

Note of STA Board Meeting Tuesday 10th September 2024

Present online

Rebecca Brooks (RB), John Henderson (JH), David Lonsdale (DL), Alex McKie (AM), Calum Ross (CR), Alison McRae (AM), Michael Golding (MG), Alex Borland (AB), Andy Cliffe (AC), Marshall Dallas (MD), James Withers (JW), Scott Inglis (SI), Clare Winskill (CW).

Apologies

All present

In attendance

Marc Crothall (MC)

Elaine Wilson (EW)

Ruth Souter (RS) – Minute taker

Welcome / Apologies - RB

No apologies

Minute from 11th June 2024 - RB

Minute was approved.

Matters arising - no matters arising.

Meeting Part 1

1. Welcome and apologies

No apologies noted

2. Minute of last full board meeting – June 2024

All actioned

3. STA Financials - MC

- AAB have provided us with year-to-date accounts ending up until August 2024. Variants on membership income is due to invoices being raised later. These have now been actioned and will reflect in the September accounts.
- STA's forecast and cashflow on track and bank balance at time of meet - Circa £150k.
- Bulk of main autumn renewals have been completed and awaiting a few to come through. Our next bulk renewal is March 2025, as in previous years the Signature Conference will be a hook to drive these.
- The ILG (hosted on 25th September 2024) managed and delivered by team STA generated a small uplift of £1.5k in fee addition.
- End of year profit forecast sitting at £2k. Discussion took place around the need to have deeper reserves going forwards, currently sitting at 3-4 months of reserves, aiming for 6 months. MC stated that to build reserves, more patrons and supporters would need to be recruited and is currently

looking at signing up AAB up as a Platinum Patron. In addition to this, other forms of commercial revenue delivering through third party event activity is another avenue being explored.

- MC reminded all annual membership fee increase will be done in line with inflation, but MC raised concerns that this could impact on small business renewal given cost pressures on business.
- Discussion around the value of the STA membership/contract arrangements being directly related to MC's contacts and personal relationships built with businesses over the years. JW suggested it would be valuable to discuss the value of the contract, so, the board can appreciate and understand the size of this. MC advised that every patron and supporter proposal is documented with a structure, but more often now being tweaked to suit specific arrangements.
- STA and UKInbound have agreed to jointly host events in Edinburgh and London with key stakeholders attending.
- We've written every Scottish MP, including Secretary of State who is keen to engage with us. The Secretary of State is keen to engage with us, both in Scotland and at London events.
- New membership continues to happen through online sources.

4. Update / Discussion on STA meetings and KEY events

- 60 registered for STA AGM (hosted on 24th September 2024). Vicki Miller joining us to present the Visit Scotland re-structure.
- A reminder of 2nd October dinner with Labour party politicians – please let us know who will be attending.
- December Board meet agenda will include update on proposed board recruitment process via third party. Information will be circulated in advance of the meeting.
- Board agreed Wednesdays were preferable for STA Board.

STA Survey

- Copy of report findings available – [STA Engagement Survey Results](#)
- 150 responses, mainly non-STA members
- STA members voiced they are happy with membership direct to MC, but didn't complete the survey. Certain associations are not passing information on, and some businesses don't realise they are part of the STA through association.
- SD, EW and MC analysed information, and MC shared the headline results. A follow-up action plan will be produced aimed at improving the STA's membership engagement for the future.

56 Degree Insight Survey

- Working with 56 Degree Insight to carry out survey in partnership with other 3 tourism alliances in the UK. This will have a set of key questions with 4 different links for each alliance version. We will use the findings from this to lobby our agenda in Westminster and Holyrood.

Meeting Part 2

5. Policy Working Group Update

There was a discussion and reflection after lunchtime about the comments made by Daniel Johnson MSP, Professor Graeme Roy (Scottish Fiscal Commission) and Judith Cruickshank (Royal Bank of Scotland) over lunch and how this might inform our future thinking regarding policy activity.

