Board Meeting 4 February 2026

TOURISM NI
MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
HELD AT THE OLD INN, CRAWFORDSBURN
ON WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2026

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 Services
- Mr Ian Snowden, Permanent Secretary, DfE
- Mr Mark Lee, Deputy Secretary, DfE
- Ms Sharon Heatherington, DfE (to item 2 (ii))
- Ms Eimear Callaghan, Interim Director of Marketing (item 2 (iii))
- Mr Mark Thompson, Visitor Information Manager (item 2 (iii))
- Ms Aine Kearney, Director of Events (item 2 (iv))
- Ms Siobhan McGuigan, Head of Events (item 2 (iv))
- Mr Jim Daly, Executive Support Team

1. Introduction / Standing Items

The Chairman welcomed participants to the meeting and invited them to declare any interests in respect of agenda items. No declarations were made at this point. There were no apologies.

1 (i) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Board's meeting on 10th December 2025 were approved, subject to a minor amendment. Amended minutes of the 12th November 2025 Board Meeting were also approved.

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

The Board reviewed and noted the status of actions carried over from previous meetings. The Board requested the document is refreshed and where original target dates had passed, new target completion dates should be included. (**ACTION**: ELT).

2. Items for Discussion

2 (i) Discussion with DfE Permanent Secretary

The Department for the Economy (DfE), Permanent Secretary briefed the Board on the key Departmental priorities for the coming year and underlined the budgetary pressures across government. It was stressed that this challenging operating environment would persist for the foreseeable future, requiring difficult decisions and agile thinking on the part of departments and agencies. He also highlighted that consideration should be given to opportunities for revenue raising and close partnership working across government to ensure resources are used to maximum effect. It was noted that Tourism NI's baseline budget planning figure has been reset and previously reallocated core marketing funds to support The Open have not been returned representing a reduction in the opening allocation prior to any further cuts applied.

Members thanked the PS for his candour, stressing they valued the positive working relationship with the Department. Members then set out the implications of further budget reductions on the sector, highlighting key areas such as marketing support to stimulate consumer demand for small tourism businesses to help manage cost pressures. Noting the important work of Tourism Ireland's promotional activity overseas, the Board stressed the need for matched "on the ground" funding to capitalise on this, particularly in the area of FAM visits. Noting the pressure on operators at this time, the Board emphasised the need for an enabling policy environment to allow tourism to grow.

The Board reaffirmed the need for capital resources in the context of the transfer of powers from Invest to TNI for accommodation development to ensure TNI could effectively support the sector.

The discussion also touched on resources in the context of the outworkings of the Board strategy discussions the previous day. The Board set out the need to stabilise Tourism NI's ELT structure that would then be followed by a detailed workforce planning exercise thereafter to ensure TNI is future fit in a changing tourism landscape.

2 (ii) Chief Executive's Report

The CEO took the report as read providing an overarching commentary on items therein. The Board welcomed the announcement of investment to support NMNI's Reawakening project at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

2 (iii) Discovernorthernireland.com

The Acting Director of Marketing and the Visitor Information Manager presented the latest version of Tourism NI's consumer website discovernorthernireland.com, which had been reviewed and reformatted to better meet users' needs. A wide ranging discussion ensued and the Board agreed that overall, the new site was a very positive development and commended the team.

2 (iv) Tourism Events Future Vision

The Director of Events and Head of Events joined the meeting to discuss the emerging strategic framework for events development. The report highlighted the need for a policy across government that sets out a clear and co-ordinated process to bidding and securing major events for NI. The Board agreed that whilst a clear rationale exists for TNI to support this activity, a clear policy position and commensurate budget allocation is required to do so effectively.

It was agreed that further conversations are needed with the Department before the framework can be finalised. It was also agreed that the Events team should produce a supporting resource plan to ensure TNI can effectively support the development of homegrown events going forward (**ACTION**: AK).

3. Reports

3 (i) Chairman's Report

The Board noted the Chairman's engagements since the last meeting. The Chair asked for a number of further engagements to be included on the list that had been missed.

3 (ii) Sub-Committee Reports

Verbal updates were given by the respective chairs.

Marketing Sub-Committee – the Committee met on 15 January and considered business cases for Campaigns, Social / Digital Media and Business Solutions. Queries raised by Members were deemed to have been satisfactorily answered, and the Board ratified its approval, which had been given in principle by correspondence. The Committee also reviewed proposals for the spring marketing campaign, including the allocation of additional resource following the December monitoring round. Returning briefly to the business case approvals, Members asked that the queries and responses should be recorded and noted on the business cases alongside the approvals. (**ACTION**: EC).

Finance & Casework Committee – a report was given on the Committee's meeting of 22nd January. The Finance report to the end of December showed that budget spend at the financial year end is on course to be within the 1% tolerance. The significant issue remains actual spend on City and Growth Deals projects, noting the easements on the DNA project.

The Committee also approved the revocation of certification for a hotel, and reviewed two corporate policies, on Safety & Security and Induction and recommended the policies to the Board for approval. The Board approved the two policies.

Audit & Risk Assurance Committee - The ARAC also met on 22nd January. The key discussion areas included work to develop new frameworks for assurance mapping and risk management with work continuing in both areas. The Board reiterated the need for reporting to be clearly linked to operational activity and strategic objectives.

The Committee also reviewed corporate policies on raising concerns and representation on external boards and requested that these be amended and resubmitted for approval.

4. Quarter III 2025-26 Performance Reports

4 (i) Operating Plan 2025-26 Performance Monitoring

The Board noted a report on the status of Operating Plan objectives at the end of Quarter III. Stressing that green accreditation remained an issue for the industry, ELT were asked to explore options to proceed with a recognised accreditation scheme if the all-island approach is not forthcoming. It was suggested that the matter should be raised at the next meeting of the all-island forum and next steps agreed thereafter. (**ACTION**: DR)

4 (ii) Risk Management

The Board was presented with a report on the status of corporate risks at the end of Q3. Members commented that the scoring of some risks should be reconsidered but were content that work is ongoing in this area more broadly. Members requested information on TNI's share of voice in the ROI market and asked this is tracked over time via the Marketing Committee. (**ACTION**: EC).

4 (iii) Finance

The Board noted the content of the report.

4 (iv) People & Organisational Development

The Board noted the update.

5. Papers for Noting

5 (i) Market Outlook

The Board noted the report. Colin Johnston left the meeting at this point.

5 (ii) Draft Agenda for March Board Meeting

The agenda was agreed.

5 (iii) Board Objectives and Effectiveness

The Board noted the content of the update.

6. Any Other Business

The Board was asked to note 2nd December in diaries for a joint engagement with the Board of Tourism Ireland, which is due to meet in Belfast. Members were also provided with the details of the Spring TED programme.

As there were no other matters for discussion the Chairman thanked participants and brought the meeting to a close.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next Board Meeting is due to take place on Thursday 19 March 2026 in the Lisburn & Castlereagh Council area, venue TBC.