



Minutes of a meeting of Visit Jersey Limited (“VJ”)

Held at the Pomme D’Or Hotel, St Helier on Tuesday 27th April 2021 at 10am

Present:	Kevin Keen (KK) – Chair
Patrick Burke (PB)	Amanda Burns (AB) – CEO
Tim Crowley (TC)	Ian Gray (IG)
Lawrence Hugler (LH)	Tracey Mourant (TM) - Board Apprentice
Catherine Leech (CL)	Amanda Willmott (AW)
(collectively referred to as the “Board” or the “Directors”)	
In Attendance	
Dan Houseago (DH), EDTSC, Government of Jersey (GOJ) (Observer)	
Matt Thomas (MT), CEO, Ports of Jersey (POJ) (until 1230pm)	
Meryl Laisney (ML), VJ (between 1130am and 1150am only)	
Aimee Maskell, AM to PM Secretarial Services (Scribe)	

General

APOLOGIES – KK welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that no apologies had been received. TM was introduced to the meeting and she provided the Board with a summary of her career background.

CONFLICTS – KK reminded the Board that his daughter works for Switch Digital (who are working with VJ on the website migration project) and advised that he has recently joined the board of Bailiwick Investments. He noted that Bailiwick Investments was a public investment company and most of its shareholders were in Guernsey. However, two of its biggest shareholdings were Sandpiper and Jacksons Garage. LH added that he had recently been appointed as a director of a UK food and beverage company (Tinnies Limited) which is due to start trading from London in approximately three months.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – IT WAS NOTED that the minutes dated 23rd February 2021 had been circulated with the agenda and, subject to minor amendment, **IT WAS RESOLVED** to approve them for signature by KK. **Action: KK**

KK provided an update on the outstanding action points from the Minutes of 23rd February 2021 (which were not included on the agenda) as follows:

Conflicts of Interest Declarations for 2021 – TC confirmed that all Directors had



now submitted their conflicts of interest declarations form for 2021 and it was agreed at the Audit Committee that the form would be made easier to use in future.

POJ 2020 Annual Accounts – MT confirmed that POJ's Annual Accounts would be released at the POJ AGM scheduled for 26th May 2021.

St Brelade's Bay Association – KK confirmed that he responded to the Chair of the St Brelade's Bay Association following the Board's discussion at the previous meeting but had not received any further correspondence.

Covid Insurance – AB advised that it is not possible to progress the use of Covid Insurance in Jersey.

Succession of Chair – **IT WAS NOTED** that work is ongoing in relation to the succession of KK as Chair.

The Board requested an updated organisational chart showing the new structure of VJ together with photographs of staff members. The Board also highlighted the importance of ensuring changes within VJ are regularly communicated to the industry and via social media and VJ's newsletter, and that the 'Meet the Team' section of the website is kept up to date.

Action: AB

For Discussion

OUTLOOK FOR RESTART OF TRAVEL TO JERSEY – The Board discussed AB's Paper on the Outlook for Restart of Travel to Jersey, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda, and AB advised that this was current at the time of writing (16th April 2021).

AB advised that she and MT continue to have concerns about how quickly Jersey will recover and welcomed a debate by the Board on how to ensure VJ is doing everything it should be and to ensure the Directors are aware of the risks.

AB noted that the RAG rating system is causing a huge barrier to bookings and despite seeing a great interest in Jersey this is not converting into bookings. AB reported that although bookings for July and August are looking okay, May and June are very weak, which is translating into a lack of confidence from the airlines that could result in them cancelling in favour of other destinations.

AB advised that in the first eight days of VJ's campaign activity, very high levels of engagement were observed; UK traffic on Jersey.com saw a rise of 48% compared to the same period in 2019 (before Covid) and new users to the website increased by 30%. She suggested that this highlights that interest in Jersey is building and that VJ is growing a strong database to convert new users over the coming months.

AB referred to research recently undertaken by The Nursery. She noted that a sample of



500 people were surveyed about short breaks and longer holidays in the UK / to a domestic destination and expressed concern that the results had reinforced her and MT's concerns. AB summarised the survey results as follows:

- 60% of respondents did not understand what is meant by the CTA;
- Jersey is at the bottom of the list when considering UK/domestic destinations (because most people want to travel by car);
- PCR testing is resulting in a loss of appeal.

AB noted the barriers for visitors travelling to Jersey prior to arrival as (1) concern about their region changing from green to amber / red after they have made their booking and (2) families wanting to travel to the Island who are from different rated regions. Furthermore, on arrival, visitors are concerned about potentially having to give up a day of their holiday in isolation whilst waiting for a negative test result. Visitors are also concerned about the possibility of receiving a positive test result requiring them to isolate for 14 days/having to isolate if they have sat next to someone who has tested positive on their flight.

