

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

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2023

**Time:** 2:00pm until 4:00pm

**Venue:** DFE Boardroom, First Floor, St George’s Court, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 1EX

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

INVITED ATTENDEES - NON-VOTING	
Mark Lewin, Chief Executive, Department for Enterprise (Apologies)	ML
Hira Modan, Marketing Manager, DFE	HM
Thomas Richardson-Hall, Business Development Co-Ordinator, DFE	TRH

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

Timing	Agenda item
14:00 - 14:05	Chair’s Welcome & Introduction
14:05 - 14:15	<p>Standing items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apologies - AF, MH, ML</li> <li>b. Code of Conduct - Nothing Raised</li> <li>c. Declarations of new/potential conflicts of interest - Nothing Raised</li> <li>d. Additions to Gifts/Hospitality Register - Nothing Raised</li> <li>e. Previous minutes to be signed off by board - May 23</li> </ul> <p>CG questioned the conflict for BERP Can this be removed.</p>

	<p>IY requested a correction of phrase from conflict to potential conflict.</p> <p>A board member requested an update on the Island Infrastructure scheme discussed at the last meeting, highlighting that importance to the construction industry of moving forward with these sites.</p> <p>TC summarised a range of brownfield sites have been put forward and are being reviewed by the Department. Currently looking at bringing in external professional like a QS to review the applications to ensure the Department fully understands the financial viability of the developments.</p> <p>A board member asked question if compulsory purchase could be used for sites which have failed to be developed or if there are options to cover sites with temporary coverings to improve the visual impact.</p> <p>TC confirmed it is a complex and time consuming process to conduct a compulsory process and the preference is to find alternative solutions by working with site owners</p> <p>f. Action tracker taken as read, any issues</p> <p>A board member asked if more detailed information could be generated to show the investment into the Island driven by the Agency?</p> <p>TC answered that information is available on the economic dashboard and additional information is something we can look at for including in the progress trackers.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Look to include information highlighting inward investment as part of the project trackers.</p>
<p>14:15 - 14:25</p>	<p><b>Initial Briefing:</b></p> <p>A. Chair;</p> <p>SP summarised the key current developments; footfall tracking negotiations are ongoing as per the Boards request in the May meeting. Meet the Street campaign on going, good news story with AF's business being featured on the front page of the Financial Times which is good promotion for the Island and TT completed feedback received from businesses indicating it has been very positive. Also planning to review the current Board meeting schedule for the year. STEP scheme is active and we are looking at acquiring some to assist with Agency projects.</p> <p>TC added we are looking at STEP students to help with Built Environment, Local Economy and some marketing activities.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Review the Board Meeting schedule for the remainder of 2023.</p> <p>B. Head of Business Agency;</p> <p>TC summarised post TT feedback found most business are up 15%, there was an uplift in footfall around the Island and commissioners reported it was successful however some work needed on the co-ordination of events. Staff updates; Head of Business Development role is now being advertised, RG has secured the permeant position of Business Development Manager, TRH has secured the Small Business Executive role and Katy from Visit will be taking up the Business Development Co-Ordinator role.</p>
<p>14:25: 15:15</p>	<p><b>Papers for Decision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BB20230620 - CleanTech Sector Update</li> </ul> <p>KG summarised, CleanTech activities run across most of our sectors and this has been reflected in the recent survey which has now received 34 responses. Overriding findings is that 97% of respondent businesses reported that operating according to ESG(Environmental, social and Governance) principles is important to them, which matches with the message coming</p>

from Chamber. ESG principles are also high on investor priorities for future investment in the island and the future energy strategy and MUA renewable strategy will be key to this.

The proposal is to run an innovation challenge, using the same method and model as Finance and Digital did with the Fintech challenge. This means there will be cross agency involvement and we will use the process Digital have in place to keeps the costs down with the current budget being set at £7,500. There is no direct prize but the benefit to participants is the opportunity to work closely with Government.

The board agreed with the findings that ESG is now critical for on Island businesses and investment from off Island while commented that the number of responses was positive. A question was also raised on the availability of ESG power for businesses in the short term.

TC answered that ESG power supply is a factor being considered as part of the planning letter process we have for example the Agency has commented on the proposed Bilown Solar Array.

KG continued the problem statements for the innovation challenge will be developed with the assistance of Cambridge CleanTech, MUA and other key stakeholder to ensure they are achievable. Cambridge CleanTech will then help to promote the challenge and opportunities to global companies which is where they really add value through the size and quality of their networks which also include a significant reach into the educational setting via universities. Outside of the innovation challenge we also want to continue our relationship with Cambridge CleanTech for the price of £5,000 as this provides our local businesses with access to this network including angel investors and helps inspire innovation via their events by showing what is possible on the ESG journey.

The board agreed with the value they offer and indicated that they wanted to see full utilisation of the funds being spent on this membership via wider events for local businesses rather than focusing on specific sectors.