EW gave brief overview of recent discussions at the recent STA Policy Working Group. Issues raised include:

- The TVL and the nervousness in the sector re: local authority variations on percentage rates being charged.
- Potential for STA to produce a short guide for TVL on how to respond to councils regarding issues such as business cost recovery.
- Lots of speculation around TVL. Lack of knowledge about it is causing concern in certain areas. A Highland Councillor implied at a meeting with the DMO that a 9% TVL rate was being considered. CR stated with that added to this it would be paid double figure percentage uplift.
- As of Friday 21st September, the bill will allow for Local Authorities to officially start consulting on a levy scheme. However, 18 months must pass before any levy can physically be collected from a visitor allowing time for detailed consultation and for business to repair and communications to customer, OTA and other stakeholders impacted.
- AM said Glasgow was looking at the TVL differently from other councils, taking a mature approach with an understanding around using the funds for long-term improvement.
- MC said Edinburgh's plans are balanced with Local Visitor Economic plans, looking at fixed annual amount of £5m going on social housing. The rationale for this is hospitality workers are unable to access accommodation locally. Although clarity around outlines and processes needed. They have also indicated that a percentage of levy cost can be retained by businesses. Numbers being quoted are between 1.5% and 2.5%.
- All agreed that there needs to be a price tipping point factored into TVL considerations.
- MD - Business tourism good, but people can't get rooms for events. Most events contracted up until 2027, with rooms to be exempt from VL until then.
 - Three national exemptions only:
 - Homeless
 - Blue Badge Holders (who must claim back via councils)
 - Travellers/Gypsy community
- If the business has a contract in place pre-TVL implementation, then no levy will be charged.
- Expected to raise net revenue of £50m in Edinburgh within 3 years from TVL.
- % rate being reviewed every 3 years, but no criteria set. TVL will influence occupancy, and interesting to see what that will be.
- The statutory TVL guidance has been published that is primarily for Local Authorities
- AC raised need to move away from single policy issues and build on developing the narrative and economic case for why tourism drives business growth.
- There was consensus that an independent economic analysis of the importance of tourism as an economic driver is needed to create an evidence base that STA can lobby government with.

Policy Agenda

- Our priority Policy Agenda
 - Brand Scotland – opportunity is there
 - Brand Scotland is not just focussed on tourism, with a much bigger proposition, collective with other industries.

- Currently divisive politics – north and south of the border
- Priority missions – technology across transport, visitor management, sustainable transport
- Community-led tourism and crucial role of DMOs
- Net zero

Conversation followed

6. Board Recruitment

After a short session after last Board meet, the group came to the following decisions (AM):

- Open advertising and transparency
- Timeline set out
- Certain skill set needs to be attracted
- Advert is going out
- Need expertise in policy as DL stepping down.
- Re advert we will frame it with emphasis on preferred skillsets but will be fully open.

Through our collective reach via STA and own channels we will get to a wide-ranging audience and that the opportunity will have broad appeal. As well as the more modern-day future skill set AI etc, keen to attract people with background in policy, politics, experience of working with or navigating the govt and agency networks in Scotland and London. (MC)

Proposed Timelines

- Announce AGM on 24/9
- Board advert goes live wk. com 30/9 with closing date application 20/9
- Initial longlist agreed by board recruitment committee for invite to 1st interview by 3/11
- First interviews done via Teams wk. com 11/11
- Shortlist agreed for invite to in-person interviews by 13/11
- Second interviews 21 & 22 Nov & 28/29 Nov
- Recommendations to Board 3/12
- Offers out 5/12
- New recruits start Jan 22/1

Since the Board meeting, it was agreed that this timeline be pushed back into the New Year. MC is bringing proposals to the December Board from third party recruiters for consideration.

7. Actions

MC Approach made to Fraser of Allender/Tourism Economics

AB to approach RBS Chief Economist Sebastian Burnside SI to access copy of Bank of England Report.

8. AOB - None

Date of next Board meetings

Board catch-up, In-person	3 rd December 2025 15:30 – 17:30	The Social Hub, Glasgow
Board catch-up, In person	4 th February 2025 12:30 – 16:30	DFW Law, Edinburgh
Half Day Strategy Day	27 th March 2025 14:00 – 18:00	Lost Shore, Edinburgh

STA 2024/2025- Meeting and Events

Ongoing 3-weekly Sector Check-In Calls	3 weekly – next meet 9 th December 2024 @ 12.30	Online
DMO Meeting	27 th January 2025 @ 14:00	Online
Council Meeting	28 th January 2025 @ 14:00	Online
Patron & Business Leaders Event	3 rd December 2024 @ 18:00-22:00	The Social Hub, Glasgow
SCOTHOT STA Spotlight Stage	26 th – 27 th February 2025	SEC, Glasgow
STM: STA Signature Conference – Workshops	10 th March 2025	EICC, Edinburgh
STM: STA Signature Conference – Evening Gathering	10 th March 2025	The Signet Library, Edinburgh
STM: STA Signature Conference – One day conference	11 th March 2025	EICC, Edinburgh