

**Business Isle of Man Agency**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Time:** 4:00pm until 5:00pm

**Venue:** DfE Boardroom, St George's Court, Douglas/ MS Teams

INVITED ATTENDEES - VOTING MEMBERS			
Steve Pickett, Chair, Business Isle of Man	SP	Janna Horsthuis, Sector Champion, Local Economy (Apologies)	JH
Alex Fray, Sector Champion, Biomed & Medicinal Cannabis	AF	Ollie Neale, Sector Champion, Drink Production	ON
Carol Glover, Sector Champion, Small Business & Entrepreneurship	CG	Ieda Yell, Sector Champion, CleanTech (Teams)	IY
Dave Hester, Sector Champion, Engineering & Manufacturing (Teams)	DH	Dr Michelle Haywood MHK, Political Member	MH
Findlay Macleod, Sector Champion, Food Production (Apologies)	FM	Tim Cowsill, CEO Of Business Isle Of Man, DfE	TC

INVITED ATTENDEES - NON-VOTING	
Mark Lewin, Chief Executive, Department for Enterprise	ML
Hira Modan, Marketing Manager, DFE	HM
Katy Ashwell, Business Development Co-Ordinator, DFE	KA

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

Agenda item	Owner(s)
Start 16:05	SP
<b>Standing items:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apologies - FM, JH</li> <li>b. Code of Conduct - No issues to report</li> <li>c. Declarations of new/potential conflicts of interest - SP advised of increased involvement in JACS group. This has been noted and added to the register.</li> <li>d. Additions to Gifts/Hospitality Register - None</li> <li>e. Previous minutes to be signed off by board - September 23</li> </ol>	SP



<p>Taken as read.</p> <p>f. Action tracker mostly taken as read, SP noted there is no update from Construction. TC: Following Stephen Smyth's resignation from the board there is a vacancy to fill. Attending a meeting with Construction Isle of Man next week where this will be discussed.</p>	
<p><b>Sector Update - Cleantech</b></p> <p>IY: Attended an initial meeting for the Innovation Challenge workshop which went well. Next will be the Energy Cleantech Forum in November, KG is organising and IY will present an introduction. KG also attended the Cleantech Venture Day event in London.</p> <p>KG: An excellent event and opportunity to both see innovation and pitch opportunity to showcase the Island. Great to see the innovation level there and how we can replicate on Island.</p>	
<p><b>Initial Briefing:</b></p> <p>A. <u>Chair</u>;</p> <p>SP: Government Conference was at the end of September and went well. Thanked the CG and ON for joining us on the panel and for the officers for attending. Strong theme was the local economy and how to support family businesses. All noted that the timing of this was prophetic given the subsequent news of Tesco purchasing Shoprite and the resultant activity.</p> <p>TC, RG and AF recently attended a medicinal cannabis conference in Portugal. TC referenced paper: <b>BB20231020 Post Event Summary - Medicinal Cannabis Conference, Portugal</b> and summarised the success of the event, stressing how valuable it was for BIOM officers and GSC to see a working facility. It was noted that Portugal is much further ahead in developing the industry but there are difficulties getting access to the regulator. AF explained that they are one of the first in Europe to issue licences, but of the 23 approved only 4 are operational so observed that for the Isle of Man taking a bit more time to get things right might not be a bad thing.</p> <p>SP: Stemfest was held last week and went well. TC: proud of the number of BIOM businesses represented, a large room was filled and there was a great showing. Excellent to see so many Manx businesses taking part.</p> <p>A board member was unaware of the event beforehand and asked how to be notified of future events that may be of interest. HM recommended reviewing the BIOM events calendar (on Teams) and an invite can be sent for any that are requested.</p> <p>MH feels there is an opportunity for this event in future for Tynwald members to see the range of activities taking place and variety of businesses involved.</p>	<p>SP ML TC</p>

TC updated on the Local Economy Strategy Sessions, with three taking place so far and one more to follow. 60 businesses have participated with many of the same issues that are often discussed being raised, however some great ideas and solutions presented amongst that. MH attended the Port St Mary session and shared that the Port Erin Traders Group had positive feedback for the event and are keen for similar opportunities for engagement in the future. TC observed that communication has been a prominent topic across all sessions.

