Bao (HLB), Secretariat (AQ), Natasha Johnson (NJ) – Guest, Ranald Coldwell (RC) – Guest, Yvette Hollows (YH) – Guest.

	Agenda Item	Owner	Action
VM 09-25	<p>Standing Items:</p> <p>Apologies - None.</p> <p>Conflicts of Interest (Other than those declared) - None.</p> <p>Hospitality/Gifts - DH was a guest of Opol at TT and at the Chamber of Commerce Dinner.</p> <p>Approval of Previous Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be revised – ST expressed that the decision regarding the registration paper and proposed fee increase (VM 08-25) did not reflect the concerns raised at the time. ST noted that the agreement was made in principle, with the understanding that further 'scaling work' be considered. <p>AP - DH actions a change in the previous minutes to reflect this. No other amendments were raised.</p> <p>Outstanding Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DH raises the previous action item regarding the commercialisation of the ferry and airport terminals discussed adding pods in the Sea Terminal and other small projects but no overarching plans. BT says that he agrees funding for improvements in the ferry terminal building is needed. He highlights the increase in short term solutions to issues. He highlighted the additional spend from IoMSPC to fix issues in the Liverpool ferry building including the toilets. BT also acknowledges the support from Visit in trying to make improvements to the sea terminal building. DH confirms that Biosphere has been added as a standing item. Work on the strategy is ongoing including a review of roles and responsibilities especially around PM3/Matrix management projects. 	Chair	DH

Updates:

Chair

- SP welcomes everyone and introduces himself as the new interim chair of the Visit Isle of Man Board. SP is looking forward to getting involved in the ongoing development of the Visit strategy. SP has enjoyed his involvement over the past month.

DfE CO

- AS gives a brief introduction. He notes that the Isle of Man economy is currently stable. AS believes that we may be headed to a pivotal time for the Visit/Tourism sector as there are opportunities for growth compared to other sectors of DfE who are encountering more challenges.

Steam Packet

- BT states that ferry passenger numbers are looking good for Manx Grand Prix.
- BT suggests that there are an increasing number of international visitors.
- BT says that he is excited about the progress that has been made with 'Project Ireland' and currently they are working out the costs.
- The board group discuss how current conversations around immigration, both globally and in the UK, are also being reflected locally. It was noted that negative perceptions around this issue could affect the island's diverse hospitality and tourism workforce.
- BT raised concerns around the increasing ID checks at the ports creating a less welcoming impression for visitors. In response the group highlighted that this further reinforces the importance of the Manx Welcome training scheme currently in development.
- BT adds that there is potential to increase the sailings to Ireland on a year-round bases. However, operational challenges were acknowledged, as docking in Belfast can sometimes be delayed due to the need to share a berth with other vessels.
AP - There will be a need for Visit IOM marketing team to co-ordinate with the IoMSPC in order to promote the sailings to Ireland to ensure their success.
- BT wishes to promote positive stories from visitors that highlight the great work that employees deliver to accommodate passengers. SM agrees.
- The group discuss the recent 'Industry x IoMSPC x Visit x Political' meeting and agree that there were positive outcomes that are currently being actioned.

Airport

- HLB notes that in terms of quarter two 2025 capacity is down 11% on all EasyJet flights. The pax number is down 7%. TT period is down 4%.
- HLB states that airline capacity split for 2025 is EasyJet: 53%, Loganair: 39% and Aer Lingus: 8%.
- There is a 6% increase in average fares with the highest increase being LTN with a fare growth of 36%. LCY was down 7%. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] When comparing it to NQY, CGU JER, NV we are the second cheapest on average fare.

DH

- HLB notes that the 'on time performance' is at 79%, this includes the LCY connection [REDACTED]. Cancellations are considerably down.
- [REDACTED]. The airport seeks additional funding for customer service improvements, this includes support for a new holding lounge.
- The group discuss the airport and governments relationship with the airlines, it is acknowledged that there is still work to do to gain trust after the ATC issues.
- AS notes that government is committed to ensuring long term connectivity.
- DH confirms that Visit have reopened a conversation around package holidays with EasyJet Holidays – although there were issues securing this idea with industry in 2023.

