Board Meeting 24 September 2026

TOURISM NI
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
HELD AT TOURISM NI HEADQUARTERS, LINUM CHAMBERS, BELFAST
ON THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

Participating:

- Ms Ellvena Graham OBE (Chairman)
- Mr Ciaran O'Neill
- Mr John Hood
- Ms Karly Greene
- Ms Linda MacHugh
- Mr Michael Counahan

In attendance:

- Ms Laura McCorry, Chief Executive
- Mr Adrian Doherty, Director of Corporate Services
- Mr David Roberts, Director of Strategic Development
- Mrs Eimear Callaghan, Director of Client Engagement
- Mrs Steph Stewart, Executive Support Team

1. Introduction / Standing Items

The Chairman welcomed participants and noted there were no apologies.

Participants were asked to declare any interests in respect of agenda items. No declarations were made.

1 (i) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Board Meeting held on Thursday 20th August 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

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

The Board noted the status of actions and agreed that those recorded as complete could be removed from the list.

2. Items for Discussion

2 (i) Chief Executive's Report

The report was taken as read and noted.

The Chief Executive advised that the launch of the Tourism Skills Action Plan had been postponed. Staff had made a presentation to Naomi Waite, who had taken early retirement. The Board agreed to write to Naomi to thank her and wish her well in her retirement. The Board also agreed to invite Translink to an upcoming Board deep dive.
(ACTION: EST)

2 (ii) Board Meeting Dates - 2027

The Board had received a paper outlining proposed dates for Board meetings as well as ARAC and F&CC meetings for 2027. Members were asked to advise the Executive Support Team if any of the proposed dates present an issue. **(ACTION: Board)**

It was agreed the Marketing Committee will plan to meet in May, late August and December in line with campaign activity and that this Committee will resume proper once a Marketing Director has been appointed.

2 (iii) Destination Stewardship Update

The Director of Strategic Development presented a proposal to establish a Destination Stewardship Framework. The Board endorsed the proposal as per the presentation. The Chief Executive thanked Michael Counahan for his support to the team in developing the proposal. The Board welcomed the visitor-led partnership approach, agreed with next steps and requested that the Board receive regular updates at key milestones.

2 (iv) Revised Draft Tourism NI Corporate Plan

The Board were presented a revised draft Tourism NI Corporate Plan. It was noted that whilst refinements had been made, the overarching ambition had not changed, and the previously approved impact framework was now included.

The Board were content to agree the proposed approach of issuing the revised plan directly to original consultees to acknowledge feedback received and approved next steps as set out in the paper. **(ACTION: DR)**

The Board were advised that annual high-level outcomes from the Corporate Plan will be captured in a corporate scorecard and this will be shared with the Board. **(ACTION: DR)**

The Board approved the revised Corporate Plan, subject to minor drafting amendments that were captured. **(ACTION: DR)**

3. Reports

3 (i) Chairman's Report

Members noted the Chairman's report on engagements in the period since the last Board Meeting.

The Chair updated members on her upcoming visit to Wales in order to observe the Visit Britain Board Meeting. Members were advised that the current Board recruitment exercise had been delayed due to changes in the panel.

The Board were advised of a change in plan regarding the invitation to the Minister to attend a stakeholder dinner. She will now join the end of the December Board meeting instead and the staff reception thereafter.

3 (ii) Sub-Committee Reports

The Chairs of the Board Sub Committees presented reports on their most recent meetings:

Finance & Casework Committee (15 September)
A report was given on the Committee's meeting on 15th September. The Committee had considered the OBC for Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark. Members had made some recommendations regarding marketing projections and timeframe for construction. The Committee were content to endorse the IDM's recommendation that casework proceed. The Council has requested a further meeting before the project reaches Full Business Case stage.

The Committee had also considered the revised business case for Managed Professional Services which had been brought to the June Board. It was noted the business case had been amended in response to Board comments at that meeting. The Committee agreed the uncontrollable nature of the workload would suggest that in-house support is not appropriate. The Committee recommended that the wording relating to affordability needs was amended in the business case.

The Board highlighted it will be important to ensure whoever is appointed to carry out the work can fulfil the full range of support to the required standard. The Board were assured there will be a robust contract management in place to challenge any work that is below standard. It was noted that discussions are ongoing with the Procurement Team to consider contract terms and scope around penalties.

The Board also commented that the criteria for the work should require experience in two distinct areas; the first being experience of writing PPEs and the second being experience of the sector. **(ACTION: DR)**

The Board granted approval of the business case subject to the recommendations above being implemented.

Discussions moved to the next Audit & Risk Assurance Committee. It was confirmed John Hood will Chair the meeting and Linda MacHugh will join to ensure quorate.

4. Papers for Noting

4 (i) Market Outlook

The Board noted the latest report on visitor performance and trends.

4 (ii) New Funding Scheme Update

The Board received an update on the new overarching Tourism Industry (Financial Assistance) Scheme which is now much broader and gives Tourism NI scope to provide greater flexibility in terms of financial assistance. Members were advised that references in the Scheme to responsibilities of "the Board" refer to the "Northern Ireland Tourist Board" and not the Non-Executive Directors.

4 (iii) Tourism Conference Update

The Board noted the report.

5. Any Other Business

The Board discussed the Cyber Security training and noted there are responsibilities which fall upon the Board in this area. It was agreed an update paper would be presented to Board. **(ACTION: AD)**

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting is due to take place on Thursday 5th November at Bangor Castle. It will be preceded by a site visit to the Walled Garden, Helen's Bay, the day before and a stakeholder dinner at Clandeboye Lodge Hotel.