A Local Economy Strategy workshop is being planned for members of the Business and Visit Agency boards on the 21<sup>st</sup> November with more details to follow.

Regarding Food and Drink, TC explained that recent events and subsequent involvement with Tesco have brought to light a number of key issues within the sector. However it is important to note that the situation also brings opportunities. This sentiment was echoed by the board members.

TC attended a DEFA Fisheries meeting earlier that day where the challenges around onshore processing were discussed. Discussions between board members followed around these and other challenges this sector faces. TC went on to explain where Shoprite didn't have requirements for accreditations, Tesco does. Work is underway between DfE and DEFA to address, and knowledge of all the affected sectors is required to do this.

**B. DfE Chief Executive;**

ML provided a brief update for each of the Agencies, with Finance securing a resource in South Africa, Digital's job numbers are up by 180 compared to last year, and AI continues to be a "hot topic", and Visit showing good visitor statistics and have received funding approval for a mountain bike trials project.

The Government conference last month went well and ML thanked all involved for their help. On Monday ML attended a hearing of the EPRC and noted that shop local and the Christmas campaigns were referenced.

Work permits are a big focus ahead of November Tynwald -

ML noted a busy couple of weeks with the Tesco purchase of Shoprite.

**C. CEO of Business Agency;**

**Tesco/Shoprite**

TC: there has been good engagement between the Chief Minister, DfE Minister, DEFA Minister and Tesco. There is the understanding that businesses need time to gain the standards required.



<p>SP noted that Tesco’s employment terms could have an impact on the sector, TC replied that their rates of pay are the highest along with M&amp;S.</p> <p>TC is pushing for outreach now and meeting with farmers and producers. Feedback from farmers is positive on hearing there will be an IOM specific Tesco Area Manager.</p> <p>TC noted that Shoprite set a high bar in local produce and there is a real opportunity here to get more residents buying local. TC reiterated earlier comments that there is the need to understand from local producers what the issues are in the various sectors, and to inspire them with the potential opportunities. ML added that obtaining the required standards doesn’t have to be difficult, with some smaller businesses already having them and DEFA offering support.</p> <p><b>Small Business Workshops</b> <i>CG left the room due to COI.</i></p> <p>TC - there are a series of workshops planned for Small Businesses which CG will be participating in. The other speakers at the event are being paid for their time, proposed that CG should also be compensated - suggested fee of £250 per workshop. - Board all voted in agreement.</p> <p><i>CG re-joined the room.</i></p> <p><i>IY left the meeting</i></p> <p><b>Isle of Man Steam Packet</b> TC: the Sea Services agreement is currently under discussion and this brings potential opportunities. There is a Department workshop next week for a political overview. The focus in the past has been income, now looking more at maximising output and utilisation of available freight space on the ferry. An officers meeting will follow and this will be brought to the Board for input.</p>	
<p><b>Paper for Decision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BB20231019 Low Season Hospitality Stimulus - Manx Menu</li> </ul> <p>MG presented an overview of the paper describing the reasoning for an initiative to support hospitality during the historically quiet period of February, noting that feedback from industry has indicated a dislike of offering discounts. The proposed offer will be for February 2024 and coincide with a Visit Isle of Man event where 100 members of The British Guild of Travel Writers will be visiting the island. Visit will also be supporting the proposed initiative through their</p>	<p>MG</p>

