



# Greater Lincolnshire Visitor Economy Board

Minutes of 21st September 2021

International Bomber Command Centre  
& Microsoft Teams

**Present: Board Directors:**

Nicky van der Drift, Jo Hardy, Paul Robinson, Alex Saul, Kimberley Vickers, Paul Learoyd, Charlotte Goy, Sukhy Johal, Emma Lowe, Emma Olivier-Townrow

Officers:

Ruth Carver, Amy O’Sullivan, Mary Powell, Lydia Rusling, Jenny Crouch, Helen Thompson

**Apologies from Directors:**

Vince Weaver, Charlotte Bennett, Emma Brealey, Nicola Radford (officer)

This was the first meeting of the new Visitor Economy Board and chair NVDD welcomed all new board members, referencing the difficult times for the sector over the last two years and the continuing issues left by COVID and Brexit but reflected that it has shown huge agility and flexibility. Going forward we need to Research, Challenge, Question, Test and then Action. She explained the three-tier structure with the Board being supported by Task and Finish Groups made up of both Board members and other representatives from our networks with a further level of people who would be asked to test the outputs from the groups, from outside the Board, before recommendations were made.

All the board members gave the experience that they were bringing to the VEB and then their hopes and concerns for the future. Most mentioned their ability to make connections, their networking and being able to join the dots. Everyone noted the importance of partnership, future sustainability and raising awareness of Lincolnshire. Their deepest concerns were about infrastructure and skills shortages and seasonality for the county. Some noted the importance of our cultural offer and that focussing on our residents was vitally important and should be an early priority. The importance of data was noted - it shows us where we are and where we’re going.

We have a reasonably good idea of the value of tourism through the STEAM data, but do we know the detail on heritage, sport, retail and events? Details of how many businesses, and of what types, are in our sector, their format, market audience, key challenges and aspirations are needed to help shape the strategy going forward.

**Role of the GLLEP - Ruth Carver**

RC presented on the role of the GLLEP. Its partnership approach, evidence based strategy and delivery plans, its role as a champion and advocate for growing the economy. She explained that the VEB was one of eight advisory boards that sit under the main board. There are four GLLEP priorities: Game Changer projects; Economic Growth; International Profile and Trade; and Strengthening the GLLEP. Currently there are no visitor economy elements listed in the gamechanger lists. RC outlined the need for the Board to create a strategy that could provide enough key elements to fit within that plan. It will be essential to have measurable and targeted outcomes that fit within the overall GLLEP focus to ensure this happens and to secure funding.

RC went on to cover skills and recruitment:

- Intelligence gathering and feedback to government
- Bid for 'good practice in recruitment'
- Bid for a career programme focussing on careers and jobs in the VE sector
- Increase the number of VE enterprise advisers
- Myth busting key messages
- VE focussed jobs and careers fair
- Possibility of focussing on one issue - such as shortage of chefs
- What is the baseline?
- Set out a vision for what skills the sector needs
- Offer the VE Board expertise
- Apprenticeship pledge for VE sector

### **Purpose of New Board and Structure - Jo Hardy**

JH presented on the purpose of the new VE Board and its structure. A key ambition will be to develop a strategy that can deliver both immediate and longer term objectives that ensure the visitor economy is then included within the “Game Changer” list for the LEP.

Various ideas for recruitment and skills development were discussed and will be included in the research done by the Employment and Skills Group. PR reported that numbers at GIFHE for hospitality were down dramatically from when he started at the College. EOT commented that the number of specialist training centres was also falling in reaction to demand. CG asked that the board kept in mind the need to align with national policy.

NVDD said she thought it was vital that we got away from the traditional images of our industry and promoted the wide range of jobs and career paths in the sector. She suggested using profiles of people like those around the table to assist this.

AS said that Bourne Leisure Group, who own Butlins, were spending time and resource on looking into the skills shortage and training issues and that the Ingoldmells operation was needing to recruit a substantial amount of new staff but were facing the same issues as others in the industry.

JH noted that Hardys Animal Farm had faced staffing problems which resulted in the café offering being substantially cut. She also added, that even with a limited offering, footfall has been at its highest level since 2004, and spend per head was up by 20%. AS concurred with the increased footfall and spend that they have experienced for Butlins Ingoldmells.

