

**TOURISM IRELAND CLG**  
**MINUTES OF THE 194th MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**HELD AT TOURISM IRELAND OFFICES, BERESFORD ROAD, COLERAINE**  
**THURSDAY 2nd MAY 2024 09.00 – 13.00**

**PRESENT:**

Christopher Brooke (Chairman)  
Karen Hennessy (vice-Chair)  
Ruth Andrews Paul Gallagher  
John McGrillen Katy Best  
Kathryn Thomson Joe Dolan  
Harry Connolly

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Alice Mansergh Chief Executive  
Shane Clarke Director of Corporate Services, Policy & NI / Company Secretary  
Siobhan McManamy Director of Markets (items 5 and 8)  
Aidan Power Director of Marketing (item 5)  
Neil Aulton Head of Strategy & Insights (items 9 and 10)  
Margaret O'Reilly Office of the CEO

**1. APOLOGIES AND OPENING REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Mary Mulvey, Laura McCorry and Stephen McNally. Minister Conor Murphy also sent apologies that he was unable to join the meeting. The Chairman welcomed new Board members, Karen Hennessy and Paul Gallagher.

**2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING ON THURSDAY  
28<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024, were approved with a minor adjustment and were signed by the Chairman. They will be published on Tourism Ireland's corporate website.

**ACTION:** Shane Clarke

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

It was noted that matters arising from the previous meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 had been actioned.

Shane Clarke advised that he will continue to update on deepdive speakers and topics to be brought to the Board. **ACTION:** Shane Clarke

The Board was also advised that the draft Statutory Accounts for 2023 should be available from the C&AG for the next meeting and a draft would be circulated in advance. **ACTION:** Shane Clarke

It was agreed that Karen Hennessy would be appointed as the Vice-Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC). Joe Dolan was stepping back from the Committee with immediate effect.

The Chair of the Return on Marketing Investment Committee (ROMI) would consider its membership in light of the appointment of two new Directors and will revert. **ACTION:** Ruth Andrews / Shane Clarke

## 5. CEO REPORT

The Board noted the contents of the paper circulated.

The CEO elaborated on the following:

- Informal meetings took place with Minister Murphy at Meet the Buyer and the Tourism Northern Ireland conference and Minister Martin at Meitheal and the Wild Atlantic Way 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary event. Thanks were recorded to Tourism NI and Fáilte Ireland for hosting these hugely important and successful annual events.
- Address to the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly offered a positive platform for exchanges with parliamentarians from the UK and Ireland on tourism opportunities and challenges, in concert with ITIC and NITA.
- A joint ministerial launch for the all-island tourism sustainability scheme has been mooted.
- Liaison continued with tourism representative bodies, sector leaders, local authority tourism officials and air and sea carriers, as well as quarterly meetings with key digital marketing agencies and partners.

The Board was advised that preparations are in train for the North South Ministerial Council Tourism sectoral meeting on 24 June in Armagh. Papers will be shared with the Board. **ACTION:** Shane Clarke

Updates on St Patrick's Day 2024 and direction for 2025, Partnerships and State of the Season are at items 8, 9 and 11 below.

The Board was updated on discussions at the Trade and Investment Council where some export agencies expressed interest in increased focus on UAE and India. In line with prior emerging markets review, an update on strategic partnerships that are being pursued by Tourism Ireland will be brought to Board.

**ACTION:** Alice Mansergh

The Board was advised of feedback received from sponsor departments on the Partnership proposal presented at the last meeting. Following discussion, the Board asked the Executive to initiate the process for an organisational review in line with NSMC and sponsor department guidance.

**ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / Shane Clarke

The Board welcomed advances on the People plan, particularly the positive engagement of volunteer working groups and the senior team's plan for prompt implementation of key recommendations. An update paper will be brought to the Board.

The 2023 staff survey will be shared with new Board members for context.

**ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / Shane Clarke

## **6. SECRETARIAT MATTERS**

### **6.1 Management Accounts December 2023**

The Board noted the accounts circulated.

### **6.2 Procurement Approvals:**

The Board noted the process and approved the Executive to proceed with:

- Initiation of an EU level procurement process for the provision of Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Marketing - Support & Development Services.