TC added that this is the starting point for the bigger picture development of the Island as a potential destination for CleanTech development as we have significant engineering expertise and an infrastructure size appropriate for testing of new ideas.

SP asked to confirm what the funding request is for the paper.

KG confirmed it is £7,000 for the innovation challenge, £5,000 for the Cambridge CleanTech membership and additional minor funding for linked events which will be discussed directly with IY as plans develop.

*The Board then conducted a vote on the suggested CleanTech challenge and wider approach to the CleanTech Sector.*

Vote supported unanimously

The Board indicated that they would like to see more promotion and marketing in this sector.

**Action:** Increase marketing focus on CleanTech events and initiatives.

- BB20230621 - Opportunity of the IOM Freeport

TC summarised the Freeport paper request; the land is owned by DFE and is yet to be fully developed. Currently 3 to 4 contacts are received per year for interest in the site. The UK have previously focused on developing freeports but the economic benefits they received from this is unclear. Based on the Isle of Man's unique tax rules and the permitted development order in place on the site it is believed their might be an economic opportunity for the site but we do not have the expertise to study this. The ask therefore is for £20,000 to be committed to paying for an external professional to study and report on the economic opportunity of the Freeport site.

The board indicated they were concerned about spending money on a project that has been in place for over 20 years with little interest. However they commented that understanding finally if there is or is not an opportunity for the site would be productive as it could result in the site being redeveloped or a greater focus on capitalising on the actual opportunity.

TC added we do not currently know if there is an opportunity or not however if one is found we could look to expand upon this and equally if there is not one it can free up the site for redevelopment. This year we had a budget uplift to allow us to explore possibilities exactly like this without impacting our day to day activities.

The Board agreed but asked if there was a part funding solution that could be considered as they felt the project should not be solely on the responsibility of the Business Agency.

TC stated he could go and ask for a part funding from another area of government however this risk significantly increasing the officer time that would be taken up by this project.

The board acknowledge this and agreed that part funding would be the best approach for this project and that although they don't see it as a priority for the Agency they understand the benefit of a final conclusion on the Freeport area.

*The Board then conducted a vote on the suggested approach of commissioning a report on the opportunities of the Isle of Man Freeport with the caveat that it is part funded from another source.*

Vote supported unanimously

**Action:** Part funding agreement to be explored for the Freeport Opportunity Project.

- BB20230622 - Feasibility Study of Marine Service Opportunities in the Irish Sea

KG summarised that there is currently an increase in marine activity within the Irish Sea as well as the developing situation of the Ramsey Shipyard being put up for sale which is providing an opportunity to review the use of the area. The majority of the land is DOI ownership with DFE owning some smaller industrial units. There has previously been interest in the combined site but the leases have never lined up for the opportunities to be landed. Additionally the expansion of Windfarm projects within the Irish sea and the recreational naval traffic to the Island and the servicing requirements of the domestic fishing fleet provide an opportunity for economic development. The proposal is to seek £40,000 for a review of the area to be conducted to understand the opportunities for the combined site in relation to the activities within the Irish Sea.

SS raised a potential conflict as their business operates from Ramsey Harbour and owns some of the land.

TC confirmed they have an interested party status but it is not a direct conflict.

The board raised the concern that this felt more like an opportunity for a private company to look at than government and clarified that if the business using the facilities is up for sale does this not suggest that there is little to no opportunity. Additionally concerns were raised about how the harbour could capitalise on projects such as the windfarm when it is both tidal and shallow and can't accept larger vessels. It was also highlighted that reviewing just one Island harbour as opposed to all of them collectively felt insignificant.

KG confirmed that there are limitations due to the harbours characteristics but that initial contact with the offshore wind developers has indicated their smaller craft would be able to make use of the facilities. Other opportunities from the past have included yacht building businesses and Royal Navy fast craft maintenance contracts.

The board indicated their concern on the ability to realise these opportunities currently considering the small amount of expertise remaining in this field on Island. Additionally they flagged that this didn't feel like a project that should sit within the Business Agency.

KG confirmed that the area could be pushed towards relocating an established business to the Island using this facility to allow the local expertise to be rebuilt.

The board asked if this review could be included with the Freeport review to remove some of the financial burden on the Agency.

KG confirmed the need for a marine specialist firm to conduct the review however the proposed £40,000 is just the maximum estimate and it would likely cost £20,000 to £25,000.