When the issue of sharing data and information was mentioned, Board members reported that businesses sometimes don't trust the public sector and don't always like sharing with other businesses, who are perceived as competition. We need to do more to create awareness of jobs and careers in VE. Businesses need to share more - communicate, network and learn from each other. All agreed that seasonality is an issue and that we want to be a year round destination, or at least be open to accommodate the Christmas/New Year visitors. All roads to improvement within our country are hinged on seasonality, which effects what we are able to provide and the quality that we are able to offer. Moreover, it will help the jobs situation and further investment, but we don't under-estimate the difficulty of extending the season. JH commented that a recent paper on coastal seasonality had cited Lincolnshire as the most seasonal coastal area in the UK.

SJ mentioned that the seasonality of the county and the associated problems with this had been highlighted many times before, and that it is imperative that we work harder on overcoming this problem.

CG informed the Board about the forthcoming developmental changes to Destination Lincolnshire and explained that this overarching body would act as the DMO whilst Visit Lincoln would retain its position primarily as a B2C service. She referenced the recent DMO Review paper by Nick de Bois and the 12 recommendations it contained. The funding review for DMOs is due to take place in October. Lincoln had been one of 10 DMOs selected to a round table with Mr de Bois during the consultation period of his review.

LR discussed the Towns Funds and their value in investment across key areas of the county. She stressed the importance of working collaboratively to ensure the best return on this investment. She also reported the positioning of the Midlands Engine Visitor Economy Board, which is chaired by Lord Taylor of Holbeach.

### **Tourism Officers Group - Mary Powell**

MP presented a report from the Tourism Officers Group who had contributed to the sub group on Market Research (please find attached). This detailed an audit of the current research that we have and also ideas for future needs. Currently work is in progress on Business Tourism and its potential for Greater Lincolnshire and also on the needs of Generation Alpha. MP welcomed the thoughts of the group to add to the list.

**Government's Recovery Plan - Kimberley Vickers**

KV presented a report from the sub group on the Government's Recovery Plan which accepted that the VE sector had been hit first, hardest and will take longest to recover. It discussed the role of DMO's, the funding landscape and the need to support businesses. It mentioned the Camelot/National Lottery voucher scheme. This was to be run through the TXGB booking scheme who would take their usual 2.5% booking fee, Visit Britain would take an additional 15% booking fee. Both of these fees were exclusive of VAT. Although this is to be reinvested into the sector, this commission meant, for most businesses, who are still trying to recover losses during the pandemic, it was unprofitable to take part in the scheme and coastal businesses would be closed during the offer time due to the short season. KV, JH and NVDD confirmed they would not be taking part.

**Task & Finish Groups**

Discussions were held around key priorities and the following Task and Finish groups were established:

- Seasonality - Chaired by JH
- Sustainability and the Green Agenda - Chaired by EOT
- Skills and Employment - Chaired by RC
- Research - Chaired by MP

**Action Point**

- See table below

The next Visitor Economy Board is on December 15<sup>th</sup> and will be held at Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education

**Any Other Business**

None

**The meeting closed at 4.50pm**

Action Log

Date of meeting	Actions Recap	Ownership	Progress
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	Research Task and Finish Group – panel to be put together  Sukhy Johal, Laura Freer (VL/DL) and Emma Lowe - panellists	Mary Powell	
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	Sustainability and Green Agenda Task and Finish Group – panel to be put together  Lydia Rusling and Paul Learoyd - panellists	Emma Olivier-Townrow	Emma and Jo have joined forces to tackle
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	Seasonality Task and Finish Group – panel to be put together  Alex Saul - panellist	Jo Hardy	Seasonality and Sustainability in one exploratory piece of work.  Currently core panellists are being contacted for their involvement. We will be bringing in a variety of people for their

			<p>involvement from a variety of sectors and geographical areas of our county as we progress</p> <p>We would hope to present our initial plan at the next VEB meeting and will be using the LEP conference to engage with a wider network of parties..</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	<p>Skills and Employment Task and Finish Group – panel to be put together</p> <p>Paul Robinson and HR rep from Bourne Leisure - panellists</p>	Ruth Carver	
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	Mary Powell would like feedback and input into research areas that could be included. Currently working on Business Tourism and Generation Alpha.	All	
21 <sup>st</sup> September 2021	All Task and Finish groups need support from your networks. Ideas or nominations to group owner	All	