MT reiterated AB's concerns. He stressed that whilst there was an interest in people coming to Jersey, the current RAG rating system is too complex, noting that following its implementation last weekend, many people decided against travelling.

MT advised that the airlines are likely to decide on their programmes for Jersey in the next week and expressed concern that they may withdraw if the Government of Jersey (GOJ) does not relax or simplify the current restrictions. He added that visitors who have bookings in place for July and August may decide to cancel if restrictions remain as they are.

The Board discussed what action could be taken to remove the current barriers of travel to Jersey as soon as possible and suggestions included offering lateral flow tests (instead of PCR tests); using the NHS app for vaccination recording (rather than waiting for the GOJ to develop its own); making the UK one, green, region (instead of having individual regions); and aligning Jersey's restrictions to the UK's/other CTA destinations to avoid confusion.

The Board agreed that focus should also be placed on clarity of message around the RAG rating. LH suggested that consideration be given to adopting a similar approach to when Jersey reopened its borders in 2020 whereby the whole of the UK was green, and visitors were only required to have one test. This was welcomed by CL who noted that although the demand for holidays is high, certainty is very important. By way of example, she advised that some people are booking two Summer holidays with a view to cancelling one depending on restrictions in place.

AW suggested that most visitors in the 50-60 age bracket will have had two Covid vaccinations and queried whether they could be given an exemption under the current restrictions. CL queried what the GOJ's appetite was for accepting visitors who have had two vaccinations and MT confirmed that whilst this was being developed and debated, he was concerned whether a solution would be found soon enough.



The Board discussed the current situation with the ferries and MT advised that they have different issues to the airlines. He noted that the high-speed service has been cancelled until 21st May 2021 when it is anticipated that demand will be stronger. However, MT stressed that the ferries were more dependent on Jersey/the Channel Islands whereas the airlines are already considering other destinations. Therefore, relatively speaking, MT believes the ferry business will be stronger than the airlines.

CL suggested that Jersey would benefit from a short-term investment in a second fast ferry service and MT reported that a second fast ferry has been secured starting from 7th May 2021. However, although the ferries are seeing high volumes of bookings, a lot of these have been carried over from last year. Therefore, no new money is being made from them.

The Board acknowledged that it would be preferable to revert to last year's system whereby the UK was one, green, region with only one test being required on arrival and MT confirmed that the airlines would be more comfortable with this as it would provide more certainty. However, he noted that consumers still have an issue about the possibility of having to spend 12-24 hours isolating whilst waiting for their test results. TC added that consideration must also be given to the potential cost of testing, noting that if Jersey starts charging for testing this will be a further barrier to travel.

IT WAS NOTED that a CAM meeting is scheduled for the following day and DH stressed the importance of Ministers being fully aware of what is at stake. He therefore welcomed the Board's debate and proposed feeding back a summary of the same to LF to ensure he has a clear steer of what should be done, noting that it will then become a political issue.

IG noted that the States Assembly must be briefed on any changes to the Safe Travel Policy which could lead to further delays and LH stressed that if the current restrictions remain in place and the situation plays out as expected, the GOJ will need to consider how it supports the tourism industry with tax-payers money in the short-term and the long-term as companies are likely to fold as a result.

MT welcomed the impressive analysis being undertaken by the Island's Public Health Department and Dr Ivan Muscat. However, whilst he proposed changing the narrative to allow Islanders to start living with the virus, those who want the borders to remain shut make their case very strongly. KK added that they also have no concerns about economics. PB therefore stressed the importance of making the Board's concerns very clear in writing, noting that if nothing is done, the prospects for the industry will be dire.

KK noted that most of the population have now been vaccinated and TC queried what the risk of opening the borders will be when everyone had been vaccinated and MT explained that concerns remain regarding different variants of the virus and the efficiency of the various testing regimes.

Based on the Board's feedback, above, **IT WAS RESOLVED** that AB would send a letter to LF (cc'ing other CAM Ministers) in advance of the CAM meeting scheduled for the



following morning at 10am. The Board agreed that this should include the various solutions suggested above which could be implemented to remove current barriers to travel and highlight the importance of simplifying current restrictions to avoid significant consequences arising for the Island in the future. **Action: AB**

VJ'S APPROACH TO AD-HOC PLANNING SUPPORT REQUESTS - ML was welcomed to the meeting at 11.30am and the Board congratulated her on her recent appointment as Head of Marketing and Product.

KK noted that he raised this agenda item following his recent discussions with the Chair of The St Brelade's Bay Association and proposed implementing a policy on how VJ should deal with the requests it receives for Planning Support Requests going forward.