Hospitality

- ST begins by saying that [REDACTED]. He notes that despite this, food sales are up and this will have been impacted by the good weather and the outdoor spaces.
- There is an ongoing concern about the impact of [REDACTED] he therefore predicts a difficult winter.
- ST would like to increase the festivalisation of TT to limit the impact of the 'quiet season'.
- ST highlights that the increase in self-catering accommodation and its occupancy is good for hospitality businesses because visitors will spend on food and drink outside their accommodation.
- ST raises the need to work with Visit on some communication material for the cruise ships that include maps highlighting local food and drink to bring in business. **AP** - DH agrees to review literature for this.
- ST spoke about an initiative called 'Okell's Independents' where managers will take ownership of delivery and performance in a much more proactive way than with managed houses.
- Group discussed the issue with bringing over hospitality workers due to lack of appropriate short term accommodation and that perhaps a conversation with Planning could help with this.
AP - SP agrees that further conversation can be had with Planning on how to support short term hospitality worker accommodation.
- CM raises the point around package holidays. The group discuss the importance of events to attract package holidays.
- CM raises the opportunity of bringing over visitors who are stopping in Liverpool to the island and that there needs to be discussion on how Visit are attracting those audiences.

DH

SP/DH

Biosphere

- *LM unfortunately suffered with poor signal whilst connecting via Teams and therefore was unable to give the Biosphere update.*

	<p>Tourism Levy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH opens the conversation by stating that government have included in the Island Plan a target to review a potential tourism levy and operate a pilot scheme. DH informs the group that the idea is to run projects with charities to trial the amount of donations from visitors. Update: Visit have agreed to view the Island Escapes fundraising & the Cruise/BeachBuddy tours as pilots. • DH notes that there is a lengthy process to bring a levy in- there will be an initial consultation process. • CL shares with the group that MNH have had a positive experience with visitor donations. Visitors express a happiness in giving – particularly around TT. • DH reinforces the importance of proper execution. • CM comments on the ongoing tense point politically in the UK. In Liverpool hoteliers are running the BID and are not taking a holistic view of the funds. A national or regional picture would mean that the accommodation BID would go. CM stated that the UK could start to control the sector not the sector controlling the levy. • DH says we need the levy and the registration scheme to work together. • CM Liverpool has had a challenge from the [REDACTED] A tourism levy would make it regional. • SP opens the group up to discussion around potential negative impacts of a tourism levy. • Board members highlight the importance of clear communication on how funds would be spent. • It was agreed that effective marketing would be required, and that revenue from the levy should be ring-fenced for reinvestment into the tourism and hospitality sector. • AJ commends the approach in Italy on their tourism levy and the work it funded on the Trevi Fountain. • ST highlights the need for data to support the levy as the tourism sector would wish to understand what investments are currently being made and the rationale for requiring additional funding. AP – should be included in consultation process • The group discuss the impact of Villa Gaiety events on tourist numbers. DH suggests visitors find it hard to purchase tickets due to on island demand and that tickets are mostly booked up well in advance. 		DH
VM 11-25	<p>Operational Strategy Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH recognises that there needs to be more support around bringing money into the economy from excursions and that the team need specialist help with that. • DH celebrates the recent success of the downhill skateboarding event and is excited to develop the events strategy to include more signature or flagship events that generate more visitors. • DH also notes that travel trade businesses are asking for higher quality accommodation. <p>Addendums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archibald Knox – Coverage Report – not discussed • WDSC Coverage Report – not discussed • Amy Jackson Westwick Coverage Report – not discussed • VIOM Off-Island Events Calendar – not discussed 	DH (Board Pack)	

