

BOARD MEETING

31st May 2023, 13.00 – 15.30

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd,

Hybrid Meeting Drumossie Hotel and via Microsoft Teams

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Board Present

David Shayer	DS	Caroline Gregory	CG
Cllr Ian Brown	IB	Emmanuel Dambier	ED
Jo De Sylva - Chair	JDS		
Ina Davies	ID		
Kenny McMillan	KM		

Apologies

Russell Fraser	RF	Anna Low	AL
Jane Slaughter	JS	Cheryl Campbell	CC
Rebecca Holt	RH		

Also present

Michael Golding	MG	VILN CEO	
Sabine MacDonald	SM	VILN Administrator	

BUSINESS

AGENDA ITEM 1

1. Welcome and Apologies

JDS welcomed everyone to the board meeting and welcomed newly appointed Director Rebecca Holt, Chief Executive of Eden Court.

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 strong for summer weddings and conferences
- Cruiselineer demand strong
- Bookings for autumn/winter events looking strong
- Increased demand from US, EU and EU groups
- May slow to start, but demand picked up, especially corporate market
- Decline in hotel dinner revenue
- Average room rate very good
- Staffing continues to be a problem
- Better occupancy and higher room rates than 2019
- Worries that high room rates could deter visitors
- Rising costs an issue, e.g. business and water rates
- Expectations of some guests hard to manage
- Visitor levy a topic of interest, Highland Council aiming to invest all levy income into infrastructure such as parking
- Longer stays and many repeat guests
- Less business travel and more leisure travel

AGENDA ITEM 5

5. Matters arising

5.1 There has been a resignation from Destination Development Manager Bryony Beck. This role is 91% funded by HIE and has 17 months remaining of the three-year post.

This resignation provides the organisation with two options:

- Recruit the vacancy for the 17-month role
- Negotiate with HIE, with the aim to agree to extend the other Destination Development Manager role, held by Emma Harrison

The CEO recommended negotiating with HIE to extend the existing role. Emma is performing well in her role, delivering events, leading food tourism activities and promoting opt-in membership. Providing security to a valued member of the team and longer-term continuation of team size is preferred. Initial cover is already taking place for the workload completed by Bryony. It is also suggested looking for alternative options to grow the team, such as graduate roles could mitigate the reduction in team size.

The board agreed to negotiate with HIE to extend Emma's role.

The board noted the complete status of the matter arising at the last board meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 6

6. Items for Strategic Discussion by the Board

6.1 Appointment of advisor

Gail Cleaver, Operations Manager of the Culloden Cluster, has expressed an interest in joining in the board and is aware that her predecessor sat on it after speaking with her team.

The board were invited to discuss the potential responses to this enquiry:

- The board positions are fully occupied, however, we would invite you to consider applying for the role should it be advertised later this year before the 2024 AGM
- While there are no board positions currently available, we have the power to invite advisors. Given there are no historic sites currently represented on the board, we would like to invite you to join the board meetings until the end of March 2024 initially.
- The board may choose to consider if 12 directors, of which 10 are levy paying members, 1 representative of Highland Council and 1 co-opted director, is the correct number. The board could decide to create a 13th position. In terms of the total number of board positions, this would not be a substantial change or unusually high number of positions. The board would also need to carefully consider if there was grounds for the

role to be directly appointed or if an open recruitment, as specified by the articles, was necessary.

The board agreed to invite Gail Cleaver as an advisor.

There were no further comments.

6.2 Ballot – February-March 2024

Key aspects:

Timeline and delivery management

- Ensure the project and activity meet the timeline in the plan

Sectors, rateable value, and change management

- Define what sectors and businesses would fall within the BID. Calculate the fees based on the updated rateable values and feedback on increasing prices received in the questionnaire. Negotiate with any new members, primarily supermarkets – which are a low volume and high-value sector that can bridge the 22% inflation growth over the 5 years while income has remained fixed

Headline event

- Deliver a significant event in February 2024 just prior to the ballot opening to show the impact and influence of the BID pre-voting opening

Admin and consultation

- Manage the production of all key documents. Also to ensure that half of the voters are consulted one to one or in small groups – time intensive and a critical step

Communications

- Ensure there is a plan to maintain visibility throughout

Directors role and request:

- Advocate and be positive about the benefit and impact of the BID
- Encourage yes votes and advise of opportunities to influence voters
- Be available to support the team as needed, particularly with sector or geographical based support

As part of the communications plan, it is likely directors will be provided with content to share and promote through their networks.

The CEO suggested it may be wise to change from having three subgroups, to one single meeting to update about the ballot preparations. The expectation would be to revert to three

subgroups following the successful ballot result. By doing this, directors will be fully informed about the progress on this critical matter.

The board agreed to merge the three sub groups into one re-ballot meeting.

CG enquired whether directors would receive clear messaging and templates for communicating with their network.

MG explained that a comms plan is being developed.

JDS commented that the inclusion of supermarkets would be seen as fair by smaller members.

There were no further questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 7

7. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes from the board meeting held on the 15th March 2023 were approved by ID and seconded by KM.

AGENDA ITEM 8

8. 8.1 Finance Report

MG talked the board through the finance report.

The board noted the projected year-end outturn of -£23.5k

The board noted the current year has no variances to budget to report.

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 93% complete.

There were no questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 10

10. Key Projects, Funds and Events

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

The board noted the projects and funds update.

JDS congratulated the VILN team for organising a number of successful events.

DS suggested themes that VILN could explore for future events, such as “Cool down” events targeting visitors from hot countries and a kilt wearing event for charity.

There were no further questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 11

11. Sustainability

MG provided the board with an update on Sustainability.

The board noted the Sustainability update.

There were no questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 12

12. General

The board noted the general update.

DS suggested using the “Cameo” website for future VILN promotional videos.

There were no further questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 13

13. AOB

MG informed that board that VILN are about to host more competitions via social media.

CG offered The Lovat as the venue for the next board meeting in October. This could be combined with a drop in event for members in the area.

Directors agreed to hold a board social event during the summer – MG and JDS to organise.

There were no further questions or comments.

AGENDA ITEM 14

14. Meeting Review

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Date

25th October 2023

Venue

The Lovat, Fort Augustus