ML summarised her "Planning Support Requests" paper dated 14th April 2021 a copy of which was circulated with the agenda. She reported that VJ has received an influx of Planning Support Requests recently and advised that whilst most applications are not very contentious and are responding to a clear tourism need (e.g. an extension to an existing product or development of self-catering), some have fallen within the Coastal National Park.

ML referred to the Planning Support Request on the development of self-catering accommodation at Conway Tower as an example, details of which were also circulated with the agenda, and noted that VJ have only been asked for support/comment on the self-catering development aspect of a wider Planning application at Wayside. Therefore, as this adds to the tourism product, VJ would support it. However, she accepted that it may be considered controversial by The St Brelade's Bay Association, as luxury accommodation is likely to be built either side of it in due course.

AB sought the Board's input on how much involvement they would like in Planning Support Requests received by VJ and, after a brief discussion, it was agreed to authorise AB to provide VJ support on any applications which support the tourism industry/are within the tourism strategy without the need to revert to the Board. However, it was also agreed that if VJ receive too many Planning Support Requests, the policy will need to be revisited. **IT WAS THEREFORE RESOLVED** that AB would work with ML/the Product Team to review all Planning Support Requests going forward and any letters of support issued will be based on fact, supported by relevant evidence and signed by AB as CEO. **Action: AB/ML**

BRIDGING ISLAND PLAN AND IMPACT ON PLANNING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND USE – KK proposed submitting a response to the Bridging Island Plan consultation which has recently opened. **IT WAS THEREFORE RESOLVED** to form a sub-committee consisting of IG, PB, KK, Jennie Smith and Ruth Perchard to draft the same. **Action: IG/PB/KK**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'VJ' with a flourish underneath.



KK recommended that VJ's response be kept at a high level and highlight the importance of the Bridging Island Plan enabling the industry to grow and adjust. This was echoed by AB who agreed to schedule a meeting of the sub-committee to give them sufficient time to draft and submit a response within the 12 week consultation period. **Action: AB**

ML left the meeting at 11.50am.

For Approval

2020 ANNUAL REPORT – TC advised that VJ's auditor was unable to attend the Audit Committee meeting held prior to the Board meeting. However, he confirmed that the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020 were complete and that the Auditor's Letter of Representation had been received with no material issues noted. There being no comments or questions on the year end accounts or Letter of Representation, TC, KK and AB were authorised to sign the same on behalf of the Board.

RISK REGISTER – The Board noted the updated Risk Register, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda. AB summarised the changes made to the Risk Register following the last meeting and these were approved by the Board.

CL sought an update on the status of the recommendations made in BDO's GDPR Report and KK advised that these mainly relate to VJ's use of Mail Chimp and the administration of data and confirmed that they were being reviewed and actioned by the Audit Committee.

CEO UPDATE - the Board reviewed the CEO Report, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda and was taken as read. AB confirmed that all activity on the 2021 road map was either on track or slightly behind and that there were no significant issues to report. The following activities were discussed in further detail:

New Destination Plan (JDP) 2022-2027– AB noted that discussions have taken place regarding the appointment of an appropriate consultant to assist with a refresh of the JDP. However, KK recommended appointing extra resource to enable AB to free up more of her time to work on the JDP rather than engaging an external resource for this purpose. CL echoed KK's views, noting that there would be little value in appointing a consultancy given that it is impossible to predict anything related to tourism at the current time. She suggested that, in the short term, there was also little value in engaging Oxford Economics to undertake any further analysis. On this basis, AB queried whether VJ should even be considering refreshing the JDP



at this stage or whether a “light touch” approach should be considered instead. KK acknowledged that whilst the JDP may not require significant update, he proposed that it should still be reviewed and suggested that this be carried out inhouse at VJ with input from POJ rather than by an external consultant.

Tourism Hospitality Economic Taskforce (THET) – DH reminded the Board that THET was the group established to work on the GOJ Tourism Strategy. He noted that Ian Clarkson (who is responsible for hospitality and retail within Economic Development) heads up THET and that the timeline for completing the Strategy was next year. It was therefore proposed to present a draft Strategy to Ministers this year. The Board noted that THET stakeholders include VJ, POJ and Chamber of Commerce (amongst others) and that PWC have been engaged to undertake some research on their behalf. However, whilst DH acknowledged that THET were in a good place in terms of what they have achieved, agreement still needs to be reached on whether the Strategy relates to tourism or the visitor economy. He suggested that the latter was a more sensible option and that THET should have a broader brief for the Strategy. However, he advised that confirmation in this regard was still awaited from LF, noting that he was originally very clear about having a “tourism” strategy. KK added that the Board have also expressed their view about whether it should be a strategy or a policy.