VM 12-25	<p>Visit Performance Review Dashboard (standing item) / Budget & Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH notes that for Q1 and Q2 overall cruise passenger numbers are down but that it is predicted to catch up in Q3. • DH adds that there is an increased trend in Cruise ships deciding to dock last minute. • DH confirms that the average spend per visitor has increased. This notes a shift in the visitor 'type'. • DH notes that last year there was an increase in visiting friends and family, especially in Q4. This trend in VFR meant that there was not an increase in demand for paid accommodation which did not help the sector. • DH further notes that there has been increased camping over TT. • DH Presented the numbers and visitor spend and its' rapid growth in recent years, and therefore the impact on exchequer benefit less inflation rises. • There is a conversation in the group around the timing of the MGP and that it creates a quiet period between the two island motorsport events. They discuss the theory that it could also compete with families visiting for a holiday. 	DH (Presentation)	
VM 13-25	<p>Marketing Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NJ delivers the marketing strategy to the group. • SP commends NJ for the work she has done on the strategy document. SP suggests it promotes some thought and discussion. • NJ concludes that socials are a key tool to reaching people and showcasing the island and NJ highlights the importance of having fresh content and assets. NJ gives examples of the recent recognition and awards we have received through our campaign videos. NJ reiterates the importance of building on this momentum. • SP queries our demographics. • NJ clarifies that the island appeals to all demographics and whilst it is important to nurture our older/traditional audiences there is key growth in our younger target market – particularly through rising trends such as wellness. • CM queries nudge behaviors. • NJ responds that we will continue driving awareness through our channels and looking for opportunities through other marketing tactics and partnerships. • NJ advises that in order to stay focused that they could look at monthly themes. • CM believes there needs to be more targets to 50 plus age group. • The group agree. • BT agrees with NJ that the content is important. AP – ST asks that the presentation be circulated. 	NJ (Presentation)	DH
VM 14-25	<p>Destination First</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YH and RC present the destination first update. • YH shares they are providing ongoing solutions including, enhancing customer related processes. • ST questions how businesses can get more involved as 	RC/YH (Presentation)	

	<p>they would want to help in the delivery of targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RC advises through the Local Economy scheme and highlights the grants for filling empty shops etc • SM compares to the villa arcade, to showcase how easy it can be done. • ST adds that we have a work force of 700 people that could contribute. • RC there is a whole community piece that we can work on and questions whether we bring it in through the local commissioners. • ST agrees and highlights the importance of building momentum. • YH responds that messaging is important to continue to work through problems. • RC notes that hopefully everyone can see the good that is being done but also acknowledges that there is room for improvement. • DH says that we need to find a fun way to get people engaged with DFB, something to capture the publics imagination. • The group celebrates that there are certain members of the public who act as community heroes and that this should be celebrated. <p>AP – To update the slides on age demographics.</p>		YH
	<p>AOB (Any Other Business)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JK elaborated on the recent acquisition of Island Escapes by Sapphire Holidays, highlighting the positive outcomes of this. • JK celebrates that a UK company have recognised and invested in the growth potential of Island Escapes. JK also confirms that it remains about customer service. • AJ adds that Opul was established on the island. Opul are working with people who have extensive influencer reach and he believes that this will increase visitor numbers. • AJ passes on that the Opul owner recognises the TT fan base in India. Opul is hoping to continue with the connection to build visitors to the island. • AJ says Opul events are working with people in Dubai and India. • The board group discuss film tourism and decide there is a market for niche films and this should be discussed further. <p>AP - Add film tourism as a discussion point in next board meeting.</p>	ALL	DH
	<p>Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DH actions a change in the previous minutes to reflect this. No other amendments were raised. • Arrange meeting for Visit IOM marketing team to co-ordinate with the IoMSPC in order to promote the sailings to Ireland to ensure their success. • DH agrees to review the literature/communication for cruise passengers. • Visit to arrange a meeting with Planning on how to support short term hospitality worker accommodation. • Include investment in tourism consultation • YH to update the slides based on age demographics. • AQ to add film tourism as a discussion point in the next board meeting agenda. • Circulate the presentations 	<p>DH</p> <p>NJ/DH</p> <p>DH</p> <p>SP</p> <p>DH</p> <p>YH</p> <p>DH</p> <p>DH</p>	

	Next Meeting Date: Friday 3rd October – Workshop 2025		
	Proposed Future Dates: Friday 12 th December 2025		
	Close: 12:30		