

# BOARD MEETING

15<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 13.00 – 15.30

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd, Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

## Visit Inverness Loch Ness Board Present

David Shayer	DS	Anna Low	AL
Jo De Sylva - Chair	JDS	Jane Slaughter	JS
Ina Davies	ID	Emmanuel Dambier	ED
Kenny McMillan	KM	Cheryl Campbell	CC
Caroline Gregory	CG	Russell Fraser	RF
Cllr Ian Brown	IB		

## Also present

Michael Golding	MG	VILN CEO
Sabine MacDonald	SM	VILN Administrator
Raoul Curtis-Machin	RCM	Advisor

## BUSINESS

### AGENDA ITEM 1

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

JDS welcomed everyone to the board meeting.

JDS informed the board that Julie Dell had resigned from the board with immediate effect due to a change in work commitments and thanked Julie Dell for her hard work on behalf of VILN.

JDS also congratulated the VILN team on winning the ITB Earth Award at ITB Berlin.

### AGENDA ITEM 2

#### 2. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3**

#### **3. Visit Inverness Loch Ness Goals and Objectives**

JDS outlined the goals and objectives of the Tourism BID.

The board noted the goals, objectives, purpose and competition law.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4**

#### **4. Director Business Updates**

Directors were asked to provide a one-minute update on their business performance, as well as where relevant that of their sector. This will provide the board members with a picture of the wider business climate and inform the management team.

The following were highlighted in the updates:

- Strong US market
- Chinese market starting to come back
- Australia and NZ market also starting to come back
- Inverness Airport expects to be back to 72% of 2019 levels
- Bookings looking strong for summer, but some accommodation providers have been quieter up to Easter
- Visitors travelling with dogs on the increase and more demand for pet friendly accommodation and attractions
- Recruitment remains a challenge
- The delay of short term lets legislation by 6 months for existing operators is good news for the sector
- Events and dinner events bookings have been strong
- Strong bookings for tour groups
- Accommodation bookings already starting to come in for 2024

### **AGENDA ITEM 5**

#### **5. Matters arising**

##### **5.1 Director recruitment**

There is now one vacancy on the board. This leaves three options:

- Continue to the ballot in March 2024 with one vacancy
- Complete an open recruitment process, the last of which finished two months ago

- Approach suitable individuals for the role, given open recruitment just took place

The CEO advised it would be preferable to have a full board for the coming year. This better ensures representation across the 1200 square mile area, a range of skills and increases support to aid the ballot efforts.

The board agreed the direct recruitment for this vacancy would be the preferred approach.

## **5.2 Bank Account Signatory**

To be completed by MG and ID.

The board noted the matters arising.

## **AGENDA ITEM 6**

### **6. Items for Strategic Discussion by the Board**

#### **6.1 Inter member business**

During a meeting of the Finance and Governance subgroup, the Chair asked about the potential for inter member business and VILN to help facilitate this.

Directors suggested a “speed dating” format for the next networking event and also suggested members could share their special offers in the weekly newsletter.

There were no further comments.

#### **6.2 Sponsorship**

The CEO reached out to three contacts who currently or previously worked in organisations that provide meaningful levels of sponsorship. These people were asked for their feedback on an initial offering:

VILN could provide:

- Branded section in a weekly newsletter to 500 tourism businesses, many of whom have multiple team members subscribed
- Mention at in-person events “with thanks to ..... as our headline sponsor”, we hold at least half a dozen per year with around 90 people in attendance
- Promotion through our industry news communications to around several thousand tourism industry businesses and employees
- Logo on our visitor website, with around 350k visitors per annum, with an additional page about the sponsor

- Bespoke options such as sponsoring specific activities – this could include sustainability, business tourism or alike

The feedback received included:

- Space for headline sponsor at key events
- Discounts for using members

How does it differ from membership offering?

- £10-15k per year (if one sponsor), £5-6k if multiple
- May need to increase customer value depending on the sponsor, currently mostly business to business benefits
- Use of VILN brand assets
- Joint PR
- Quarterly sponsor updates on performance of the package

Directors agreed that they would be open to having a sponsor, but sponsor(s) would have to be chosen very carefully.

ID enquired if sponsorship would be for certain events or for the full term of the next business plan. MG explained that VILN would be looking for a partner for the full 5 years of the business plan.

*Action: MG to put together a sponsorship package for directors to approach potential sponsors*

There were no further questions or comments.

### **6.3 Ballot – March 2024**

MG provided the board with a ballot preparation update.

MG reminded the board to please encourage members to complete the current member survey.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7**

### **7. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes from the board meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were approved by ID and seconded by JS.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8**

### **8. 8.1 Finance Report**

MG talked the board through the finance report.

The board noted the year to date performance and projection for year end.

There were no questions or comments.

## **8.2 Budget**

A draft budget was created for 2023 – 2024 and was presented to the Finance and Governance subgroup in February. It was recommended for approval.

The board approved the budget for 2023-24.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 9**

### **9. Business Plan Progress Report**

MG talked the board through the Business Plan Progress Report.

The board noted the progress of the Business Plan at 90% complete.

The board noted the 4 outstanding Business Plan points.

The board noted the aim to reach 93% complete by end of March 2023.

Considering the items which cannot be delivered this effectively means the Business Plan has been fully delivered in four years of the five-year period.

The board therefore agreed to remove this item from the agenda until starting the new Business Plan.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 10**

### **10. Performance Report**

MG talked the board through the performance report.

The board noted the performance report.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 11**

### **11. Key Projects, Funds and Events**

MG updated the board on key projects, funds and events.

MG asked directors to notify him of potential sponsors for the See & Do maps.

MG also highlighted the success of the Shortbread Showdown event and asked the board to note the two upcoming cycling events in Drumnadrochit and Inverness.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 12**

### **12. Sustainability**

MG provided the board with an update on Sustainability.

The board noted the Sustainability update.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 13**

### **13. General**

The board noted the general update.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 14**

### **14. Annual Calendar**

MG presented a draft annual calendar to the board for comment, including the board meetings, subgroups, AGM and any other key dates of note.

The board approved the proposed annual calendar.

There were no further questions or comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 15**

**15. AOB**

CG enquired if VILN are planning to offer a workshop for members giving advice on entering awards.

JDS answered that Thistle Awards are going to provide such a workshop with RBS and details will be shared with members.

JS highlighted the importance of providing feedback to businesses who entered an award but were unsuccessful.

There were no further questions or comments.

**AGENDA ITEM 16**

**16. Meeting Review**

**NEXT BOARD MEETING**

**Date**

**31st of May 2023**

**Venue**

**Venue TBC**