Business Isle of Man Agency
Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday 7th August 2025
Time: 14:00 – 16:30
Venue: DfE Boardroom, St Georges Court

INVITED ATTENDEES - VOTING MEMBERS			
Steve Pickett, Chair, Business Isle of Man	SP	Robert Mercer MLC, Political Member	RM
Alex Fray, Sector Champion, Biomed & Medicinal Cannabis	AF	Dave Hester, Sector Champion, Engineering & Manufacturing	DH
Ollie Neale, Sector Champion, Drink Production	ON	Findlay Macleod, Sector Champion, Food Production	FM
Ieda Yell, Sector Champion, CleanTech	IY	Brian Butler, Sector Champion, Construction	BB
Richard Frear, Sector Champion, Large Retail	RF	Scott Pearse, Sector Champion, Local Economy	SPe
Christian Murphy, Sector Champion, Entrepreneurship	CM		

INVITED ATTENDEES - NON-VOTING	
Andy Stewart, Interim Chief Officer, Department for Enterprise	AS
Tim Cowsill, Chief Officer, DEFA	TC
Hira Modan, Marketing Manager, DFE	HM
Debbie Reed, Chief Officer, Construction IOM	DR
Rob Green, Head of Local Economy, BIOM	RG
Kirree Gooberman, Head of Business Development, Business Isle of Man	KG
Stephen Moore, Policy Manager-Built in Environment, BIOM	SM
Pradipta Das, Administrative Officer, DFE	PD

Please note all available members of the Business Agency Team are able to join on Teams to support where required.

Agenda item	Owner(s)
Chair's Welcome & Introduction Welcomes Board. This was followed by introductions around the table.	SP

Standing items:
• Apologies – HM, FM, ON, RF, CM & AF.
• Code of Conduct – none
• Declarations of new/potential conflicts of interest
  ○ IY - Represent the IOD at the biosphere meetings.
  ○ AS - Nothing related to agenda, will provide update for standing conflicts register.
  ○ SP – Two companies registered with CIOM.
• Additions to Gifts/Hospitality Register – none
Action – PD to add potential conflicts
• Previous minutes to be signed off by board
  ○ May Board – Taken as read.
	SP

<u>**Papers for Discussion -**</u> • <u>**Construction IOM - Future funding:**</u> *DR joined the room 14:15* DR introduced as Chief Officer of CIOM; joined to support sector-specific discussion. BB summarised CIOM's funding paper, highlighting areas needing additional support.	

DR presented an overview of CIOM.
Sector Challenges discussed:

- Industry under pressure, lack of visibility of future projects, skills shortages, ageing workforce, and declining apprenticeship support noted.
- CIOM's outreach tools (e.g., STEMFest bridge model) require maintenance and funding.
- A requirement to support and upskill the industry. Proposal to offer workshops to help contractors navigate government procurement.

Funding Request:

- CIOM requested an increase in annual funding from **£34,300 to £70,000**.
- Three options considered: maintain, approve full request, or withdraw funding.

DR & BB left – 14 : 45

SM

Board discussed the following strategic significance:

- CIOM provides essential services at lower cost than government delivery.
- Plays a key role in workforce development, training, and sector representation.
- Current fee structure is modest to support small businesses.

CIOM holds **£86,000 in reserves**—used for emergencies and one-off costs.
Board discussed using reserves to offset funding needs this year, maintained to a level sufficient to meet statutory obligations and directors' satisfaction.
DR & BB entered - 14 : 58

Board stressed the need for measurable KPIs.
DR agreed to report back in six months with updated KPIs.
Monthly tracking already in place; board requested standardised reporting template.

Funding Decision

- Funding capped at **£70,000 annually**, for 24 months, funding structured on **cost-incurred basis** following the payment of funding already committed to.
- Conditions include:
  - Maintaining majority income from membership.
  - Six-month KPI review.
  - Reserve level reassessment.

Closing Remarks & Approval

- Chair confirmed **unanimous board approval** of the funding under agreed conditions.
- Appreciation expressed for CIOM's work and sector impact.

DR departed at 15:03.

- <u>**Food & Drink festival – Board and Budget Review**</u>

RG presented the proposal to revive the **Isle of Man Food & Drink Festival in Sept 2026**. It was proposed that a **£75,000 revenue budget** is allocated to **underwrite** the event. Any additional funding requirements will be brought back to the board for approval. A **Steering Committee** will meet regularly starting September 25. RG noted strong support from producers and the public. RG

Proposed location: **Noble's Park**, leveraging existing **MGP infrastructure** to reduce costs.

