

## Board Meeting 10 December 2025

**TOURISM NI  
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING  
HELD AT TOURISM NI HEADQUARTERS, LINUM CHAMBERS, BELFAST  
ON WEDNESDAY 10 DECEMBER 2025**

**Participating:**

- Ms Ellvena Graham OBE (Chairman)
- Ms Aileen Martin
- Mr Michael Counahan
- Ms Aine Gallagher
- Ms Karly Greene
- Mr John Hood
- Mr Colin Johnston
- Ms Linda MacHugh
- Mr Ciaran O’Neill

**In attendance:**

- Ms Laura McCorry, Chief Executive
- Mr Adrian Doherty, Director of Corporate Development
- Ms Aine Kearney, Director of Events (item 2 (iv))
- Mrs Dorothy Erskine, Head of Strategy & Policy (item 2 (ii))
- Mr David Roberts, Director of Strategic Development (item 2 (iii – iv))
- Mr Jim Daly, Executive Support Team

### **1. Introduction / Standing Items**

The Chairman welcomed those present. There were no apologies. Ciaran O’Neill and Colin Johnston declared potential interest with item (2) as accommodation providers, and it was agreed unnecessary for them to withdraw from the discussions as no decision was required.

#### **1 (i) Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Board reviewed draft minutes of its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2025. Karly Greene and Aine Gallagher advised that they had some proposed minor amendments and agreed to forward these for inclusion.

## **1 (ii) Matters Arising – Actions from previous Board Meeting**

The Board reviewed and noted the status of actions carried over from previous meetings. Aine Gallagher clarified the recommendation that the Audit Committee should share findings on Casework with the Finance & Casework Committee related more broadly to recommendation sharing across committees and it was agreed that this would be amended.

## **2. Items for Discussion**

### **2 (i) Chief Executive's Report**

The report was taken as read and several points were highlighted including the additional resource allocated to Tourism NI in the December monitoring round, to help upweight the Spring 2026 marketing campaign and promote the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand.

A further sum of ring-fenced funds to support the bid by the NI Executive to host the Women's World Cup in 2035 was discussed in detail. The CEO shared the correspondence from the Department permitting TNI to administer the payment. It was agreed that Tourism NI should reply to the Department confirming that the Board was content (**ACTION:** LMCC).

It was also noted that the Irish Government had published its National Tourism Policy Statement, *A New Era for Irish Tourism* that included tourism development opportunities on an all-island basis. The Board commented on the importance of collaboration in support of the all-island tourism economy whilst recognising that Northern Ireland is starting from a lower base with less investment.

The need to ensure that Northern Ireland's distinctiveness and stand out within all-island brand promotion was emphasized, to ensure the Dept's total investment in tourism overall delivers a strong return for the businesses and the economy in NI.

### **2 (ii) Tourism NI Draft Corporate Plan Consultation Responses**

Dot Erskine, Head of Strategy and Policy, joined the meeting to present the themes arising from the CP consultation. The responses proposed 52 actions for Tourism NI, of which 37 were assessed as inherent within the plan but could be better presented. A further 15 were considered for inclusion, however several were noted to be outside of TNI's control. The Board commented that TNI should focus on the actions within our remit to deliver, and the distinction should be explained to consultees in any response.

It was also recommended that a consultation response document be produced, and respondents thanked for their considered input. The Board also discussed amending the timeframe of the Corporate Plan to align with the budget and Yr 1 assumed to be 26/27.

Subject to agreement with DfE this was agreed (**ACTION:** ELT). The Board thanked Dot Erskine for her work, and she left the meeting.

### **2 (iii) Transfer of Invest NI Functions**

The Director of Strategic Development David Roberts joined the meeting to provide an update on preparations to transfer Invest NI's functions to Tourism NI.

Progress to date was noted, and the Board was content to accept the powers transferring in April noting the requirement will involve post-project monitoring only. However, it was emphasized that a new scheme could only progress subject to budget and the other dependencies set out in the paper.

Within this context, the Board highlighted the importance of clear communications, noting the context for this was the outcome of the Lyons report. They emphasized the need for a distinction in communications between the transfer of the functions and the implications for affected clients versus the communications to wider industry setting out clarity on the new support scheme (**ACTION:** DR).

### **2 (iv) Budget Planning Framework**

The Director of Events, Aine Kearney joined the meeting. The Board's input was sought on guiding principles to underpin the proposed allocation of the 2026-27 budget. There was a wider ranging discussion that touched on Tourism NI's discretionary activity, fulfilment of statutory duties, supporting the work of the Minister and NI Executive and meeting inescapable pressures. It was agreed the ELT will present scenarios at the Board away day in February.

When the discussion concluded, David Roberts and Aine Kearney left the meeting.

### **2 (v) Arrangements for February 2026 Board Meeting**

The outline of the programme for the Board away day was agreed and ELT is to prepare accordingly (**ACTION:** CEO).

### **2 (vi) Tourism NI Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25**

The Board was presented with the draft annual report and accounts for the 2024-25 financial year, for approval and signature. The Board was content to approve the Annual Report and Accounts for signing, subject to the amendment of a few typographical errors (**ACTION:** AD).

## **2 (vii) IT Project Update**

The Board noted the paper and approved the recommendation. It was agreed that the Q&S system must continue to function as it is linked to TNI's statutory remit, but only minimal spend should be incurred until there is clarity on the way forward.

The Board underlined its support for the Executive Team in finding a solution and stressed the need to find a resolution as soon as possible. They also asked that an amended version of the paper be uploaded to Decision Time to incorporate a small section of missing text (**ACTION: AD**).

Ciaran O'Neill left the meeting at this point.

## **2 (viii) Direct Award Contract - Employer Excellence Scheme**

The Board's approval was sought for a Direct Award Contract (DAC) to engage a specialist supplier to deliver an Employer's Excellence programme. The request was not approved in favor of a competitive tendering exercise (**ACTION: DR / EC**).

## **3. Reports**

### **3 (i) Chairman's Report**

The Board noted the Chairman's engagements since the last meeting. The Chair asked for feedback on the Board's recent sessions with Earthcheck in relation to the Destination Stewardship Framework. Members remarked that some fundamental questions remain outstanding. Noting that the final Earthcheck report is yet to be completed, the Board would like to discuss this further upon receipt.

### **3 (ii) Sub-Committee Reports**

Verbal updates were given by the respective chairs. Whilst the Finance and Casework Committee had not met in the period since the last Board Meeting, a revised outline business case for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann had been reviewed and approved by correspondence; the Committee had agreed that as the amendments were relatively minor further approval by the Board was not required.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held an extraordinary meeting on 2 December to review and recommend approval of the Annual Report and Accounts to the Board.

The Board was also advised as the Director of Marketing is on an extended leave of absence, it had been suggested that January's meeting of the Marketing Sub-Committee may be postponed; however if temporary cover arrangements can be put in place, the meeting will proceed.

## **4. Papers for Noting**

### **4 (i) Market Outlook**

The Board noted the content of the latest update on visitor performance trends.

### **4 (ii) Travel & Subsistence Policy**

An updated version of the travel and subsistence policy was presented for noting. This included a paragraph designating Tourism NI's Belfast headquarters as Board Members' place of work, for the purpose of mileage claims.

## **5. Any Other Business**

The Board was advised of arrangements for the launch of Tourism Ireland's 2026 Marketing Plans. The Chairman and Linda MacHugh indicated that they hoped to attend.

As there were no other substantive items of business the Chairman thanked participants and drew the meeting to a close.

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

The next Board Meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 4 February 2026 at the Old Inn, Crawfordsburn.