<p>marketing activities. The initiative will focus on promoting Manx produce and there will be a voting system with awards offered at the end of the event. The specifics of which are to be defined, but the aim is to increase spending in local hospitality businesses, and a means to collect metrics will allow the monitoring of the success of the initiative. Board members are asked for their support to progress as detailed in the paper to a maximum cost of £25, 000.</p> <p><b>Vote:</b> Yes - unanimous (IY shared her vote before leaving the meeting earlier)</p> <p>Board members recommended that additional opportunities to capitalise on the British Guild of Travel Writers visit should be considered. TC advised there will be a showcase event which will include local producers.</p> <p><b>Paper for Noting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- BB20231020 Post Event Summary - Medicinal Cannabis Conference, Portugal</li> <li>- BB20231021 BIOM September Dashboard 2023</li> </ul> <p>Both taken as read with no comment.</p>	
<p><b>Sector Updates</b></p> <p><u>Engineering &amp; Manufacturing</u></p> <p>The sector representative gave update, noting there are no big changes to report and the sector is fairly stable. Noted that there are still some issues getting apprenticeships. Timing is the problem and aligning what UCM can offer with what is needed.</p> <p>KG has a meeting with UCM tomorrow and will raise course alignments then. Added that there is now a project plan for the E&amp;M review which is due to start on the 30<sup>th</sup> October with a health check at the end of February.</p> <p><i>Dh left the meeting</i></p> <p><u>Small Business &amp; Entrepreneurship</u></p> <p>The sector representative gave an update. Firstly that the Small Business Workshops start next week and interested to see how they are received. Secondly, advised that there is an opportunity for a replacement for Eagle Labs upcoming with an impressive business plan. ML added that the Department is supportive.</p> <p>SP inquired as to what feedback there has been from non-food businesses regarding Tesco/Shoprite. A board member replied that this will take more time to understand. TC added that work is being done to reach out to these businesses, and asked that the board member shares any individuals that BIOM should contact.</p> <p>SP is meeting with a Tesco contractor in coming weeks, there will be discussions to encourage Tesco to make use of the multitude of contractors available on Island.</p>	



<p><u>Drink Production</u></p> <p>The sector representative gave an update on Food and Drink Export, there is a meeting planned with the producers in the Export Group tomorrow. Engagement with the group has been initially difficult but feels that now getting past the initial complaints and discussions are more constructive.</p> <p>The board member added that drinks producers seem to be better engaged and there are plans to attend a UK Trade show next month.</p> <p>TC advised there are also plans to attend ID24 next year, but as two stalls. Feels there has been a missed opportunity with not having one large Isle of Man stall with several producers. The hope is a success of ID24 will encourage participation in future events.</p> <p><u>Medicinal Cannabis</u></p> <p>The sector representative gave an update, advising of an event scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> November for potential stakeholders aiming to educate and demystify about the sector.</p> <p>Broader, there is currently one licence application progressing well and talks of others to be submitted. Growlabs are looking at a collaboration with a large wholesaler.</p> <p>TC added that there are two additional leads from Portugal who understand the IOM regulatory framework and see an opportunity.</p> <p><u>Construction</u></p> <p>The sector representative gave an update, noting there are some nice projects coming on line including Middlemarch and Lord St in Douglas. There have been meetings at officer level to discuss the quantity of work coming down the pipeline. It is positive news but presents fairly major challenges, how will the construction industry react, along with suppliers, consultants, and building control. There is a meeting scheduled 3<sup>rd</sup> November to discuss concerns and approach.</p> <p><u>Local Economy Strategy</u></p> <p>TC - There is an active tender for the Town Audit, the resultant report will give the baseline to see what difference we can make and give focus. A request has come for a longer period for consultation, due to the importance of the project this has been granted.</p> <p>TC reminded that a local economy strategy workshop is planned with Visit Agency Board members to establish the strategic priorities is planned for the 21<sup>st</sup> November.</p>	
<p><b>2024 Program - Initial Discussions</b></p>	<p>TC</p>



<p>TC - the board workshop in November will focus on the program for 2024, and there will be meetings scheduled with individual board members and the BIOM BDMs ahead of this. SP encouraged that the board share any initiatives or ideas.</p>	
<p><b>Standing Item: AOB</b></p> <p>HM asked board members to share the small business workshops on their Linked In profiles.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Meeting Close 17:40</p>	<p>SP</p>