



TOURISM ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes 19th OCTOBER 2009

1. Welcome/Introductions/Minutes of July Meeting

The minutes of July's meeting were agreed. These will now be posted on the DCMS website.

2. State of the Industry

The Minister asked for any general comments on the state of the industry.

Leisure Tourism - the general consensus was that August and September had been better than expected, although there was some slow down in October. General trends were for more people to take up last minute deals, for shorter durations, and on a self-catering basis.

Airport Industry – numbers were stabilising and inbound figures were slowly rising, but there was general consensus that yields were still low.

It was noted that business tourism continued to lag significantly, and that both public and private sector were taking initiatives to address this.

It was observed that it was important for the UK to understand overseas consumers' perceptions of their own countries' economic conditions, and the impact this might have on their spending decisions.

MH referenced the weakness of the £pound against the Euro and wondered whether there was any more that could be done to exploit the situation to increase leisure tourism.

VisitLondon listed initiatives currently being pursued but many around the table also felt that good PR was the answer. It was felt that the currency advantage was still not being fully appreciated by potential visitors and that this needed to be rectified. MH asked for information on promotion and how much perceptions might be shifted, especially from from the value-for money point of view.

(ACTION VB and VL)

3. Tourism 2012/ Welcome Strategy

The Group welcomed the appointment of Tony Hall to the Cultural Olympiad Board. MH stressed the need for regions to have buy-in on any proposed torch relay route. LOCOG assured MH that a route would be consulted upon nationally and regionally.

VisitBritain/VisitLondon presented their report on Tourism 2012 progress. LOCOG also provided an update on the work they have been doing in the Nations and Regions Group, including the development of a tourism business opportunities network - a portal for businesses to access information, and on the other work they have been doing with RDAs, e.g. on events, pre-games training camps, target markets, volunteers, language training.

Chris White raised concerns about information being cascaded to local government, who remain unclear what their role is and how they can be part of the Tourism 2012 process. It was agreed this needed full consideration.

It was recognised that much activity was taking place around Tourism 2012, but the Group felt that we were still lacking a national narrative of what needed to be communicated about the tourism legacy of the Games. Communicating this clearly would help those marketing the games to do so with a co-ordinated and consistent message. Members were particularly keen for VisitBritain and VisitLondon to agree one script between them and act as a central point of industry guidance.

MH stressed the need for key deliverables to get the Tourism 2012 strategy on course and for a clear, coherent strategy and message. MH commented that she was not keen on the number of strap lines currently in circulation.

MH requested that VisitBritain and VisitLondon consider again an overarching strap-line and put together a joint document or narrative on areas of importance to the tourism industry in relation to 2012, and where we are with each area to date. This document would act as a central point of information for the tourist industry. DCMS would hold the ring. This might also be co-ordinated with the tourism business opportunities network portal being developed by the Nations and Regions Group.

MH also agreed to work with VisitBritain to host a seminar or conference at which VisitBritain paper can be presented or launched.

(ACTION: VB, VL and DCMS)

[NB. It is anticipated that VisitBritain/VisitLondon should present their draft communications narrative to the next TAC meeting in order to allow members the opportunity to discuss, and provide feedback and observations. The paper will be circulated to members, via DCMS, in advance to allow good time for consideration prior to the meeting. It is envisaged that a conference or seminar will be held following the TAC meeting – DCMS and VisitBritain will consider arrangements for this.]

Brian Wisdom gave an update on skills and said that People 1st were currently refreshing their national skills strategy which should be ready by January, to

coincide with the VisitBritain/VisitLondon narrative and the proposed seminar or conference.

The Group also discussed a fair pricing hotel commitment for 2012 and MH said there was a need to ensure an industry-wide buy-in; one which was greater than the current position.

4. Furnished Holidays Lettings rule changes

MH stressed that officials are continuing to make representations to the Treasury on the industry's behalf. Ken Robinson reported on a constructive meeting with Treasury during October. DCMS reported that, in principle, the Treasury had agreed to another discussion with industry later in the autumn, at around Pre-Budget Report time, when further details of proposals should be available. MH agreed that officials would follow up on KR's behalf. **(ACTION DCMS)**

5. 5-Asks - Priorities for Government

Ken Robinson asked for an update on this. It was noted that DCMS was still waiting to receive a formal response on a couple of elements of the '5-asks' from one or two Departments. An Inter-Ministerial Tourism Group meeting, chaired by MH, was scheduled to take place in November and the '5-asks' would be discussed again then. It was hoped that that DCMS would be able to provide a formal response to the industry by the end of the year.

6. 'Barriers to Entry' (APD, taxation and other tariffs)

VisitBritain/Tourism Alliance presented their paper.

Concerns were expressed about the increase in air passenger duty. MH indicated that any policy changes were likely to prove difficult, but encouraged members to present views to the Chancellor accordingly in the run up to the Pre-Budget Report.

MH was surprised to hear that documentation for visas is often only available in English and agreed to look again into this issue

(ACTION: DCMS).

Andrew Cunningham agreed to provide MH with an update on double summertime and discussions that have taken place with BIS

(ACTION: DCMS).

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on January 18th.