

**Minutes STA Board Meeting  
Wednesday 21 September 2016  
Sheraton Hotel, 1 Festival Square, Edinburgh**

Present:

Stephen Leckie (SL), Henk Berits (HB), Rebecca Brooks (RB), Alison McRae (AM), Martin Bennett (MB), Calum Ross (CR), Marina Huggett (MH)

Apologies

James Withers (JW), David Lonsdale (DL), Gordon Dewar (GD)

In attendance

Marc Crothall (MC), Elaine Townsend (ET), Caroline Warburton (CW) - minute takers

---

**1. Welcome / Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

June Board Minute approved and actions discharged with the following comments:

- **Themed Years:** Lots of input received from industry. Themes should be reflected around the TS2020 Strategy. Single theme year not practical, ideally each should be a 2year cycle, but this comes with a costs implication.
- ***STA Coms Team to produce paper for future Board meeting detailing analytics for STA website/The Talker/The Pulse (to show before and after redevelopment of website). Action C/fwd.***
- ***MC to update Board on STA Council changes and include STA Board succession planning as agenda item for next meeting. Chart showing timeline of each member term to be produced. – Council changes have been put on hold. MC displayed and explained the board succession timeline.***
- ***What is STA Position on AirBnB and advocating for regulation? RB to draft STA position on AirBnB. Action C/fwd.***

**2. CEO & TS2020 Report**

- **CEO Report**

The report was discussed; the following comments were noted:

- The STW17 programme is still work in progress – board were encouraged to email topic ideas / potential speakers. CalMac & ScotRail are working on offering a joint travel ticket.

Suggestions for speakers/topics: International speaker; European National; Digital; Skyscanner Report on Future of Travel <http://www.skyscanner2024.com/>; Tour Operator – Towey; Nicola Millard, Head of Customer Insight & Futures, British Telecom.

Agenda to be fronted with more STA visibility and complemented with speakers from industry.

- There was a discussion around the Wild Scotland Contract, which is currently through to 31 December 2016. MC advised it has a clause that requires either party to issue 3 months -notice should they not be able to or wish the current contract to be extended beyond the current term i.e. from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2017 onwards. Post conversations re the rationale for not entering into a new contract it was agreed that MC speak to and arrange a meeting with WS Chair, Ben Mardall to advise on the decision not to enter into a new contract. CR stated that the reasons need to be made clear, support is offered in the transition and that any dialogue and comms be managed sensitively so perceptions and opinions of others do not allow this decision to reflect negatively on the STA.
- Great to see membership is continuing to grow with 90% retention. Potentially 2 more patrons are coming on board – Castlewater and Clock Software. Graham also had a positive meeting with Blair Estate. Currently looking at a 2-tier membership level for Colleges. South of Scotland / Dumfries & Galloway not very well represented through membership.
- There has been a huge response from hotels to the Brexit survey. The Tourism Alliance is putting out a further survey using the CBI format. STA are sending out a similar survey with the pre-conference information to delegates. Radio Scotland will hopefully cover a piece at the STW17 Conference, which will be heavily weighted towards Brexit. STA need to decide their position on Brexit. Important to have continued free movement of people. Potentially a minimum 10-15yrs transition period if the above is shut out. Simon Calder recently reported there are challenges ahead for Scotland. Important to put out the message that Scotland is open for business.
- Suggestion a European National is asked to speak at the STW17 conference.

### **3. STA Financials**

Financial papers were approved. Forecast is on track. CRM system has been taken out of the budget. BDMRM (to Sept'17) and Marketing Manager (to March'17) continuation of funding has been approved.

### **4. TS2020 & discussions with PS agencies re ILG structure**

Agencies have discussed the funding proposal put forward by the STA. Funding for National Strategy Co-ordinator (CW) and STA CE (MC) has been approved; awaiting contracts for signature. Further discussions to be held for Comms co-ordinator and 2 other co-ordinators funding.

Going forward the STA will be the lead organisation but the Industry Leadership Group (ILG) will be separate. The next ILG meeting is in December when the composition of the Group and who will be the Chair to be discussed. Important to have the correct balance of private/public sector; public sector personnel important but also important to have the right quality of individuals around the table.

CW can deliver to a degree but without additional resource what can actually be achieved? Industry engagement is key. Cabinet Secretary is fully supportive of the ILG. The future group will shape the 2030 strategy.

Concerns were discussed what impact co-ordinating the delivery of the Strategy may have on the STA and its membership expectations. The STA core activity is influencing the Strategy; this message should be ramped up. If the STA scaled back to an advocacy organisation would it lose members and funding? Is it possible to set aside funds for a co-ordinator within the STA financials – perhaps using the Santander graduate scheme?

STA is the industry membership body. Who actually owns the Strategy? The role of the ILG is to develop and create a strategic plan. SE is the only funder, to date, for TS2020. ILG/Strategy/STA – the difference is not clear to industry.

STA core is completely self-sufficient. STA TS2020 activity – STA is employed to undertake activity on behalf of the Group.

Following further discussions it was decided to hold a future board session on the future direction of the STA; the following were noted:

- Strategy has zero credibility if not supported by the STA
- What do we think the core function of the STA should be?
- How is this sustained?
  - Industry representation
  - Membership – what are they looking for?
  - Lots of delivery in the destinations – bigger picture is the challenge
- Danger members may not renew because of TS2020 activity

#### **5. AGM agenda, Directors Report and Audited accounts**

The year-end accounts to 31 March 2016 were approved by the board, and signed by Stephen Leckie and Marina Huggett.