### **6.3 Mainland Europe Appraisal TOR**

The Board considered and approved the Terms of Reference for the Mainland Europe Appraisal. The Board will consider progress in line with the milestones noted. This will include a deepdive into key European markets in terms of tourism metrics, consumer trends and approach to growing inbound tourism revenue for the future. The Board will be updated at key stages. **ACTION:** Alice Mansergh

### **6.4 Board Governance Manual**

The Board was advised that the Board Governance Manual had been updated with signed Minutes and Board induction information. The Board Effectiveness action plan would be reviewed by the Chairman and Company Secretary and a progress update will be brought to the Board for the next meeting.

**ACTION:** Shane Clarke

Siobhan McManamy, Aidan Power, Julie Wakley, Judith Cassidy, Eileen Pranger and Neil Aulton joined the meeting.

## **7. Plan on a page update**

Aidan Power, Director of Marketing, updated the Board on progress during Q1 on the Plan on a page 2024 – a dashboard showing progress against specific targets and metrics.

Discussion centred on brand uplift surveys, inclusion of Northern Ireland-specific campaigns and the opportunity to explore implications of a future shift to core funding.

**ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / Aidan Power

## **8. St Patrick Day 2024/2025**

Siobhan McManamy, Director of Markets, updated the Board on the success of the 2024 St Patrick's Day activity programme – which included streaming of Dublin parade to up to 180M viewers in the US, positive publicity for the island of Ireland reaching up to 230M potential holidaymakers in key markets (+34% on 2023), and

other activities which all resulted in a four-fold increase in searches for Ireland that week compared with spring average.

St Patrick's Day 2025 was also discussed. Proposed next steps were discussed, evolving the concept of greenings with new unifying ideas to activate a celebration of Irishness at this time of year, and fuel future tourism. Planning for 2025, with a call out to industry and other partners, will begin in June and the Board will be updated in September.

**ACTION:** Siobhan McManamy

## 9. Partnerships

Discussed under CEO report.

## 10. GB Market overview

Julie Wakley, Head of Great Britain, Judith Cassidy, Deputy Head of Great Britain and Eileen Pranger, Senior Brand Partnership Executive – GB, presented an update on the Great Britain market with highlights from their Q1 activity programme and indications of return on marketing investment. Positive trading environment included strong desire for travel, with online searches for Ireland up significantly, good air and sea connectivity – all leading to strong opportunities to inspire visitors and win business in 2024.

Discussion centred on feeding back on successful marketing initiatives to key industry partners and other stakeholders. A number of upcoming opportunities were identified and will be explored. Uplift from golf coverage on key sports channels was discussed and will be reviewed. **ACTION:** Alice Mansergh

Peace Plus and Shared Island funding for key north-south projects was discussed. Further updates will be provided. **ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / Shane Clarke

There was discussion on unique opportunities to develop tourism experiences in Northern Ireland in the context of recent history. Further examination and benchmarking to be explored. **ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / TNI

The Board recorded its thanks to Julie, Judith, Eileen and the GB team for their great work and delivery against targets.

Siobhan McManamy, Aidan Power, Julie Wakley, Judith Cassidy, Eileen Pranger left the meeting.

## 11. State of the Season update

Neil Aulton advised that the latest available CSO data suggest that overseas tourism revenue – Tourism Ireland's primary metric – has recovered to pre-pandemic levels (allowing that inflation plays a role). Overall, outlook for inbound tourism this season is currently quite positive. Demand is strong with flight searches for Ireland up

significantly, particularly from the US and GB markets. Air access seats for July 2024 are +5% ahead of last year. While hotel occupancy was subdued in Jan and Feb in Ireland, sources show overseas room bookings grew while domestic may have rebalanced slightly post Covid. Forward bookings show growth from overseas throughout the year. Lead time for booking is short.

Rolling twelve-month inbound tourism data for Ireland is expected from the CSO by end May; a summary will be shared with the Board ahead of the next meeting. Northern Ireland data is expected over the summer (NISRA awaits input from CSO) and it was suggested that NISRA be invited to update the Board at a future date.

**ACTION:** Alice Mansergh / Neil Aulton

## 12. AOB

The Board agreed to change the date of the next meeting and Strategy Day to 31 July, location to be confirmed. **ACTION:** Shane Clarke

## 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 31 July 2024, location to be confirmed. **ACTION:** Shane Clarke

Alice Mansergh, Shane Clarke, Neil Aulton and Margaret O'Reilly left the meeting.

## 14. MEETING WITHOUT THE EXECUTIVE

Several matters were discussed by the Board. The Board requested further information regarding the process of organisational grading review.

**ACTION:** Shane Clarke

The meeting concluded at 13.00 hrs.

Signed:



**CHRISTOPHER BROOKE – CHAIRMAN**