

# BOARD MEETING

18<sup>th</sup> January 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
Julie Dell	JD	Cheryl Campbell	CC
Caroline Gregory	CG	Russell Fraser	RF

## Also present

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

## Apologies

Kenny McMillan	KM
Ian Brown	IB

## BUSINESS

### AGENDA ITEM 1

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

JDS welcomed everyone to the Board meeting, particularly newly appointed directors Caroline Gregory, Russell Fraser and Kenny McMillan.

After completing three years on the board in a challenging climate, thanks to Jane Slaughter and Chair Jo De Sylva for choosing to remain on the board for up to a further three years.

The following directors will be due to retire or restand at the next AGM: Julie Dell, Anna Low, David Shayer

### 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:

- Bookings looking healthy for 2023
- More repeat visitors and longer stays
- More bookings coming in last minute
- Sector concerns regarding the short term lets licensing scheme
- Strong demand from US, Australia and also domestic visitors
- Airport passenger numbers looking strong for summer 2023
- Winter bookings have been slower, but B&B and hotel bookings looking strong from spring
- Rising costs a concern for most businesses
- Recruitment and staffing still a challenge, especially experienced staff
- Active and authentic travel experiences in demand
- Customers looking for added value

### **AGENDA ITEM 5**

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

##### **5.1 Appointment of Vice Chair**

Following the retiral of Marina Huggett the position is now vacant, and the board were asked to appoint a Vice-Chair. JS proposed the appointment of Ina Davies as Vice Chair, seconded by JDS.

Ina Davies was duly appointed as Vice Chair.

## 5.2 Bank Account Signatory

Following the retirement of Raoul Curtis-Machin, former Chair of Finance and Governance, the company requires a director to be added as a company signatory. Following the finance policy, with the Finance and Governance Chair position vacant, it would normally be the Vice-Chair to become the second board signatory. Newly appointed Vice Chair ID agreed to become the second board signatory.

## 5.3 Board Subgroups

All directors are appointed to a subgroup of the board. The newly appointed directors were appointed to the following subgroups:

- Finance and Governance – Kenny McMillan
- Business Development and Sustainability – Caroline Gregory
- Membership – Russell Fraser

## 5.4 Items from the previous meeting

- *South Loch Ness Trail agreement*

The board agreed that the proposed contract agreement with FLS cannot be fulfilled by VILN.

Destination Development Manager Emma Harrison to meet with Highland Council to discuss adding the SLNT to the existing GGW maintenance arrangements.

RF suggested to make an offer to Highland Council for VILN to take on marketing of the GGW in exchange.

- *BID Ballot research*

MG highlighted the results of the BID ballot research carried out following the October board meeting and his consultation with British BIDs and Scotland's Towns Partnership. He explained that there is no precedent of an alternative BID proposal and VILN will need to look at collaboration.

The board noted the status of the matters arising.

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

**6.1 Pre-board calls**

A week to ten days in advance of an STA board meeting a destination forum call and a sector call take place. The purpose of these is to ensure the latest information is gathered to advise and steer the board meeting that follows.

It is suggested by the CEO that Visit Inverness Loch Ness could try something similar, with a stakeholders call and an open member call one to two weeks ahead of each board meeting. This could be particularly important in the year leading up to the ballot and to ensure regular and open engagement.

Directors suggested to carry out a member survey re communication preferences, e.g. webinar or WhatsApp group. *MG to take forward.*

JS emphasised the importance to give members the opportunity to contribute, even if there may only be a small number of members taking up the offer.

There were no further comments.

**6.2 Relationships with other destinations**

Visit Inverness Loch Ness was approached by Nairn BID to ask if there was an interest in working together on marketing. The implication was this could mean including some of the natural and business assets of Nairn within the Visit Inverness Loch Ness marketing activity. An initial response was provided to say this was something to be discussed with the board. The seemed to be an openness for a Memorandum of Understanding, which is used in areas such as Oban and Elgin for organisations to work together with one leading on marketing. There would likely be a financial contribution for this relationship.

Considerations:

- Would the board be open to negotiation about additional further geographical areas via a Memorandum of Understanding
- If so what conditions, including financial, need to be considered
- What are the benefits of this arrangement
- What are the risks of this arrangement
- Are these considerations or the agreed approach specific to this enquiry, or could it apply to other areas such as the Black Isle

Several directors voiced concern that this would dilute the VILN offering and that at this stage VILN focus should be on VILN members and the re-ballot.

It was suggested for MG to discuss working with Nairn BID on a specific marketing project, but not until after the re-ballot.

There were no further comments.

### **6.3 Ballot – March 2024**

MG provided the board with a ballot preparation update.

There were no questions or comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 7**

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

The minutes from the board meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were approved by AL and seconded by JS.

## **AGENDA ITEM 8**

### **8. Finance Report**

MG talked the board through the finance report.

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

The board noted information and plan for the presentation of the budget.

The board noted the intention to close all services with RBS.

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.

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.

RCM enquired if the changes in social media reach were seasonal.

MG explained that several social channels like Instagram had changed their algorithms, so some reach has been lost.

CG enquired whether the Sustainability report sets specific goals and targets.

MG explained that Sustainability is a new section of the report and currently under development, but there is a need for more forecasting.

RF asked if there were plans to link the live cameras to other platforms and MG replied that this is currently being reviewed.

There were no further comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 11**

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

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

RCM enquired whether the HIE DMO fund will continue.

MG explained that it will not continue and VILN is currently looking for alternative sources of funding and/or sponsorship.

There were no further comments.

## **AGENDA ITEM 12**

### **12. Sustainability**

MG provided the board with an update on Sustainability.

The board noted the Sustainability update.

CG enquired if other organisations have approached VILN regarding sustainability help and support and if this could be a future source of income.

MG explained that this was the case and is being considered.

There were no further comments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 13**

#### **13. General**

The board noted the general update.

There were no questions or comments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 14**

#### **14. AOB**

The board were asked to consider if the next board meeting on the 15th of March should be in person.

JDS suggested that the meeting should be in person, possibly at the Drum Mossie Hotel.

RF suggested that it should be a hybrid style meeting with the option for directors to join virtually.

MG confirmed that a hybrid style meeting should be possible.

DS enquired whether VILN are currently promoting winter activities.

MG confirmed that there is currently a winter marketing campaign underway created by The Union.

There were no further questions or comments.

### **AGENDA ITEM 15**

#### **15. Meeting Review**

There were no questions or comments.