HMRC tax debt has been fully paid off. **Action: SL/MC to give explanation at the AGM.**

#### **6. Verbal update on UK TIC & future Cross Party Group / STA Council meets**

The next CPG meeting is scheduled for evening of Oct 5<sup>th</sup> (same day at STA Conference and Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology Launch). MC has highlighted this to the CPG Convener and explained that it is unlikely that many industry representatives will be there on this occasion.

#### **7. STA Conference update and final agenda with delegate key partner list**

MC updated the group on the latest attendance numbers (over 300) and reminded Board members that they are asked to ensure that they speak to STA members, in particular patrons and exhibitors. This is particularly important for those members who pay significant subscriptions and are looking for influence and introductions in the sector. A list is being drawn up of individuals who Board members will be asked to speak to if possible and this will be provided prior to the event.

The Board requested that it was clear by the delegate badges which individuals they were to speak to, and also that the Board members delegate badges said Board Director (not just the organisation they run).

SL/MC and CW are meeting next week to discuss the key Chair messages and these will be circulated to the Board in advance of the AGM.

**Action: All Board members to speak to 'priority' delegates where at all possible.**

**Action: MC to ensure that delegate badges reflect STA Board members' status and also are clear on first glance if individuals are members, patrons, potential members etc.**

**Action: MC/SL to circulate Chair's script prior to the STA AGM.**

#### **8. Preview of New STA Website**

MC presented the new STA website which is currently under development. All agreed that it was a great improvement on the current one.

**AP: ET to send development link for STA website ([www.scottishtourismalliance.co.uk](http://www.scottishtourismalliance.co.uk)).**

#### **9. Board Dublin Trip update & meeting Agenda with ITIC**

An itinerary had been circulated with the agenda and MC asked what the Board would like to get from the visit:

- A better understanding of ITIC as an organisation, its Board, Constitution and objectives
- How do ITIC see Brexit?
- How does ITIC interact with Government and Failte Ireland.
- Greater understanding of the Tourism Recovery Taskforce – its role and its impact.
- What has ITIC done really well and why, and what hasn't worked and why?

**AP: MC to prepare briefing note on ITIC and circulate prior to departure.**

**AP: MC to follow up on Fiona Hyslop's comment about the Board meeting with her counterpart in the Irish Government.**

#### **10. Reflections on progress made vs 4 strands of STA Strategic Plan**

The board agreed the 4 strands were still current and should remain our focus. It was also agreed the document would be reviewed over the course of the year.

#### **11. Future Meeting Dates & Agenda Items Board Succession planning – Skill set / who**

MC provided a diagram showing the dates when, under the current constitution, existing Board members would step down. Discussion included:

Whether the constitution could be changed to allow directors to continue beyond their two terms. The need to begin to consider who new directors might be (new directors would not be appointed until Oct 2018 AGM).

A cross section of skills and experience was important and this should be mapped out for discussion by the Board at a future meeting.

Whether STA members should be invited to put themselves forward as directors. The general option was that they should and that this should be raised at the STA AGM on 5 October.

**AP: ET to circulate Board Succession spreadsheet to Board.**

**AP: SL/MC/ET to ensure that the STA Board will look to invite applications to be Board members is included in the AGM presentation.**

**AP: SL to speak to each Board member individually to get their views on the succession plan document.**

#### **Future Meeting Dates:**

##### **2016 Board meetings & other STA event dates & times**

- **Oct 5<sup>th</sup> AGM & Autumn Conference:** Glasgow Royal Concert Hall – 08.30-14.00
- **Nov 3<sup>rd</sup>/4 Board Trip to Ireland Meet dinner with ITIC:** Dublin(dep c8.30hrs 3<sup>rd</sup>, rtn. c14.30 4<sup>th</sup>)
- **Nov 22<sup>nd</sup> STA Council meet – Edinburgh** 14.00- 16.30 ( Board attendance not reqd)
- **Nov 30<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting:** Howard Hotel Edinburgh 13.30-16.00
- **Nov 30<sup>th</sup> Patrons & Business Leaders Dinner:** RBS Gogaburn 18.30-22.30

### **2017 STA Board meeting event dates & times**

- **Jan 19<sup>th</sup> Dinner with VS Board – Edinburgh** venue TBC 18.30-22.30
- **Jan. 20<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting: Edinburgh** venue TBC 09.00-12.00
- **March 15/16 STW2017 Signature Conference / Dinner: – Glasgow - Crowne Plaza**
- **March 22<sup>nd</sup> Parliamentary Reception – Holyrood - 18.00-20.00**
- **June 8<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting: Edinburgh – venue TBC - 13.30 -16.00**
- **Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting: Glasgow – venue TBC 10.30-13.00**
- **Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> AGM & Autumn Conference – Location TBC**
- **Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting: Edinburgh – venue TBC 13.30-16.00**
- **Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> Patrons & Business Leaders Dinner – Edinburgh venue TBC – 18.30-22.30**

### **12. AOB**

Martin Bennet asked how do we get feedback from our Patrons in order to ensure that we are providing value of Patronage? MC replied that this is through regular dialogue from himself or Graham MacLennan. The Comms Team regularly go out to the patrons asking for news stories and features. Some patrons are better at responding than others.

Marina Huggett asked about how we could better engage with members and provide networking opportunities. MC highlighted the recent cancellation of the Barclays Inverness event where it was felt that the timing (most businesses were still very busy) and theme (financial information) were not right. A networking event is being considered for Inverness on evening of 21<sup>st</sup> November (night before Highland Tourism Conference).