TC welcomed copies of THET minutes by way of update and AB agreed to circulate these following the next meeting (scheduled for Thursday 29th April 2021). However, she advised that since Government had been more involved and supportive of the group, the original terms of reference for THET (and its name) may require amendment. **Action: AB**

MT highlighted the importance of the GOJ Strategy focusing initially on whether the Island wants a tourism industry or not. He noted that tourism does not have support of the Island; local people do not want to work in the industry; and GOJ policies do not support tourism, all of which will take time to resolve. However, DH reminded the Board that the GOJ issued a strong message around supporting the tourism industry going forward and he has no doubt that it will do that in the future. That said, he does not anticipate the GOJ interfering with VJ’s work, the nature of which is defined in its Partnership Agreement with the GOJ and in its Business Plan.

Jersey on Sale – AB reported that whilst VJ’s bid for funding from the Fiscal Stimulus Fund for Jersey on Sale has not yet been rejected, despite her explaining the benefit to the Island of the initiative, the Officer Panel responsible for processing applications have expressed concern about investment being made in the UK rather than in Jersey. She advised that an alternative / revised application has therefore been submitted seeking investment in a “spend local” initiative whereby pre-paid cards will to be issued to visitors arriving in Jersey, a response on which is awaited.



MT left the meeting at 12.30pm.

DH commented that the original proposal was initially rejected and then revisited. However, it remains a challenge for the Panel given that it is proposed to spend money off Island, which does not meet the Stimulus Fund's criteria. He advised that it is therefore proposed to discuss the alternative submission with Treasury later today.

KK expressed disappointment at the decision reached by the Fiscal Stimulus Fund and queried whether there was a right to appeal. DH suggested that appeals would need to be made directly to the Treasury Minister. However, he noted that the Chief Economic Advisor sits on the Panel and suggested that his economic advice regarding the importance of money being invested into the local economy was the main challenge for VJ's application.

KK suggested that the criteria of the Fund had been misinterpreted by the Panel. He noted that most of the funding has been awarded to construction projects all of which will require importation of materials (and often resource) from outside of the Island. This was echoed by LH who noted that none of the Fiscal Stimulus funding awarded to date would benefit tourism.

DH advised that the Panel are due to meet in the next two weeks to decide which bids should be progressed and which bids not to approve. He also reported that the GOJ has allocated some residual funding to a recovery fund which can be utilised by applicants who did not meet the Stimulus Fund criteria and suggested that this may be an option for VJ.

KK welcomed DH's support. However, he expressed frustration at the decisions made by the Fiscal Stimulus Fund to date and queried the economic expertise of the Panel. **IT WAS THEREFORE RESOLVED** that he would write to John Le Fondre to raise his concerns in this regard. **Action: KK**

Recruitment / Staff – AB reported that four positions were currently being advertised (PR Manager, Brand and Campaign Manager, Marketing Executive and Product Executive (six month maternity leave)). She noted that although the team were stretched, they were working very well together, were positive and have pride and passion in what they do and in doing all they can to recover tourism in 2021.

Marketing KPIs – AB reported that she has started to track marketing KPIs and she provided the Board with a summary of the same.

“Do it For Jersey” – The Board acknowledged that whilst this campaign had been worth doing it was only a “drop in the ocean” to plug the gap of what hoteliers have lost from external visitors.

Website Migration – AB advised that VJ were continuing to work with Switch Digital



on the website migration which was on track for a July completion. She added that the later completion date has provided VJ more time to work with the industry on the project.

Partner Referrals – LH suggested that this was the most useful KPI and queried whether “partners” only include paid partners of VJ or any referral (e.g. hotels, restaurants, bars, etc.). TC advised that “partners” include any business whose website has been clicked on from VJ’s website. LH welcomed a breakdown of partner referrals by sector and AB agreed to provide the same going forward.

Action: AB

Marketing/PR – CL congratulated the VJ team on the promotional cover wraparound in the Travel Weekly magazine, noting that this was one of the best promotions she has read in 40 years. However, she expressed surprise at the video recently posted on social media which she advised she struggled to understand. This was echoed by IG who suggested that whilst the video started very well it then became very amateurish. AB explained that the video was intended to be “tongue in cheek” and was targeted at specific UK audiences through social media channels. However, LH warned AB about taking this approach as people from Jersey can sometimes take it the wrong way.

Q1 2021 REPORT FOR EDTSC – The Board noted the Q1 2021 Report for EDTSC a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

FUTURE BOARD MEETINGS – The Board noted the suggested meeting dates for 2021, details of which had been circulated with the agenda.

Any Other Business

There was no further business to discuss.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - The Board noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 18th May 2021.

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Chair

18th May 2021

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