	<p><i>The Board then conducted a vote on the suggested approach of commissioning a report on the opportunities of the Ramsey Harbour area.</i></p> <p>Vote was rejected by majority.</p> <p>The board indicated that they would be happy to review any options once all the interested parties got to together to talk through the options of Ramsey. If from that group coming together an opportunity could be seen for a further study then the Agency would be happy to look at a joint project again with DOI.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BB20230623 - Proposal for Public Consultation into Removing Restrictions on Growing Male Hemp</li> </ul> <p>RG summarised the proposal; currently there is a requirement in the Agency programme to revisit the decision on growing Male Hemp outdoors by the halfway point of the year. The paper suggests public consultation could be launched to gather the views of industry and the wider public. There is no financial element to this proposal but it will take a significant amount of officer time to complete the consultation and review of the results.</p> <p>The complexities and concerns around this subject were discussed by the board, nothing that the male species is not the most valuable part of the Cannabis proposition but does have a market for both industrial fibres and the production of CBD oil (outside of the Isle of Man). However, there is also a potential USP strength in having only female plants grown on Island. The consultation would help us to understand if it is worth looking at the option to review the decision on growing male hemp outdoors.</p> <p>It was added that considering the complexity of the female market that is only just in its infancy the board don't believe now is the right time to review this. The board asked if the local farmers have requested this to be reviewed or shown an interest in male hemp.</p> <p>TC answered that there is currently no pressure from the farming community to explore this and from an Agency point of view there is a concern about the significant amount of officer time that could be taken up looking into this. Personally I would like to try marketing the female market first and revisit this in 6 months' time. This could be a significant distraction and there is more value in just pushing the female market and trying to land some of the opportunities that have been floating about.</p> <p><i>The board conducted a vote on the suggestion to begin a public consultation on the growing of Male Hemp Outdoors.</i></p> <p>Vote was rejected unanimously.</p> <p>Papers for Noting - Taken as Read</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BB20230624 - Public Consultation Document for Removing Restrictions on Growing Male Hemp</li> <li>• BB20230625 - May 2023 Board Meeting Actions Updates</li> <li>• BB20230626 - BIOM May Marketing Dashboard</li> <li>• BB20230627 - LoveIOM May Marketing Dashboard</li> </ul>
15:15 - 15:35	<p><b>Sector Updates</b></p> <p>A board member raised that there is a lot of applications in the planning system which could provide economic benefit, do we know this value and could we push them through faster?</p> <p>TC confirmed that there is some information on this and we can look into it however we have only just began the process of commenting on applications so we are unsure of our impact at this point.</p>

	<p><b>Action:</b> Look into the economic benefit of ‘stuck’ planning application and how these could be pushed forward.</p>
15:35 - 15:45	Project tracker Updates - Taken as read
15:45 - 15:50	Standing Item: Budget Update - Taken as read
15:50 - 16:00	<p>Standing Item: AOB</p> <p>Primary Engineer</p> <p>A board member flagged that there is significant interest in the primary engineer program from STEM when schools have been informed of it and have suggested that this should be promoted more, potentially in collaboration with Construction IOM’s bridge activity.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Look to promote the primary Engineer &amp; Bridge Activity out to more schools.</p> <hr/> <p>Ronaldsway Challenges</p> <p>The board raised significant concerns linked to the current challenges being faced by the Isle of Man airport and the knock on effects it is having from an economic point of view. Issues such as reputational risk from visitors, potential investors not being able to travel to the Island and the impact on domestic quality of life. They flagged that this is seriously hindering the image of the Isle of Man and risks the ability to relocate and retain people in line with the Island Plan.</p> <p>TC clarified that there is a lot of different issues occurring at the same time here to cause the situation. Firstly the airlines are not basing any staff on the Island so they have no back-up in place. Secondly the routes to the Island are ‘tagged on’ to other routes coming from South &amp; West Europe which means adverse weather in those regions delays our flights. Finally the air traffic controllers have industry mandated requirements for breaks which has been complex with low numbers of staff, there has been a drive previously to recruit more controllers but it appears this might not have been successful.</p> <p>The board noted the explanation but went on to highlight that if a private company ran the airport they would be working on multiple options to resolve this as an immediate priority. Additional other issues linked to this were raised such as the drop in landing slots for private jets from 25 to 5 and the reported steep price increase of Steam Packet tickets for people trying to book last minute to return home from the Island after flight cancelation.</p> <p>TC suggested that the Agency could prepare a comment to be put forward to the minister and the Chief Officer directly on this.</p> <p>The Board agreed with this suggestion and further highlighted the urgency of the matter.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Drafting and submission of a letter to the Minister of the impacts of the Ronaldsway flight disruption.</p>
16:00	Meeting Close 16:32

**Actions**

Action	Owner
Look to include information highlighting inward investment as part of the project trackers.	All
Review the Board Meeting schedule for the remainder of 2023.	TRH
Increase marketing focus on CleanTech events and initiatives.	KG

Part funding agreement to be explored for the Freeport Opportunity Project.	TC
Look into the economic benefit of 'stuck' planning application and how these could be pushed forward.	SM
Look to promote the primary Engineer & Bridge Activity out to more schools.	KG
Drafting and submission of a letter to the Minister of the impacts of the Ronaldsway flight disruption.	SP