Chair clarified that only the shortfall will be funded, which would be the difference between cost & revenue, not the full amount allocated.
BIOM team confirmed the request for up to £75,000 to begin preparations (e.g., booking marquees). Final income projection to be submitted later.
Logistics & planning were discussed, including accessibility & site licensing.

Board discussed the need for an agile decision-making structure and clear guiding principles to support effective governance and broader sector inclusion.

Questions were raised about the suitability of Noble's Park as a venue, citing weather risks, space limitations, transport logistics, and potential disruption to regular park users. Board suggested exploring indoor hosting options and minimizing the duration of park occupation to reduce impact and recommended collaboration with Visit Isle of Man and inclusion of a Douglas Corporation representative on the steering committee to strengthen local engagement. Board clarified that licensing issues may require multi-party coordination and confirmed that funding is available within the BIOM budget envelope. **Closing Remarks & Approval:** • On behalf of the board, **Chair** confirmed **unanimous approval** of the funding under the agreed conditions. • **RM** accepted the role of **Chair of the Food & Drink Festival Steering committee**. • <u>**Winter Event Scheme - Future funding**</u> BIOM team suggested inviting JH to provide an update; Board clarified the decision will be made outside the meeting, likely via email. Due to a number of Board members being conflicted a decision to hold a vote via email, to ensure a quorum. Questions were raised about the board's influence over the funding, noting it is externally sourced and not agency-controlled. CEO explained that while the board cannot redirect the funds, it can decide whether to reopen the scheme. He noted that £200,000 allocated under the Domestic Event Fund for the Winter Event Scheme approved by the Economic Strategy Board. Board questioned the effectiveness of last year's scheme and the lack of clarity on alternative uses for the fund. Board clarified that the vote pertains to whether the scheme should run again, not to any reallocation of existing funds. BIOM team emphasised alignment with the **Local Economy Strategy**, which aims to support businesses via increased footfall. Scheme Impact & Evaluation were discussed and mandatory surveys proposed by board to improve data quality. **Action Agreed**: **Vote** on reopening the scheme to be made via **email correspondence**. • <u>**New Development Coordinator Role Replacement**</u> KG informed the board that following KA's promotion to **Business Development Manager**, the **Business Development Coordinator** role is now vacant. PD is currently providing **temporary administrative support**. Proposal: Begin recruitment for the permanent position, ideally alongside the **CEO recruitment process**. CEO outlined the role's responsibilities including supporting governance and operational functions. Board members requested clarification on: • **Job title**: Confirmed as **Business Development Coordinator**. • **Reporting structure**: Reports directly to the CEO, as per the organisation chart. CEO explained that the Business Development Manager role, previously held by RG (now Head of Local Economy), remains vacant. This vacancy is intentional to allow the team to **stabilise** and assess **future resource needs**.	JH KG

Decision & Action: • The proposal to proceed with recruitment received **unanimous board support**. • Recruitment will now move forward through the **Recruitment Control Framework**. • <u>**STEMFest 2026 - Review**</u> *AN entered at 15:48* **AN** presented a proposal to continue and expand **STEMFest**, an educational event for Year 5 and 6 students, running since 2018. Proposal includes a new **senior STEMFest** for Year 8 and 9 students, linking STEM to careers and GCSE choices. Funding Request: • **£30,000 annually** for two events (primary and secondary). • **Three-year commitment** requested: **£90,000 total**. Sponsorship (typically £3,000–£4,000 per event) will be sought to offset costs. Feedback will be collected post-event to ensure relevance and improvement. Strategic alignment & impact alongside a proposed schedule was discussed. Board discussed the value of volunteer time and industry support, comparing STEMFest to UK Big Bang events. Questions raised about feasibility of running two events annually and securing repeat industry participation. Affordability was discussed in light of other proposals. Benefit of a three-year commitment for planning and curriculum alignment was noted. **Board** supported the proposal and suggested showcasing student success stories to demonstrate long-term impact. **Board** noted that secondary-level proposal feels distinct and may require additional input from DESC, to ensure close collaboration, max high school participation, to overcome scheduling challenges and to ensure curriculum alignment. **Decision & Closing Remarks:** • **Chair** confirmed the board is voting on a **£90,000 commitment over three years**. • Emphasis placed on securing school participation and appropriate timing before proceeding. • **Board unanimously approved** the proposal. • Members expressed appreciation for the work done and confirmed support moving forward. *AN left at 16:04* <u>**Papers for Noting -**</u> Chair noted that upcoming papers were for information only. • <u>Local Economy Strategy Update</u> RG presented an update on the Local Economy Strategy, focusing on outreach, data collection, and implementation progress. Over **60 business reviews** conducted by Jane and Maddie. He discussed tactical delivery underway, involving: • Engagement with **local authorities** and **estate agents** • Amplifying messaging and supporting application processes • **CRM dashboards** being developed to provide **sector-specific insights** with the goal of moving toward **granular, sector-based reporting** to inform strategy.	AN RG

