

BOARD MEETING

28th November 2019, 10:00 - 12:30

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd, Tower Road, Smithton, Inverness, IV2 7NL

Visit Inverness Loch Ness Board Present

Joyce Arbuckle	JA	Lyn Forbes	LF
Graeme Bell - Chair	GB	Angela Wilson	AW
Fraser Campbell	FC	Jane Slaughter	JS
Claire Christie	CC	Marina Huggett	MH
Jo De Sylva	JD		

Also present

Michael Golding	MG	VILN CEO	
Sabine MacDonald	SM	VILN Administrator	

Apologies

Councillor Helen Carmichael	HC	John Martin	JM
-----------------------------	----	-------------	----

Introductory Updates

Business Tourism:

Alan Rawlinson updated the Board on his recent trips representing VILN at events in Oman and China. He gave a brief overview on information on the Chinese market and its opportunities.

Business Development:

Sharon Mackay presented on the recent VILN Fam trip for members to the “hidden gems” on the north side of Loch Ness, which was very well received by members. The Board agreed that it was good to see a new initiative to engage members and that further Fam trips should be planned for 2020.

Several directors suggested that VILN could build on this increased collaboration with further new initiatives such as a winter discount card or discount card for locals. The Board supported this idea – Sharon Mackay to take forward.

BUSINESS

AGENDA ITEM 1

1. Welcome and Apologies

GB welcomed everyone to the Board meeting, especially new directors JD and JS.

AGENDA ITEM 2

2. **Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

AGENDA ITEM 3

3. **Minutes of Meeting 29th of August**

GB talked the Board through the Action Points.

There were no questions or comments and the minute of the Board meeting on 29th August 2019 was approved by LF and seconded by JA.

AGENDA ITEM 4

4. **Income and Expenditure**

MG talked the Board through Income & Expenditure, highlighting the Loch Ness 360 Challenge, which will need to be monitored closely in its first year.

He also informed the Board that £4,000 had been allocated towards a 2020 VILN conference in spring, but the management team felt that at this time there were insufficient resources to organise this event and funds should therefore be allocated to a local event such as a VILN “Expo” and further Fam trips.

Several directors agreed that initiatives like the member Fam trips are invaluable and increase the ability of members to promote the area to their guests/visitors.

JA enquired if some of this budget could be used for external outreach events.

GB pointed out that the funds were allocated to Business Development and suggested that the VILN management team develop a concept of how funds could be spent. MG to take forward.

AGENDA ITEM 5

5. **Loch Ness 360° Trail trademark**

MG informed the Board of the continuing situation regarding the Loch Ness 360 trademark. Following further legal advice VILN have now submitted evidence to the other party that the Loch Ness 360 name and logo have been used by VILN for a considerable time and VILN are now awaiting a response. GB and MG stated that they were hopeful at this stage that the situation can be resolved. FC offered to meet with the other party, as he has a good working relationship with the company. GB stated that at this stage VILN would wait for a response before deciding the next steps.

AGENDA ITEM 6

6. **Loch Ness 360° Challenge**

MG updated the Board on the Loch Ness 360 Challenge and highlighted the success of ticket sales so far with the Mountain Bike Challenge already sold out.

He encouraged the Board to make their contacts aware of sponsorship opportunities.

AGENDA ITEM 7

7. Networking Event 12th December 2019

MG updated the Board on the next VILN networking event on 12th December and highlighted the changes to the format that will be introduced at this event. Following feedback from members there will be more time for networking and a new “5 For 5” section, in which 5 members can showcase their business. MH suggested that this should include a “Top Tip” or similar. JS agreed that businesses would be looking for a valuable insight or information to take away for their own businesses. MG confirmed that the “5 for 5” businesses would receive a best practice brief for their presentation.

MG also urged directors to attend the networking event.

AGENDA ITEM 8

8. New Directors, Sub-Groups and preparation for a new Chair

MG informed the Board that 3 sub-groups had now been created. The Loch Ness 360 Challenge sub-group has already met, the Business Development and Finance & Governance sub-groups are yet to meet. GB highlighted that the Finance & Governance sub-group will need more members.

MG will issue a brief on the sub-groups to directors, so they can make an informed decision on which sub-group to join.

GB also highlighted that there is one current vacancy on the Board with two further vacancies coming up in summer 2020 including the position of Chair. GB encouraged Board members to speak to himself or MG if interested in this position.

LF asked that in the future the Board consider Brenda Dunthorne or Douglas Graham for a position on the Board and for the position as Chair.

MG suggested to the Board that an external audit of VILN finance and governance procedures should be carried out with assistance from HIE. The Board agreed – MG to take forward.

AGENDA ITEM 9

9. Business Plan Update

MG updated the Board on the VILN business plan progress, highlighting plans developed by Posh Agency and the VILN management team to hold a “photomathon” event in 2020, which will provide VILN with valuable content to be used for projects like the winter festival/seasonal festival.

AGENDA ITEM 10

10. General Update

MG talked the Board through General Updates:

Digital Tourism Think Tank:

MG will be attending the Digital Tourism think Tank event in Helsinki in December. The previous event in Brussels was attended by Graeme Ambrose and VILN were able to make useful contacts and gain valuable insights.

Inverness Influencer Lodge:

Invitations have been sent out to the first influencers for this project in March 2020 and so far, all but two have confirmed that they will take part. In collaboration with project partner VisitScotland the second round of invitations have now been issued.

Staff Development Plans:

Staff Development Plans have been put back to February 2020.

ScotRail Tourism Working Group:

MG has been invited to join this group to help improve the ScotRail tourism offering.

Membership Map:

Posh Agency are currently putting together a map of the area indicating where VILN members are located. This can help in future with the development of a digital version of the See & Do maps.

See and Do Maps:

The Board were asked to consider whether the popular VILN See & Do maps should remain a “perk” for members or if they should be made available to non-members to help promote the area. The Board were also asked to consider the future distribution of the maps, which is currently time-consuming for the management team and incurs costs like van hire and mileage.

LF suggested to approach Landmark Press for a quote for distribution. The Board also agreed to explore the option of selling maps to non-members.

Climate Emergency:

MG asked the Board to consider becoming the first carbon-neutral BID in Scotland by offsetting the VILN carbon footprint. The Board agreed that this idea is worth exploring, VILN management team to find out costs and marketing opportunities.

AGENDA ITEM 11

11. CEO Presentation – Initial Assessment and “What the Future Holds”

MG presented to the Board on the current position of VILN, highlighting the change in CEO, upcoming appointment of a new Chair and the conclusion of funding from VisitBritain. A vision for the future of VILN was presented which was supported by the Board. MG to provide an update at the next meeting in February or in advance if appropriate.

AGENDA ITEM 12

12. AOCB

MG notified the board of a request from a travel agency to join VILN as an opt in member. Following discussion there was agreement that travel agencies would not be permitted to join VILN however they would be offered the opportunity to join on behalf of individual properties.

GB thanked all for their attendance and brought the meeting to a close.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

20th February 2020

Venue TBC

ACTIONS

Actions	Lead	Update
Explore winter discount scheme concept	SM	
VILN Management team develop concept for reallocation of £4k March conference budget to member engagement activities	MG	
Issue Board Sub-Group briefs	MG	
Propose first meeting dates for finance and governance and business development sub groups.	MG	
Notification of interest in becoming Chair	Directors	
Explore options for an external audit of VILN finance and governance	MG	
Investigate opportunity to become carbon neutral	MG	