Footfall tracking efforts face lease and insurance challenges; **Attorney General's Chambers** assisting with legal guidance. Board emphasised need to break down the term cost of doing business into actionable components such as, power and utilities, premises affordability, inflation pressures, staffing and supply chain costs. Importance of distinguishing between **cost pressures** and **skills shortages** was discussed. **Closing Remarks:** • Board acknowledged the importance of detailed insights to support strategic decisions. • Members expressed appreciation for the outreach efforts and confirmed support for continued refinement of the strategy. • IFE Post Event Summary – Taken as read. • Paris Airflow Post Event Report 2025 – Taken as read. • Leicester Made Event Report 2025 – Taken as read. • Post-Event Summary – Cannabis Europa – Attendees: RG, KA & TC. TC noted that attendance at Cannabis Europa revealed a shift in the medicinal cannabis sector. Compared to last year's strong engagement, this year saw limited interest and no new leads. Existing leads from last year remain active, but momentum has slowed. He recommended a strategic reassessment and broader sector engagement to avoid over-reliance on a few prospects. • Cambridge Cleantech Venture Day 2025 – Taken as read. KG briefly discussed BIOM paper ICBF 2025 with board, The Isle of Man had a strong cross-sector presence at the Inter-Celtic Business Forum (ICBF), with representatives from digital, maritime, and food & drink. There is growing interest in hosting ICBF on the Isle of Man, potentially in September 2026, aligned with a cultural event. Expected attendance: 80–200 people, offering a great opportunity to integrate business and cultural engagement. Discussed above. Decision Papers Signed off by CEO for Review – • CIOM Annual Funds 2025 • CCT Membership Renewal and Cleantech Survey Paper 2025 • BIOM paper ICBF 2025 Discussed in CEO update below.	TC KG
Department Update: • Interim CO DfE; AS noted that there are no major updates due to parliamentary recess, though planning work is ongoing. Recruitment Update : Interim Chief highlighted that the vacant role is currently out for agreement with a 10-day window. Recruitment process discussions included the potential use of a stakeholder panel, possibly involving board members. Advert to close soon, shortlisting and interviews planned for early September. Possible brief delay due to leave at the end of August. The recruitment process for a F&D marketing executive is well underway.	AS

• Chair; SP expressed deep appreciation for TC's years of dedication, particularly his resilience through challenges like COVID, and his leadership in building both the board and the team. Acknowledged that TC is leaving the agency in a strong position, and thanked him on behalf of the entire board. • CEO of Business Agency; TC explained that the agency is well-positioned for a **leadership transition**, supported by strong internal structure. **Cross-agency collaboration** is gaining momentum, with growing interest in shared approaches and messaging. Events often reveal overlapping themes (e.g., technology, workforce), highlighting the need for a unified narrative. Agencies like **Digital**, **Finance**, and **Visit** have unique strengths that can be leveraged across sectors. **STEMFest** and innovation challenges were cited as successful examples of collaborative delivery. The goal is to embed collaboration into **everyday operations**, moving from discussion to action. The **Business Agency**, under Steve's leadership, is actively identifying opportunities for efficiency and influence.	SP TC
Significant Sector Updates: none	All
Any Other Business – *Invitation - Digital Isle of Man - Industry Round Table* *KG extended DIOM's invitation: AI Industry Roundtable is being organised by Digital Isle of Man, aiming to gather cross-sector representation to discuss the impacts of AI and how best to support businesses in adopting it. The roundtable seeks participation from the business agency, with a focus on diverse sector input. The goal is to understand challenges, opportunities, and practical support mechanisms for AI integration. SP & SPe expressed interest in joining.*	KG
Meeting Close: 16:31	SP